

Cena conmemorativa del 40º aniversario de la Feria Internacional de Turismo - FITUR

Palacio de Cibeles. Madrid, 21.01.2020

Buenas noches. Good evening.

I would like to begin these remarks with a warm welcome to all the professionals, entrepreneurs, official delegations, citizens from around the world, who have come to Spain, and to Madrid, to participate in this very special edition of FITUR.

Our renowned International Tourism Fair can now take pride in its now four decades of existence; a time in which it has constantly excelled to perform above expectations. Therefore, we are happy to be here tonight and share this well-deserved anniversary celebration. It certainly owes to the vision, the concerted effort supported by the industry and public administrations, and the success of our tourism sector as a powerhouse for business development, economic growth and employment for our country and for the world.

I would like to acknowledge all of the Ministers of Tourism and other officials from so many countries who are honouring us with their presence, and whose interest in attending this event in our Nation's Capital clearly shows how over the past four decades FITUR has become a must-see event. Many thanks to you and huge congratulations to IFEMA for this achievement: so many names to call out and distinguish, so many which are no longer with us... With all of them in mind, let us pay a warm tribute to an outstanding job, to a precious legacy... We are committed to continue the hard work, creatively, with an eye for innovation and a heart for environmental and social consciousness.

Spain is the host country for the World Tourism Organization, a United Nations specialized agency, and we are proud to support the UNWTO, not only because of our international standing in the tourism industry, but also our strong commitment to the UN family and to multilateralism. The Madrid Declaration on "Tourism in the 21st Century" incorporates the political, economic, social, employment and cultural dimensions of tourism into the context of the goals of the 2030 Agenda. I thank the UNWTO and its Sec.Gen. for preparing and delivering this important document.

For this edition of FITUR, the trade fair's special guest country is Korea, since it is now 70 years ago that we established diplomatic relations between this nation and Spain. Likewise, Korea's role this year highlights the importance of Asia as an emerging region in the tourism field. Indeed, Korea is now the 3rd largest source of Asian tourists visiting Spain. The Queen and I, just last October, were honoured and pleased to go Seoul on a State visit, invited by his Excellency President Moon Jae-in.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, creating one tenth of global jobs and

GDP. This is a sector of our economies that has seen constant growth in recent decades; an industry that has gone from strength to strength, and which is expected to continue its growth worldwide. Moreover, fuelled by the emerging economies, it has bright prospects for growth, specially by generating international tourists.

Tourism is a universal economic activity that involves societies having very different levels of development, and has an especially large impact in lower-income countries. It employs people with very basic training, as well as highly qualified professionals.

Moreover, tourism enables us to get to know other cultures, and experience other lifestyles. The motivations of tourists, of travellers, to have new experiences and to see new places and cultures are many —we could even say infinite. Tourism is an industry by people for people: it seeks to create leisure and wellbeing. Therefore, by gathering here to address tourism, we aspire to share a worldview, and we have the responsibility to influence positively the international scene by communicating our commitment to inclusive and sustainable progress.

Señoras y señores,

Permítanme ahora unas palabras sobre España como líder mundial en turismo; un país que, a partir de sus activos y valores en torno a la industria, la economía y el fenómeno turístico, quiere aportar lo mejor de sí mismo a la Comunidad Internacional.

España es el 1er destino turístico de Europa, tanto en ingresos, como en pernoctaciones y gasto de los turistas; es considerado también el país más competitivo del mundo en términos turísticos. Un turismo que, en España —y también globalmente— manifiesta fortalezas extraordinarias en la mayoría de indicadores, como el empleo, el gasto y el número de turistas, factores en los que España experimenta realmente cifras históricas, como los más de 83,5 millones de viajeros internacionales que nos visitaron el año pasado.

Estos resultados muestran que España cuenta con múltiples atractivos que se suman a factores muy positivos como el clima, la seguridad, la salud y la calidad de nuestros servicios e infraestructuras...la gastronomía. También un tejido empresarial competitivo capaz de dar una respuesta muy satisfactoria a las demandas cada vez más exigentes de quienes que nos visitan.

Uno de los elementos más apreciados del sistema turístico español es, precisamente, la conectividad aérea que, unida a la conexión del transporte ferroviario, marítimo y terrestre, ofrece al viajero uno de los mejores sistemas de comunicaciones a nivel mundial.

España es, asimismo, el 2do país del mundo por gasto y llegada de turistas internacionales. Además de ser potencia turística y el destino más competitivo del mundo, lidera igualmente las metodologías y certificaciones turísticas.

Por todas estas razones, nuestro país desea aportar su conocimiento y cooperación para contribuir en el ámbito internacional, tanto en el espacio europeo del que forma parte como en diferentes Organismos internacionales de ámbito regional o universal. Asimismo, España desea servir de plataforma en el ámbito de la cooperación para la

transferencia de conocimiento turístico a países emergentes apoyando su desarrollo turístico y social.

Pero el turismo no es un ámbito más de nuestra economía: es un sector transversal que influye en todas sus ramas. Es comercio, es transporte, es patrimonio cultural y lingüístico; es naturaleza, innovación, gastronomía, artesanía. El sector turístico es fuente de riqueza y empleo, es una herramienta de cohesión social y territorial, de fijación de la población, de lucha contra el cambio climático y la desigualdad; es un acelerador en la consecución de los ODS y la transformación digital. También impulsa la economía circular.

Es, asimismo, un extraordinario expositor, el mejor a nivel internacional, para mostrar nuestro país al mundo, una sociedad moderna, abierta, tolerante, solidaria, inclusiva y hospitalaria. Se trata igualmente de una actividad fundamental para conservar, promocionar y compartir el patrimonio natural y cultural. En este contexto, España apuesta de forma decidida por la innovación, la excelencia y la sostenibilidad como claves del modelo turístico del futuro.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The tourism industry is undergoing unprecedented transformation and change, driven by technology and by the emergence of new actors and business models. In an environment marked by the acceleration of the digital revolution, connectivity and automation, customers will demand greater added value, more flexibility, and higher degree of personalization. Sustainability also represents a major challenge for the achievement of more diversified and balanced tourism. Other global issues, such as climate change and rural depopulation, also need to be addressed.

Finally, in these complex times and context, it will always be crucial to preserve a social and ethical vision, with steady principles and values; as well as transparency and accountability.

I will conclude here. I wish you all a very rewarding experience at FITUR, and I hope that you will be able to find some time to get to know our country better—to see for yourselves how Spain's national commitment to tourism is embodied by the warm welcome and generosity that our people show to everyone who visits us.

Thank you very much. Muchas gracias.