

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY****OPENING SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNITY OF MADRID AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION****Madrid, 26 November 2021**

Your Majesty, esteemed dignitaries, friends:

As President of the Community of Madrid, it is an honour to welcome you to the inauguration of the Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

You are in a place that is very dear to the people of Madrid and to the rest of Spain. In March 2020, not far from here, in pavilions seven and nine of this conference venue, we built our first temporary pandemic hospital: the predecessor to the Nurse Isabel Zendal Emergency Hospital.

Thousands of people's lives were saved in these two hospitals, as a result of which they have become another symbol of the sheer determination of the people of Madrid.

The Community of Madrid has been at the centre of Spain's political life for the past five hundred years. We are the heirs to a constitutional tradition of democracy and freedom that goes back to 1810, with the Cortes of Cádiz; not forgetting the first ever Cortes, held in León in 1188.

**We are particularly proud of the phase that began in 1978; a historic example of how to take on the Transition from an authoritarian regime to a democracy.**

Your Majesty, dignitaries:

**The successes of that Transition now belong to the people of Spain,** thanks to the drive and commitment of extraordinary figures in politics and society, **led by the unconditional support of the Crown.**

Nothing would have been achieved without this support for the wishes and aspirations of the Spanish people; support that they now have in Your Majesty Felipe VI, and in the stability and consensus with society that our democratic institutions need.

In the words of Your Majesty, "We must continue to believe" in a society "that does not oppose, but engages in dialogue: that does not quarrel, but listens; that does not silence or shut itself away, but travels and opens itself up in a spirit of brotherhood."

With that memory and vindication of our Transition to democracy in mind, I would also like to thank the members of the Inter-Parliamentary Union who,

through their presence, have today turned the Community of Madrid into a meeting place for national parliaments from all over the world.

The work that they do is essential, because the fundamental purpose of parliaments is to bring about understanding, and to have the freedom to do so.

Forty-five years ago, the Spanish people conferred on our Parliament the responsibility for debating, seeking agreement, and overcoming Spain's difficulties.

**True progress in any society may only be achieved in a context of freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights and the rule of law.**

Parliaments play a fundamental role in that task, not only by fostering just laws and pursuing the common good, but also by establishing effective controls against abuses of power.

As representatives of the people, parliaments have a responsibility to defend them and to achieve, by way of dialogue, the necessary wisdom to navigate the problems that arise from living with one another. That is politics: it is what citizens expect of us.

Cooperation among parliaments should act as an incentive to defend democracy and freedom, as well as to condemn abuses that may threaten the separation of powers.

I urge you to make the most of these days to work hard, but also to get to know the Community of Madrid a little better by walking around its hidden corners and talking to the people who live here. I am sure that you will love our region.

I am certain that the work you will do will be extraordinary, and that you will remember this journey forever.

Ladies and gentlemen: **beyond our convictions lies the ability to find common ground.** That is what parliaments are for.

Welcome, and thank you very much.