Honourable Dean of Chapman University,
Respected Dignitaries,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and a great honour for me to be with you this evening and to have been awarded the Global Citizen Medal for 2004. I would like to express my gratitude to Chapman University for this honour and, in particular, the Dean of the University, Mr. Doti.
Finding myself among you today I cannot fail to mention someone who graduated at Chapman and who presided over the University's Board of Trustees for some 25 years. Ambassador Argyros is an excellent representative for your country in Spain. However, that is not all. He also represents the friendship that exists between our two nations and the range of principles we share. I would like to publicly express my heartfelt gratitude for all the work he has done to ensure that relations between the United States and Spain have been able to flourish in recent years.

It is only a few weeks since I left the Presidency of the Spanish Government. I do not know whether I have yet managed to achieve the tone of voice acquired by former presidents ... You will have to excuse my inexperience. I am still learning my new vocation.
However, I would like to tell you that I feel quite at home this evening; I feel that I am among friends. And I am also extremely impressed by the session I shared with students from the University this afternoon. In addition to enjoying a very pleasant time among them, I was struck by their interest in Spain and knowledge of Spanish history and its institutions and current situation, witnesses all to the high level of education they receive at Chapman University.

In this respect, I congratulate the educational community you have created here. At the same time, I am delighted to confirm that, thanks to young people such as these, the future of relations between our two countries is in excellent hands.

For any Spaniard who visits California, the mere sight of the names of your cities and towns, your streets and avenues, eliminates any geographical distance that may separate us.
Spain may be located thousands of miles away from California, but it is inseparably linked to this State – as it is to the entire American Continent – by centuries of shared history. We are bound by the presence of millions of people who keep the Spanish language alive. We are also united because we share the same values of freedom, because we share a belief in the absolute priority of human values.

Tonight I would like to present to you, quite briefly, the vision I have of my country, how I see relations between Spain and America and how I believe we should work together.
I have always believed in Spain and in its capabilities. Throughout the last eight years in Government I have sought to achieve an increasingly modern and advanced country. I have attempted to demonstrate that Spain is no exception and that it can progress in the same way as any other nation. All that was needed was a series of appropriate policies.
When I assumed responsibilities in Government in 1996, the labour force consisted of just over 12 million workers. Today the working population is over 17 million. This means over five million new jobs, half of all the new jobs created in Europe throughout that period and almost one third of all the jobs created in the entire history of Spain. Spanish gross domestic product is now 64 per cent higher than it was eight years ago. Our public deficit stood at 6 per cent of GDP in 1996. Today we have a surplus budget. Eight years ago, real interest rates stood at almost 10 per cent. Today they stand at 2 per cent. Today Spain, a country of 43 million inhabitants, is the eighth largest economy in the world.

We have demonstrated that in Spain, in the same way as in any other country, two things are essential in order to ensure progress: solid and stable democratic institutions and good policies.
I believe it is a simple recipe. There is no great secret, no underlying miracle, no startling phenomenon. What is more, I am convinced that what has worked so well in my country could work in any country in the world.

Here in the United States it may sound somewhat absurd to talk about stable democracy. You, alongside the United Kingdom, represent the secular continuity of institutions based on individual freedom. However, as you well know, institutional continuity is unfortunately not the predominant trend throughout the world.

Over the last few years my country has demonstrated that, through its own efforts, it deserves a place among the world’s leading democracies. We have not only demonstrated this through the economic and social progress we have made, but also by taking on our share of responsibility as participants in the community of shared values represented by the Atlantic Alliance.
Throughout my eight years in government I worked towards strengthening the Atlantic relationship. I did so first with the Clinton Administration and, subsequently, with that of President Bush. And this was because I do not believe this relationship should be conditioned by the political persuasion of the government of the day, but by a shared vision regarding our responsibility and the role we should play throughout the world.

Before I succeeded in my first general elections I resolved not to remain in Government for longer than eight years. There is no constitutional requirement to this effect in Spain, but I was and am convinced that this was a useful contribution to the political regeneration my country needed. Today I am no longer in Government, but I shall continue to work in order to promote the Atlantic relationship, a link that I believe is not only beneficial to Spain, but to Europe as a whole.
I am convinced that the work Americans and Europeans are carrying out together is quite indispensable. It is essential if the world is to be a freer, safer and more prosperous place. The more we realize this is the case, the more we shall do to close our ties and strengthen our alliance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our planet is not the idyllic place some may have thought it to be after the fall of the communist dictatorships and the end of the Cold War. The emergence of terrorism as the main threat to the free world was brutally illustrated by attacks such as those of September 11th 2001 in the United States and March 11th of this year in the capital of Spain.
2,900 people in America and 200 in my own country were murdered in those atrocities. We shall never forget them. And their memory will forever bring us strength. These events must always form the basis of our convictions, a reason for remembering the people who died and for understanding what the terrorists sought to destroy apart from innocent lives.

