

Palabras de S. M. el Rey en la cena de bienvenida del “GSMA Mobile World Congress Barcelona 2022”

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Señoras y señores, buenas noches, bona nit, good evening ladies and gentlemen; and welcome once more to Barcelona, to Cataluña and to Spain for GSMA’s Mobile World Congress.

Just as everyone who has spoken before me, I cannot start my remarks without mentioning Ukraine, a country that is in everyone’s mind today.

After what we have seen and lived in recent times, the last thing we would imagine is to be meeting here under the dark omen of a war in Eastern Europe. We are saddened and outraged. An unacceptable aggression on a sovereign and independent nation, member of the UN and particularly a friend of the EU and Spain.

Ukraine and the Ukrainian people are deeply in our hearts, and Spain —as expressed by our government— is committed to help together with the EU and with the International Community, that see the clear reality and nature of this war and invasion of Ukraine also as a threat upon Europe and World Order. This concerns us all.

Spain is following therefore with deep concern the developments in Ukraine. In these difficult times, we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian authorities and people, and we reaffirm our commitment to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country. Together with our partners, we are working tirelessly to support them and to restore peace as soon as possible. Respect for international law by all States, without exception, must be the basis of such —and any— peace.

In particular, now my thoughts are with all those families and friends of the more than 100,000 Ukrainians who are living in our country and contribute every day to our economic prosperity and social well-being.

Señoras y señores,

Antes de hacer algunos comentarios sobre esta edición del MWC, quiero agradecer a los organizadores la invitación para presidir y participar de nuevo en su inauguración. Esta es la 10ª ocasión que os acompaño y realmente impresiona poder comprobar de cerca la evolución que ha experimentado en todo este tiempo y cómo ha llegado, con mucho esfuerzo y con la dedicación de excelentes recursos —humanos, técnicos y materiales—, a tener tanto alcance y proyección.

Así que, mi más sincera enhorabuena por una nueva edición de este congreso; que continúa creciendo y que ha demostrado su capacidad de adaptación a las circunstancias, a pesar de todas las dificultades sufridas, especialmente con la llegada de la pandemia del Covid-19. También nuestro agradecimiento por la confianza que la GSMA nos otorga nuevamente para acoger este evento.

Todos los aquí presentes somos, de hecho, muy conscientes de la importancia y de la dimensión internacional que tiene el “Mobile” y, por ello, nos sentimos muy orgullosos de que se celebre en España, aquí en Barcelona.

Des del 2006 (dos mil sis), Barcelona, capital de Catalunya, acull aquest congrés de gran repercussió en el que líders i experts en tecnologia, tant del sector privat com del sector públic, contribueixen a construir el futur dels negocis i també de la societat sobre les bases de la connectivitat mòbil, tot responant a les exigències de cada moment. Barcelona, un dels centres de desenvolupament tecnològic més avançat, és una referència de creativitat i d'innovació, i com a tal ha de continuar projectant-se així al mercat global. Des d'aquí s'aposta per i es construeix per al futur.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This connectivity and the fact —and sense— of being connected are essential to our everyday lives, as these past two years have made abundantly clear:

- 2020 was a year of shock and innovation, when a context of seemingly insurmountable obstacles suddenly appeared and affected our lives in so many and challenging ways.
- 2021 was a year of transformation and of further adaptation, keeping our hopes for a soon end of the pandemic, but coming to terms with its persistence.
- And 2022 is proving a year of technological acceleration; this is why the MWC's motto this year—“Connectivity Unleashed”—seems so appropriate.

Spain's ecosystem of technological entrepreneurship is truly experiencing a boom, as shown by the rapid and solid increase in the number of tech start-ups, scale-ups and companies with very high valuations, known as “unicorns”.

In a very short time, Spain has clearly become a destination of choice for start-ups from all over the world. The abundant availability of talent is what attracts them most for their innovative projects. Initiatives of all kinds have thrived and find support from a growing network of accelerators and incubators, research centers, initiatives based on public-private collaboration, and companies involved in a wide array of open and collaborative projects that lean heavily on innovation.

National and international investors have not failed to grasp the significance of this technological evolution. The figures are telling and a solid proof: resources invested in start-ups tripled between 2019 and 2021.

This tech start-up ecosystem is approaching fast to a mature stage that is also spreading throughout Spain. The number of successful start-ups is surprising, but so is the number of start-ups that do not shy away from taking the next steps into more solid and permanent transformations, making use of their experience to generate yet further initiatives and projects, a phenomenon that is intrinsic to the true nature of technological innovation.

In this context, it is essential that we remain open to both national and international talent, offering every possible facility to enable their seamless blend into this ecosystem. It is also vital that we continue to get the younger generations, especially in

those who were born in the digital era, to develop a passion for and commitment to technology: to understand its power, to address and anticipate the risks involved, and to maximize its benefits in a safe and humane way.

A clear testimony of Spain's dynamism in this respect is that in any part of the country there is fertile soil for talent and entrepreneurship to blossom.

Digital transformation is crucial to ensure our international competitiveness in all spheres of the economy, as well as to provide the optimal functioning of government and of public and social services. Therefore, it must also serve to address challenges in areas such as health, education, the fight against climate change, social inclusion, and the unbalances in worldwide demography.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The MWC is a meeting point for participants from 150 countries, and serves as a forum for discussing all those fancy topics you all know so much about (financial technology, 5G, artificial intelligence, cloud technology, the internet of things, climate issues and cybersecurity). This year it features: 1,000 speakers formally scheduled, in addition to representatives from 2,000 companies (between 40,000 and 60,000 people expected to attend), including the main mobile operators, software companies and major corporations from the sector.

Moreover, this year we have seen —as our dear friend John Hoffman, the CEO of GSMA, has recently pointed out— a great deal of enthusiasm to celebrate and enjoy this congress in-person, placing on-line attendance and our computer, phone and tablet screens in their rightful place. In fact, 95% of the scheduled speakers are to be physically present, a clear sign that we are all moving forward in the right direction.

“4 Years From Now” (4YFN), which takes place in parallel to this Congress, has established itself over the past few years as a regular and indeed very successful event. It is specially a great meeting for start-ups, reflecting also the relevance, growth and dynamism of recent tech companies in Spain.

In short, all those gathered around the MWC in Barcelona this week —mobile network operators, consultants, business owners, investors, political leaders, and international organizations— certainly play —or will do so— a leading role in the global plans for digital transformation and economic recovery.

This week, the world industry of mobile communications —and its broad ecosystem— is here in Barcelona, and this is the perfect opportunity to imagine the world of tomorrow, with proper and general digital access and ample benefits for all.

I would like to finish my remarks in full confidence that this MWC will allow and induce constructive debate, exchange of expert opinions, a deep quest for innovation, powerful investment decisions and advancements in public policy.

I wish you all a highly productive experience, and hope that you thoroughly enjoy your stay in Spain, here in Barcelona and Cataluña. Again, my warmest welcome and hope to see you all again next year. Thank you very much / Moltes gràcies / Muchas gracias.