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**STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT, MR. JOSE LUIS RODRIGUEZ ZAPATERO, TO THE GENERAL DEBATE OF THE 59<sup>TH</sup> PERIOD OF SESSIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

(New York, 21 September 2004)

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Mr President,

For the first time, I am addressing the United Nations General Assembly representing my country. Ours is an old and diverse country, with several languages and different traditions and cultures. Ours is a European, Mediterranean and Ibero-American country.

I am speaking on behalf of a country that has had its share of difficult experiences throughout its history. A country in which still living generations have known a civil war, a dictatorship of almost four decades and a democracy that is now 25 years old. We have also experienced the scourge of terrorism for more than thirty years.

Over the last thirty years we, Spanish women and men, have learned much about and from terrorism. We soon learned about its iniquity. We have learned what it is about. We have learned how to defy it, how to withstand its blows with courage and dignity. We have learned how to fight it.

Precisely because of this, because we have been experiencing it for thirty years, we Spaniards deeply sympathised with the suffering of the American people on 9/11. We knew how they felt. We know how they feel. Here in New York I would like to convey the Spanish people's hard felt solidarity with this great American nation.

We fully understand the terrible pain that in these past years has been inflicted upon Jakarta, Bali, Casablanca, Riyadh or Beslan. We know all about enduring kidnappings, bombings and cold-blooded killings. We are well acquainted with the meaning of the word compassion.

On March 11 this year a terrorist attack took the lives of 192 people in Madrid. We had never experienced this kind of terrorism in our country before, but we were familiar with the bloodshed and the pain that it caused. From this

platform, I want to express my deep appreciation to all nations for their solidarity, extended to us at a time of such suffering with the brutal events that took place in my country.

Spanish women and men were not afraid. On the very next day after the bombings, millions of people left their homes, took to the streets and squares of the cities and towns of my country and, once again, we expressed our rejection and disgust, our unanimous contempt for terrorist brutality.

From thirty years of terrorism we have learned that the risk of a terrorist victory rises sharply when, in order to fight terror, democracy betrays its fundamental nature, governments curtail civil liberties, put judicial guaranties at risk, or carry out pre-emptive military operations. This is what our people have learned: that it is legality, democracy and political means and ways what makes us stronger and them weaker.

We will resist terrorism. Our history endorses our resolve. We will pursue our fight against terrorism. But we will always do so within the framework of both domestic and international legality. We will do so always respecting Human Rights and our commitment to the United Nations, and in no other way. It is not only the ethics of our beliefs that move us, but also and above all our belief in ethics. Our conviction is that legality, and only legality, will allow us to prevail in the fight against terrorism.

Nothing justifies terrorism. It is irrational, like the Black Death, but the roots of terrorism, like those of the plague, can and must be uncovered. We can and must rationally analyse how it emerges, how it grows, so as to be able to fight it rationally.

Terrorism is insanity and death and, regrettably, there will always be fanatics who are ready to kill to impose their insanity through force. Ready to disseminate the seed of evil. The seed of evil cannot take root when it falls on the rock of justice, well-being, freedom and hope; but it can take root if it lands on the soil of injustice, poverty, humiliation and despair.

Thus, redressing the major political and economic injustices that affect our world would deprive terrorists of their popular support. The more people there are who enjoy dignified conditions around the world, the safer we will all be.

Mr. President,

In this context, I would like to speak about Iraq. But above all I would like to speak about the thousands of victims of this conflict, about the Iraqis and about the soldiers and civilians who lost their lives. We express our permanent solidarity to them and to their countries.

The overwhelming majority of people in Spain spoke out against the war. We were not persuaded by the reasons given by those who promoted the war.

Spain commits itself to spare no political, diplomatic or cooperation effort to try and bring about the peace that is so necessary in the Middle East. But it also wants to address an urgent appeal to the United States, to the European Union, to Russia and to the United Nations to implement the Road Map. These are four powerful players, which we want to see exercising decisive diplomatic pressure.

Mr. President,

In the humanitarian field, Spain has contributed several million euros to help alleviate the terrible crisis in Darfur. However, the Sudanese authorities must, without delay, take all measures necessary to end the atrocities, bring the perpetrators to trial and normalise the situation in the region. It is also necessary that the rebel groups and militias respect the cease-fire and show a constructive attitude at the negotiating table. In this context, we must support the initiatives launched by the African Union.

Mr. President,

Spain considers that we can no longer passively accept the continuation of Africa's forgotten conflicts, which is why, along with our partners in the European Union, we have supported the establishment of the Peace Facility for Africa, an instrument designed to promote regional solutions to the crises suffered by the continent.

Mr. President,

In the Maghreb, Spain is pursuing an active and comprehensive policy to enhance political stability and economic and social development in the region. Regional integration and interdependence with Spain and Europe is, we believe, the way to achieve these goals.

Regarding the Western Sahara, Spain vigorously supports the pursuit of a just and definitive political solution that is acceptable to all parties and respects the principles set out in the Resolutions of this Organisation. From this platform, I would like to call upon the international community to redouble its efforts, within the framework of dialogue and negotiations established by the United Nations, to resolve a conflict that has dragged on for far too long.

Mr President,



President Lula of Brazil - which envisages new funding mechanisms for development. The government of Spain will substantially increase its official development assistance, in order to reach the threshold of 0.7% of GDP.

Mr. President,

democratic systems and bringing political stability to the region. I also wish to reconfirm our support for Latin America's economic progress aimed to reducing inequality and strengthening social cohesion. Within the European Union, we will continue to promote a closer relationship



I thank you very much, Mr. President.