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TRANSCRIPCIÓN

INTERVENCIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO, PEDRO SÁNCHEZ, EN EL PANEL “FORTIFYING THE FOUNDATION OF TRANSATLANTIC SECURITY”, EN LA CONFERENCIA DE SEGURIDAD DE MÚNICH

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INTERVENCIÓN DEL PRESIDENTE DEL GOBIERNO, PEDRO SÁNCHEZ

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I've come to Munich to meet with friends and allies. To listen to experts. And to show Spain's commitment to the multilateral order and the security of Eastern European nations.

We Spaniards are far away from Russia. But we know quite well that Putin is a serious threat. That the world is becoming more unstable.

And that we Europeans must strengthen our defence capabilities. To protect, of course, our freedom and way of life, but also to provide security guarantees to our international partners.

We are so aware of this that, since I became Prime Minister, Spain has tripled its defence spending, and has doubled the number of soldiers deployed in NATO missions.

We need, of course, to ensure our sovereignty, our security, and our territorial integrity.

But I strongly believe that nuclear rearmament is not the right way of doing it.

And I am hardly the first one thinking that. Seventy years ago, our parents and grandparents came to the conclusion that nuclear deterrence was a far too costly and a risky way of avoiding conflict between countries.

Too costly because it demanded colossal public investments.

And too dangerous because, on several occasions, technical or human errors came close to triggering a full-scale nuclear war between the West and the former Soviet Union. A war which would have brought humanity to the brink of extinction.

After a few decades, our predecessors realized that the risks posed by nuclear deterrence far outweighed its contributions to peace. They realized that a system that requires zero mistakes and constant correction to avoid total destruction, is not a guarantee. It is a gamble.

President Ronald Reagan stated, and I quote: "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought", end of the quote. And John F. Kennedy said, and I quote, that "the weapons of war must be abolished before they abolish us", end of the quote.

This was not about left or right. It was about doing the right thing.



This collective realisation led to an international agreement to undertake a gradual, verifiable process of nuclear disarmament. Treaties were signed. And nuclear arsenals were dramatically reduced.

But now, the tide is turning. Nuclear powers have forgotten the lessons of the past, and they are expanding their nuclear arsenals once again. Together, they are spending more than 11 million dollars every single hour on them. And experts estimate that the US alone will invest 946 billion dollars in nukes over the next decade—enough to eradicate extreme global poverty.

In my view, this is a mistake. A historical error that we cannot commit again. Particularly not today, with Artificial Intelligence casting a shadow of uncertainty over the entire world.

That is why I would like to humbly ask all these powerful nations: please stop nuclear rearmament.

Sit down. Negotiate. And sign a new START Treaty to ensure continuity of the one that has just expired.

As a non-nuclear country that has witnessed nuclear bombs accidentally being dropped on its territory back in 1966, I beg you: prevent the launch of a new arms race while it is still possible.

Humanity will be forever grateful if you do. And it will heavily judge you if you don't.

We need to stop Putin. We need to strengthen our deterrence capabilities. But let us do so in a coordinated and targeted way that we can control.

Let's build a true European army. Not in ten years. But now. Spain will join with all the resources that are needed.

Let's strengthen our multilateral system. Reforming and empowering those institutions that, despite their flaws, have succeeded in maintaining peace in the West for decades.

And, also, let's invest in the values of solidarity, empathy and cooperation that have brought us this far. Because the rearmament that we most urgently need is a moral one.

Thank you.

P [Hadley Gamble].- I'd love to invite the rest of our panelists to join us.

Thank you so much, Your Excellency, for those comments. I'd like to also welcome our other panelists to the stage.

Finland's President, Alexander Stubb, the U.S. Senator from the great State of Delaware, Chris Coons, and Denmark's Prime Minister Frederiksen. Great to see you.

I just want to pick up on that point, Prime Minister, because you're talking about Vladimir Putin and you're talking about nuclear strength.

You're also discussing how Europe can best defend itself.

Walk me through this, because Spain is lagging behind in its NATO spending, and you have the fastest growing economy in the eurozone.

Walk us through that. How does that make sense?

Presidente.- Well, first of all. There are trade-offs that we disagree when it comes to this 5% of GDP in defense.

Second, I do believe that we need also to focus on capabilities and contributions.

And, as I said earlier, of course we have doubled not only the presence of Spanish soldiers in NATO missions, but also we have tripled the investments on defense expenditure when it comes to our GDP.

But last but not least, I think that what we need to do in the coming years is to strengthen the European pillar of NATO within NATO.

P [Hadley Gamble].- How do you do that without spending?

Presidente.- No, what we have to do is to strengthen the defence, the European defence industry.

And that means that, paradoxically, if we agree with this idea of 5%, at the end of the day, we will become more dependent on the US defense industry.

And that is why I think that we need to focus more on not only how much do we spend, but how much do we spend together, and therefore better.

