

SPAIN'S PRIORITIES
AT THE UNITED NATIONS.
**74TH SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



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Introduction

The 74th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) is defined by a challenging international context. This calls for the implementation of global and specific action plans that will enable us to demonstrate the validity of multilateralism in the face of the reservations expressed by key actors on the world stage.

The current challenges (climate change, imbalances in the distribution of wealth and of the achievements of development, mass—and, in some cases, forced—human displacement, the risk of pandemics, terrorism, extremism, violations of human rights or of International Humanitarian Law) demand clear and immediate responses and actions from governments and from all the other actors involved. In addition, these responses must be concerted, global and multilateral. **Spain wishes to transform the UN into a platform for change and urgent action.**

Spain, like its European partners, takes an active part in multilateral fora, which constitutes one of the cornerstones of our foreign policy. **Spain is committed to inclusive, people-centred and effective multilateralism**, in which governments and international organizations pool their efforts with civil society, the private sector, academia and non-governmental organizations.

The UN will continue to find in Spain a partner that is firmly committed to the quest for international peace and security. In the context of the session that is about to begin, we will continue working towards the three priorities identified by the UN Secretary-General for his mandate: conflict prevention, sustainable development, and the UN reform.

Our action during this session will follow three basic lines:

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Human dignity

Human dignity as a priority line of action for Spain means not only the most rigorous respect for human rights and International Humanitarian Law, but, above all, the consideration of human beings and their basic needs in all the actions carried out in multilateral forums. This is consistent with both the role that Spain has traditionally played in the UN, and with our planned future actions.

Spain has promoted—or played a fundamental role in—numerous initiatives in the sphere of the UN, which we will continue to champion:

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• **Gender equality**, through—among other initiatives—the preparation of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform, or through our ongoing leadership of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda¹. In this context, Spain—in collaboration with Finland—launched the *2025 Commitment*, aimed at ensuring the full and effective participation of women in all peace processes by 2025, with 10 specific commitments adopted by States and 5 petitions to the UN.

• **Humanitarian diplomacy**, maintaining our leadership of the agenda to protect medical missions in conflict situations²; of the children and armed conflict agenda, aimed at protecting schools, students and teachers³; of the fight against the smuggling and trafficking of human beings⁴, including human organ trafficking, which will be the focus of a new resolution during the current session; and of the efforts to respond to the humanitarian crises provoked by mass displacements of people, maintaining Spain's full commitment to the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration.

All of these undertakings will be complemented by Spain's humanitarian actions—in 2019 Spain is chairing the OCHA Donor Support Group—ODSG; our defence of and specialization in forgotten crises, and our call for greater coordination in the international community's response to these crises; as well as our commitment to challenges on gender, disability and diversity.

In this same area, Spain is stepping up its commitment to defending and promoting the Responsibility to Protect and to keeping it on the UNGA's agenda; and the fight against impunity, through the staunch defence of the work of the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the promotion of cooperation between the ICC and the Security Council (UNSC), as well as our support for efforts aimed at limiting the use of the veto in the UNSC where atrocious crimes are involved.

The commitment to human dignity requires continuous action, and that is why we are working to be one of the first countries to design a National Humanitarian Diplomacy Strategy that measures the level of internal compliance with the commitments adopted at the international level and leads to consistency in foreign policies.

¹ Spain promoted the creation of a Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network, and adopted a second Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in 2018.

² Spain promoted UNSC Resolution 2286 (2016) and is working for its implementation through a General Assembly Resolution to address aspects not covered by the Security Council.

³ During the current session, Spain will implement the conclusions reached at the International Conference on Safe Schools held in Palma de Mallorca in May 2019.

⁴ Spain promoted Resolution 2331 (2016) on this issue.

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Protecting and promoting human rights has continued to be the mainstay of our external action during the 2018-2020 period, in which Spain is serving on the Human Rights Council (HRC). We supported the decision that the Council should address the most serious human rights violations in specific countries through country resolutions. We have also contributed our knowledge and experience in those spheres in which we have an accredited track record. This is why we will continue to support the work of human rights defenders, and to promote the abolition of the death penalty, the full exercise and enjoyment of the rights of women and girls on equal terms—with particular focus on sexual and reproductive health rights and the fight against gender violence in all its forms; and the protection deserved by other vulnerable groups, such as LGBTI people, and people with disabilities. In broader terms, we will continue working to deliver on all social, economic and cultural rights, focusing particularly on the right to water and sanitation.

