

WELCOME ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

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It is a great honor for me to give you a warm welcome to Toledo and to the UCLM. Our university has a total of 33000 pre-graduate students. It is a young university, which is organized in four different and distant campuses placed in the cities of Toledo, Cuenca, Ciudad Real and Albacete.

The university was born 15 years ago with a clear commitment with scientific and technological development and a vocation to that as a transformer element of the region of Castilla-La Mancha, offering to its citizens high quality university education. For the UCLM it is a great honor to host this group of researchers and people participating and interested in this ambitious project called satellite FIRST, which has the aim of building a space observatory to detect radiation from the far infrared and millimetre and sub-millimetre wavelengths with the support of the ESA and the NASA.

The project is a clear and evident proof of the fruitful cooperation of scientists from all over the world. The project has got the necessary financial support for its goals. It is on the subject of stability in time of the financial support of scientific research about what I would like to make now a brief comment.

First, I would like to call the attention of the whole society and of its legitimate representatives about the importance of both basic and applied scientific research as an essential element and instrument of social development, progress and exploration of the new, but it is absolutely obvious that scientific research needs enough financial support to reach its aims. That is why it is advisable that the higher political responsible should participate as chairmen of the regional and national commission for science and technology as an evident symbol or clear signal of compromise and preoccupation about the development of science, which is the value that the normal citizen links with the concept of progress.

Space projects as many other projects in science need a long term programming. They also require a state policy in order to define and coordinate the diverse scientific policies of the different political parties, that could be called to have a governmental responsibility. It is in this sense that it is necessary an adequate planification for a serious preparation of the young scientists of the future, which will responsible for the development of science in the next decade. This is even more urgent and certain in countries

like Spain that wants to be and, indeed, should be in the first line of European and world countries.

I want to finish saying that I really hope that the financial support that you already have for building the FIRST satellite will be complemented in the future with the necessary budget for the exploitation of the scientific data that will be obtained and for the adequate education of the young scientists. I do not ignore the high technology that is required for the instruments that will be used. I am also conscious of the Spanish participation in the project through the Yebes Centre of astronomy and the Astronomy Institute of the Canary islands as well the specific participation of Spanish scientists in the project, and this is the case of Prof. Dr. Cernicharo, as a mission scientist for FIRST.

Therefore, I wish you good luck on building the complex instruments on-board FIRST and good luck on getting and forming the young scientists that could obtain the maximum scientific output from FIRST. I hope that this meeting will help in all these matters. Enjoy the congress and enjoy your stay in Toledo!

Thank you very much for your attention!