

## WELCOME ADDRESS ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CASTILLA-LA MANCHA

**J. Bono**

President of the Government of Castilla-La Mancha

Ladies and Gentlemen, thanks a lot and welcome to this meeting in Toledo, a millennial town which hosts regional and governmental institutions, of this nevertheless very young autonomous region.

Those coming from distant countries may not know that Castilla-La Mancha is a very young self-governed region. We are just eighteen years old, which is very little time compared with a long term project like the one which has brought you here.

However, this young region is placed in a territory with a very rich history. The city of Toledo, seat of the regional Government, has been declared World Heritage Site. Here, where you have decided to celebrate this meeting, we had the capital of a Kingdom and the capital of an Empire. It is just during these days that we are celebrating the V<sup>th</sup> centenary of Emperor Carlos birthday, the most powerful man at that time, with an outstanding exhibition which I hope you will have time to visit.

This town, also called the imperial town, is also known for other memoirs of lesser imperious kind. We have always tried to keep a positive legend of Toledo as legends tend to become true. Thus, we make efforts to remember that three different cultures lived together in Toledo in an exemplary way: Jewish, Moslem and Christian. During the Middle Age knowledge in different languages, which had been left unattended, was recovered and transmitted to Europe. The Zero Meridian crossed Toledo and it was here that the *Almagest* by Ptolomeo was translated for the first time.

Toledo's legend as a city of communication and understanding is true, although it may not be the only one, as there were also many times in which the multi-cultural presence was neither fruitful nor had a peaceful coexistence. Nevertheless, we work hard to make of Toledo and Castilla-La Mancha a site of convergence, dialogue and tolerance.

We are used to remember the positive aspects of our history to inspire a better future. As the American geneticist and zoologist Dobzhansky wrote: "among the two million of species on Earth, the human being is the only one which feels the 'fundamental worry' ". It is certainly not by evocating the past Empire that our region achieves dignity but rather by the belief that we can understand each other and be the seat of fruitful encounters. Thus, in my name and on behalf of the citizens I represent, I am

glad of your choice of this place to meet and communicate all the knowledge which will contribute to transform this planet some day.

In spite of our modest economical contribution to the project at the 'Centro Astronómico de Yebe', in Guadalajara, I wish my presence here not to have a mere ritual aspect. I have come to render homage to the scientific community represented here. It is not easy for us to identify you while walking in the streets and hence to thank you for what you are doing. Thus, on behalf of those who cannot recognize you as individuals but do recognize your scientific work I would like to transmit our gratitude.

It is the human curiosity which feeds the scientific spirit since its origins that has promoted us beyond planet Earth. Many answers to our challenges, depend mainly on space research.

I think I remember as a true story, what people tell about what happened when Gagarin, the first man in space, was asked by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the former Soviet Union: 'What do you see from space, comrade Gagarin?'. Gagarin answered: 'I do not see God.'

When our first astronaut, Pedro Duque, was orbiting the Earth, a group of children formulated the same question. Duque also answered with a negation, which to me had both richer sense and meaning: 'I see no borders'. From space we cannot see political borders, lines dividing the world and, by no means, perceive the reasons which have led to split humanity in so many compartments along History. Neither from space nor from Earth can we distinguish the citizens' Rh factor, their ideas, or different ways of thinking.

Months later I had the occasion to meet Pedro Duque here in Toledo and we deepened on his comment. He told me that he had only partially answered the truth, as from space one could notice the ecological devastation of large territories of our Planet. It is because of people like you that space has become not only the place we look at, but also the place from which we are observed.

In the preface of the book 'The human condition', Hanna Arendt comments on the sentence written on a great Russian scientist gravestone which read: 'Humankind will not stay bound to earth for ever'. Nevertheless, scientific progress does not detach us from earth, even if some people believe so. The reason is that while bringing us

closer to the unknown, scientific progress is helping us to interpret our existence and the behavior of the mankind.

In 1969, the same year in which the first man walked on the moon, one of the most prolific men of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the architect Fuller, wrote a book entitled 'Operating Manual for Spaceship Earth', where among many other things he said: 'In Spaceship Earth there is no Operating Manual'. And so it is. Humankind is a very little portion of the Universe, a portion that moves forward without operating manual since ancient times, but with a strong passion to know what makes us curious with respect to the unknown and to solve our all-day problems.

In such a not only imperial and tolerant but also religious town, it is worth to remember that many times we appealed to God to explain certain phenomena which nature we did not know. It was the God of 'how things work'. However, one day everything will be known and we will achieve the 'how' of everything. Maybe then, the God of 'why' will have a sense. Maybe we will discover him in everyone of us and we will be able to create an operating manual for a planet in which solidarity and fraternity will not just remain as part of political speeches or clergymen sermons.

Hopefully, you will help us to see our limitations, become aware of our errors while increasing your confidence on our possibilities.

I wish you very fruitful days in Toledo. I also wish success to the 'FIRST' satellite from 2007 on. I specially wish that we all keep on moving forward in this planet which, seen from space and watched from the ground has no operating manual and many times seems erratic and extraordinarily unfair.

Muchas Gracias!