So, all in all, what I am trying to say is that the challenge that we have within the European Union is how do we strengthen the European pillar within NATO.



P [Hadley Gamble].- Prime Minister Sánchez, you're hearing these comments from your NATO colleagues. In your mind, how do you defend your position when it comes to Russia when it comes to not spending more?

Presidente.- No, actually, we are spending more and we are sending troops to the eastern flank of Europe.

And we are committed, of course, with the security and the and the territorial integrity of the eastern part of Europe and of course, of Ukraine. And when it comes to the Greenland, of course, we express our support to the Kingdom of Denmark.

Now, I think at the end of the day, there is a debate of whether we are sticking to the rules of an international order based on rules.

If we stick to the UN charter principles or not, and I think that when it comes to values and principles, we need to defend those values and principles.

And let's not forget that, of course, we have to think about the eastern flank, of course we have to think about the Arctic flank. But there's also a reality that you mentioned earlier, which is the southern flank.

And for that, we need also to bridge understandings with other countries that belong to other cultures and societies that they need to understand from the Western world that we are engaged with them, that we don't accept double standards, that when it comes to territorial integrity, we defend that territorial integrity in Ukraine, but also in Gaza and in the West Bank.

And the situation that, you know, now, Palestinian people are facing in the West Bank is completely unacceptable.

And I think that the leverage, the influence that Western society and governments could play also in the southern flank is very, very important also for the security and the geopolitical interests of the European Union and of course, therefore, for the transatlantic relationship.

So, all in all, we are committed, we have this solidarity with the eastern flank of Europe. But let us not forget that in the Madrid strategic concept, when we had the NATO summit, we also agreed upon this idea of 360 degree security approach

And I think that there's a lot of disagreement on that and not a lot of unity when it comes to foresee a potential solution in the conflict of the Middle East.

[...]

Presidente.- So I think that within the European Union, we understood quite well the reasons behind the invasion. Not only an attack to a third country, Ukraine, but also an attack against the European Union as a whole, as a political project.

So, that is why I think that it was clear for all governments within the European Union that we need to stick together, united and, of course, defending Ukraine and its territorial integrity and freedom.

But we need to do more. I think that we need to face the reality that within some years, in the near future, we will need to enlarge the European Union and to get Ukraine.

P [Hadley Gamble].- Many would say that is a problem because that galvanized the situation in the first place.

Presidente.- No, no. I think that, as I said earlier, I think we need to understand that this is not only a challenge against Ukraine, it's also a challenge against the European Union as a whole, as a political project, as a democratic and freedom space within, of course, our continent.

So therefore, I think that we need to face that reality. We need to do also our internal structural reforms in order to be more efficient.

We need also to increase our competitiveness when it comes to the European Union economy and, therefore, to have enough resources in order to increase our deterrence capabilities.

And let me add just one thing. There is also in politics like a qualitative, let us say, issues.

The debate about Greenland and the territorial integrity somehow, for other countries, not in the Western societies or of course in Russia, but in the global South, the so-called global South, perhaps it has legitimized somehow what Putin is doing.

So, I think it is important from the European Union to stick together, to be united and to say clearly to our friends in the US that territorial integrity is something that we must all respect without any doubt.

And, therefore, I think it was important to see that we are moving forward, that we are overcoming this situation because somehow we gave reasons to Putin. And this is something that is weakening us when it comes to the global South.

Let me just conclude by saying that, of course, we need to do all this stuff when it comes to Russia and Putin, but we need also to engage in all these global public debates that we have on climate, on global health, on poverty and inequality.



These are things that countries and societies from the global South are asking Western societies and governments to face and respond effectively.

And my concern is that we are not there. We are just looking at ourselves, of course, talking about Russia but not talking about other things.

P [Hadley Gamble].- Prime Minister Sánchez, with your continually growing economy, I guess you're pretty happy.

Presidente.- Well, not only that. I mean, we have, sun, we have great [inaudible].

But just let me add one thing. I don't understand why some, you know, personalities of the US Administration see the reality of the European Union project as a threat, because I think that, you know, this is a fact. I think it's one of the biggest accomplishment of the 20th century.

And what we have decided within the European Union is to move forward. And I think this is for the community, and the global peace.

So, therefore, I do not understand why we are seen as a threat.

P [Hadley Gamble].- I don't think you're seen as a threat by the Administration. You're seen as a burden, which suggests to me you need to do better.

Presidente.- No, I think that some look at the European Union and wish to have a more fragmented European Union, while at least, you know, these three representatives of the European Union were looking and working for a stronger and stronger European Union.

And, therefore, we need also to deepen our single market. We need to open ourselves to other regions such as, you know, this free trade agreement that we reached with Mercosur, and therefore we need to move in this direction.

So, this is a reality. And the US needs to accept this fact, this reality that in the future, what they will have in Europe is a more integrated Europe in the European Union.

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