

Palabras de Su Majestad el Rey con ocasión de la 15ª Cumbre Global del Consejo Mundial de Viajes y Turismo

Madrid, 14.04.2015

It is a great pleasure to be here with all of you on the occasion of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)'s Global Summit, which begins tomorrow here in Madrid —although there have been some ministerial meetings taking place already this afternoon.

I would like, first of all, to thank the WTTC President and CEO, Mr David Scowsill, and the UNWTO Secretary-General, Mr Taleb Rifai, for their kind words; and for inviting me to participate in tonight's —opening or welcoming— dinner. My thanks, also, to everyone here for their involvement and commitment to tourism, and here I mean tourism in the broadest sense; not just the booming industry that drives a very important part of economic development for many societies, but the global social phenomenon that brings people together and favours mutual understanding.

Something we are unfortunately still in dire need of, judging by such horrific acts against human life and other basic human rights, that are being committed in so many places around the world, both near and far from our homes and daily lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to share some ideas and realities about tourism that matter to us and, indeed, affect us all.

Travel and tourism is one of the world's most important and fastest-growing sectors, and has been continuously expanding and diversifying over the past 6 decades. It now represents a larger trade volume than oil exports, the food industry or cars; it contributes almost a 10th of global GDP and generates 1 out of every 11 jobs worldwide and 6% of global exports.

It is a sector that has shown great strength in recent years, despite adverse factors such as fragile economic growth worldwide, political instability, or the ongoing conflicts in certain parts of the world. Tourism has established itself as an unquestionable driver of growth, economic development, job creation, progress and wealth, and must continue to contribute to global economic recovery.

For all of these reasons, and in light of the current prospects for growth, it has become necessary to develop tools for making the most of these opportunities and addressing any new challenges that may present themselves.

It is here that the work of international organizations such as the UNWTO and WTTC is essential, as it emphasizes the sector's importance and favours a shared view among those responsible for policy on tourism and private operators around the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I do not want to end this address without briefly turning to the importance of tourism in Spain and its prospects. As it is well known, Spain is a leader in international tourism and a good benchmark for measuring the importance of this industry.

We are the world's 2nd-biggest nation in international tourism revenues and 3rd-biggest in numbers of international tourist arrivals. In Spain, tourism is a very dynamic sector, a clear source of growth, prosperity and employment, which has helped drive economic expansion. In fact, we have been clocking-up record international tourism figures over recent years, and even those records are being beaten in the opening months of this year 2015.

In a way, Spain's success in tourism reflects some of the best trends that confirm our country as a competitive, stable and safe destination in which tourism businesses can operate with little reason for concern and where tourists' satisfaction is guaranteed thanks to an array of first-class infrastructure (transport, communications, healthcare), our public safety records, and a wide and varied offering of tourist services. Our tourism assets are truly extraordinary thanks to our geographical location, our magnificent cuisine, our wealth of natural, historical and cultural heritage—we rank 2nd in the world in number of cities declared World Heritage sites by UNESCO.

Add to all of this, Spain's experience in tourism and the know-how accumulated by our businesses (hotel chains, airlines, service providers)—some of which are world leaders—and you have a clear recipe for success. Most Spaniards, including myself, feel proud of what our tourism industry has accomplished over the years, both in our country and in many other destinations around the globe.

For all of these reasons, I would like to say that Spain feels greatly honoured to place its experience in the service of the international community, to help ensure that travel and tourism continue to foster economic and social progress around the world. We must continue working together, just as you are doing at this Summit, pooling our efforts, seeking the best possible collaboration between businesses—to which so much of the growth of tourism is owed—and between public and private sectors.

I end my words as I began, referring to tourism as a social phenomenon, an instrument for bringing cultures, societies and people closer together, and as a very useful tool for promoting peace, harmony and tolerance. From your position, please do not stop promoting this dimension of tourism that greatly dignifies an economic sector, to which we owe—it must be said—a very large part of material prosperity in a great many countries.

And please, also in light of this dimension, and knowing the power and relevance concentrated in this gathering, allow me to highlight the constant need for greater coordination, collaboration and sharing of the efforts to fight any form of abuse, discrimination and indignity—let alone crime!. We cannot tolerate—or look away—from any episode or example of such practices that we know travel fast and often try to nest in-and-around this thriving industry; one that is—I insist—widely and justly perceived not only as a powerful leverage for progress, but also for greater understanding and positive human relations between different peoples, countries,

cultures and faiths, from all over the world; one that deserves and can also foster an ethical high-ground for the benefit of all.

Ladies and gentleman, thank you for your attention, enjoy your dinner and, of course, over the coming days, I wish you a lovely stay in Madrid, our Nation's capital; an excellent example of the quality our country has to offer those who visit us, and of Spanish people's famous hospitality. Thank you very much.