In all of the above, we will seek dialogue, cooperation and effectiveness, supporting the strengthening of Member States so that they may comply with their human rights obligations, guaranteeing their cooperation with the mechanisms of the Council, and supporting the participation of civil society organizations during the HRC's sessions.

This is why we are seeking to improve the effectiveness, and guarantee the legitimacy of the UN bodies entrusted with monitoring and protecting human rights. We will pay particular attention to the proper functioning of the HRC's Special Procedures and of the treaty bodies, to guarantee, in addition to their effectiveness, that they act with independence, professionalism and impartiality.

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Human safety and security

The above will not be possible without the creation of initiatives aimed at guaranteeing human safety and security in the face of global threats such as terrorism, armed conflicts, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, or new threats such as cyber-attacks. We will also continue to support the efforts of the international community against transnational organized crime and in the face of maritime insecurity.

- **Spain supports the UN's peacekeeping work**, but it is aware of the need to reform and strengthen the system, increasing its effectiveness, guaranteeing that the protection of civilians and, where applicable, the protection of human rights, forms an inherent part of all mandates. This is why we signed the Action for Peacekeeping Political Declaration promoted by Secretary-General Guterres, intended to set a new path for the mandates of peacekeeping operations. The President of the Spanish Government forms part of the Circle of Leadership

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to eradicate sexual abuse and exploitation in peacekeeping operations, an endeavour to which Spain is fully committed.

Spain has been participating in peacekeeping missions since 1989; since then more than 160,000 Spanish troops have been deployed in over fifty operations in four continents. Spain is currently the 33rd contributor of troops to the UN and the 10th largest financial contributor.

- **In the fight against terrorism**, Spain will participate actively in reviewing the Madrid Guiding Principles on Foreign Terrorist Fighters; it will continue to pay particular attention to victims, supporting the holding of an International Conference of Victims in the current session through the recently created Group of Friends of the Victims of Terrorism (chaired by Spain and Afghanistan). We have also been decisively supporting and financing the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism led by Under-Secretary-General Voronkov, as well as his Victims of Terrorism Support Portal. In the more general framework of the UN, there are other initiatives which are of particular interest to us, such as those relating to judicial proof, or the protection of infrastructure.

- **Spain is also fully engaged on to preserving and strengthening the international non-proliferation regime**, in particular the universal conventions included in the international regime for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD): the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention, and the Chemical Weapons Convention. During the current session, we will continue to work actively in the Disarmament Conference, recognized by the UN as the only permanent negotiating body for multilateral agreements on disarmament and non-proliferation. Spain remains committed to the full implementation of the JCPOA.

- Lastly, in coherence with the line set forth by the UNSG, we will **promote prevention** as a guiding principle for the UN's action in all its spheres. Given that mediation is a key instrument, Spain will continue to be committed, to mediation, by promoting and participating in different initiatives: co-chairing, together with Finland, the Group of Friends of Mediation in Brussels; the Initiative on Mediation in the Mediterranean (Med-Med Initiative); and, more broadly, our involvement in the Alliance of Civilizations.



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Support for people-centred sustainable development

Defending people's dignity means supporting their needs and aspirations regarding sustainable development. **Spain is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda**, designed for the global achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and that is why it underwent the Voluntary National Review in July 2018. In the current session, Spain will present a progress report on the achievement of the SDGs.

This internal commitment also involves international action to support other countries in reaching the SDGs, as well as achieving the global public goods. Thus, Spanish Cooperation, in its new Master Plan for 2018-2021, adopted the SDGs as its own Strategic Objectives, focusing its efforts on helping to eradicate poverty, build the resilience of people and communities, reduce inequalities, defend human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote inclusive economic growth, the conservation of our planet, and the fight against climate change. We will continue to promote the implementation of the outcomes of the major UN conferences and summits in different spheres, including the Agenda for Humanity, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and the New Urban Agenda approved at the Habitat III Conference.

One of our priorities is reducing inequalities and discrimination between countries and within countries, which undoubtedly constitutes one of the major challenges of the new 2030 Agenda. Spain focuses part of its cooperation efforts on working with human groups that are suffering multiple forms of discrimination, regardless of the country in which they are, and adopting a multi-dimensional approach. This is why we will also advocate paying particular attention to the challenges facing the Least Developed Countries, the Middle-Income Countries, and the Small Island Developing States.