On that 11th September, my country wanted to show its solidarity with the American people. For decades we had been a nation plagued by terrorism. We understood the pain of the victims’ families. We understood the danger of allowing ourselves to be defeated by fear. We are ever aware of the dangerous temptation of believing that terrorism can be eliminated through concessions.
In this respect, I believe it might be appropriate to recall the words of Benjamin Franklin, when he stated that "those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety". They do not deserve them and, I might add, they do have them. There would be no freedom and no security if we allowed all the fanatics around the world to believe that planting bombs will enable them to achieve their political objectives.

I know terror. I have experienced it myself at close hand and I have always fought it. I have suffered it personally. I have seen many colleagues, friends and fellow countrymen fall. I have embraced many families of murdered victims and I have visited many casualties of these atrocities.
In our battle against terrorism, many images have remained engraved on my mind. One of them is of the prison officer, José Ortega Lara, who was kidnapped for 532 days. He was buried in a hole in which he could hardly even stand up. He was eventually freed by a brilliant Spanish police operation. His face and his body were eloquent witnesses to the pain and torture he had suffered. However, he had never given in. He always maintained his dignity and his strength of mind.

I have always been convinced that terrorism cannot be defeated by fleeing, only by fighting against it with all the instruments of the law. I have always thought it was a terrible error to seek justification for terror in causes such as poverty and injustice. The responsibility for crimes lies in the hands of criminals. Terrorists do not seek to make amends for any injustice, but to bring the tyranny of their fanaticism to free societies.
Convinced of these principles, as President of the Spanish Government I offered Spain's solidarity and help to President Bush.

I believe that the President has done what he had to do. He has assumed the leadership and taken difficult decisions. Some I have witnessed at close hand and I have supported, because I believed they were necessary. I share the principles he is defending and support the need to work for a world where aggressors pay for their crimes and dictators are unable to threaten others with impunity.
I offered him support in fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan, in Iraq or wherever else necessary. I do not believe an alliance can exist where one party gives and the other only receives. I understand alliances as being reciprocal relationships. Europe has received the support and security guarantees provided by the United States for years. Now that the threats come from other places and from other organizations I do not understand why some observers believe that it should only be of concern to Americans.
The battle against terrorism will be a lengthy one. We will go through bad times. At every stage we will hear the voices of those who want to commit the errors of running away, giving up or making concessions. However, we must remain firm if we wish democracy and our free way of life to survive. Terrorists want to impose closed societies based on compulsory habits and customs. We wish to see open societies in which each individual can choose his beliefs and habits. It is something worth defending.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Atlantic relationship, our alliance, is based on freedom. There is no other more noble cause for which to work and fight.

The extension of freedoms throughout the world must be an essential objective of the Atlantic Alliance nations. Freedom is a universal value. It also applies to the Middle East and the Iraq of today.
America owes its prosperity to freedom. Spain, thanks to the greater freedoms it has gained, has also progressed over the last 25 years like never before in its history.

President Bush said just this last November: "We believe that freedom - the freedom we prize - is not for us alone; it is the right and the capacity of all mankind".

I believe that our two nations must work together. Spain can cooperate with the United States in regions as important and as familiar to Californians as Latin America.
Our two countries have historical and cultural ties with this Continent that go beyond mere interests. We must also take into account that we are the two leading investors on the continent. We can both work alongside our Latin American friends in order to strengthen their institutions, enhance their political stability and open up trade.

I believe another field in which both sides of the Atlantic should cooperate is that of free trade. Some months ago I proposed the creation of a grand economic, financial and trade area encompassing Europe and the United States, to be established between now and the year 2015. I reiterated my proposal last 4th February in the United States Congress in Washington and today I shall repeat it once again, since I am convinced that it would contribute significantly to the prosperity and well-being of our peoples. A free-trade area that stretches from California to Poland is a dream we should not renounce.
However, the most important form of cooperation at the present time is that of working together for freedom.

Strengthening our ties is a means of working towards a better world, a world where aggression is not left unpunished, a world where the law reigns supreme, a world where every individual can progress as far as his efforts and ability take him. This is a world where governments have no other objective than to work for the freedom, security and prosperity of their peoples.

I believe these are ideals worth working for.

Thank you all very much.