Scientific evidence of environmental deterioration and global warming and its effects—desertification, displacement of people, increased poverty, scarce resources—lead Spain to consider that only through global action, of which the **Paris Agreement** is a paradigm, will we be able to counter these threats.

Hence **our full support for the Climate Action Summit**, to advance international political and economic commitment in support of the Paris agenda. Together with Peru, Spain leads the Coalition on Social and Political Drivers, and during the current session it has launched specific commitments involving health and climate, just transition, and gender and climate change.

Moreover, in a broader context, we are following with interest the negotiation process for a **Global Pact for the Environment** to harmonize the existing



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instruments and fill any possible gaps, and we will follow closely the UNGA's work on combating desertification, conserving biodiversity, and, in particular, protecting the oceans and seas.

The United Nations system reform and the revitalization of its bodies

These strategic lines are proof of the ongoing nature of Spain's commitment to multilateralism and its awareness of the need to continue perfecting the system.

Spain supports the necessary reform of the UN system advocated by SG

Guterres to achieve a UN that is capable of acting comprehensively and coherently, both on the ground and in its offices in New York, Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Rome and all around the world. Its aim must be to clearly integrate the three pillars (peace-development-human rights), strengthen preventive diplomacy, and eliminate overlapping and competition between departments in the Secretariat, as well as between the development system bodies and agencies, which, far from acting in coordination, are creating overlaps and dysfunction in common areas.

Spain has been one of the first countries to contribute to the two major trust funds supporting the reform of the development system—the Joint SDG Fund and the Special Purpose Trust Fund for the Resident Coordinator System—and will continue to do so during this session, as set forth in the Spain-UN joint declaration signed in March 2019 on the occasion of the visit to Spain by the UN Deputy Secretary-General.

The management system reform will continue to be a priority. Spain will strive to achieve an ambitious reform that ensures the system's efficiency, transparency, accountability and sustainability, in which each Member State contributes according to its capacity.

Spain also supports the revitalization of the UN bodies to improve their effectiveness. In this conviction, we will support efforts aimed at driving the revitalization of the **General Assembly**, through improving its working methods, including finding an adequate procedure for the selection and appointment of the UN Secretary-General.

Spain strongly believes that the **reform of the UNSC** is necessary. Our goal is to achieve an agreement backed by an ample majority of States, thus strengthening the Council's legitimacy. This comprehensive reform must be aimed at jointly resolving the five issues involved (categories of membership, veto, regional representation,

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size and working methods, and the UNSC-UNGA relationship) in order to achieve a Security Council that is truly representative, effective, transparent, accountable, and democratic.

By committing to inclusive multilateralism, during this session Spain will seek greater dialogue and interaction with civil society, making use of existing instruments, as well as better coordination with regional organizations, especially the European Union and the African Union.

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Other issues

- We will defend the principle of multilingualism at the UN, as an expression of its universal nature that fosters communication and tolerance among different peoples, and ensures the broadest and most effective participation of all of them in the Organization's work.
- Spain will continue to work towards the full and effective application of the UNGA's unequivocal position on the question of Gibraltar, which sets forth that the colonial situation of Gibraltar is incompatible with Resolution 1514 (XV), of 14 December 1960, on the right to self-determination; that the principle that must govern the decolonization process of Gibraltar is that of restoring the territorial integrity of Spain; that this matter can only be resolved through bilateral negotiations between Spain and the United Kingdom in which the interests of the colony's residents are taken into account; and that only the UN can decide when the decolonization process has been concluded, until which point Gibraltar will continue to appear on the UN's list of non-self-governing territories.
- We will continue to work to ensure that Spain is suitably represented on the UN bodies, Commissions, Committees and Executive Boards and increase the presence of Spanish nationals in management positions within the UN Secretariat and the rest of the UN system.
- Alongside our European partners, we will pay particular attention to outreach activities towards Member States and Spanish citizens, aimed at raising awareness of and enhancing the UN's work and the role that our country plays in the Organization.
- We will play a more prominent role in fora and debates organized by the UN in the following areas: sport, as a factor that contributes to peace and to the reduction of exclusion; sustainable tourism, as a crucial means of fostering peaceful coexistence, mutual relations and friendship between peoples; and

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Corporate Social Responsibility, as a way of obtaining profits responsibly through good governance, environmental management, and social action for development. In all these areas, Spain and Spanish businesses are recognized as global standard-setters according to the most prestigious international indices.

- In the framework of the Action Plan for Spanish Companies within the UN, we will work to increase the presence of Spanish businesses in all UN tenders.