

Speech for Partido Popular Convention

“Let’s open a new chapter for a better Europe!”

Thank you, President Casado, dear Pablo,

I was there when you were elected president. Since then, we have gotten to know one another very well — in Salzburg and Vienna and Andalusia, in Helsinki and in Brussels. But I have to tell you, *siempre es bueno estar en España*;

And you have already managed a big political success. Andalusia is now governed by Partido Popular. Congratulations to You have stopped socialist dominance in Andalusia after .. years. A defeat for Sanchez and a success for Pablo Casado.

The EPP has a proud legacy in Spain. Thanks to our leaders like Prime Ministers José María Aznar and Mariano Rajoy, Spain is a success story, Partido Popular created this. You all can be proud about your party, and about your country. It is a deep honour to address you today.

Pablo, you showed us in Helsinki your clear vision for Europe. The courage of your commitments. At the EPP Summits, you are proving your leadership at the European level. You have shown, you are ready to meet the challenges facing a new generation of strong EPP leaders. That is why I am sure you will become the next prime minister of Spain! Thank you so much for your support. I am proud to stand with you to lead the EPP and Europe to a new and even brighter chapter!

Dear Pablo, I would like you to know that in the Partido Popular you can be very proud of the work that your MEPs have developed during this term. Spanish MEPs from Partido Popular have been decisive, constructive and influential. They have defended the unity of Spain with their utmost conviction and strength. Thanks to the MEPs of Partido Popular, Puigdemont has never been topic for debate in the European Parliament. In fact,

Puigdemont has been living in Brussels for the past year and thanks to the work of your colleagues, has not once been granted access to any EU office.

You can also be very proud of the work conducted and accomplished by my friend, Esteban González Pons, our Vice-chair and Head of the Spanish Delegation in the European Parliament, in defending the unity of Spain and the rule of law in your country.

Dear friends, the Europe we have built together is under attack. Populists and nationalists, egoists: they want to destroy the dream of a Europe where we sit together as friends and compromise. We have a simple choice: egoism or cooperation. In Spain this old ghost of nationalism has a concrete name: the Catalonia question! We stand firmly for preserving the unity of Spain, for upholding the rule of law that Spain and that Europe are built on! There can be no cherry-picking: whether for the UK or Catalonia. The internal market, Schengen, the euro: all this is part of the Europe we have built together. The choice is clear: whoever tries to leave Spain leaves the European Union!

Today all 3 EU presidents are from the EPP. So, the first question is: How did we do in leading Europe?

We have done a good job! Commissioner Miguel Arias Cañete; the Secretary General of the EPP, Antonio López-Istúriz; Vice-President of the European Parliament Ramón Luis Valcárcel; together we did a great job!

Only two examples: In 2015 we had the migration crisis. A critical moment! And today? In the last 3 years, we have cut illegal arrivals by 85%.

Economically, we are growing. After the euro crisis in 2008, the EPP showed leadership. We created 13 million new jobs! Samaras and Kenny, Passos Coelho and Anastasiades; and yes, Mariano Rajoy in Spain! We did it, not the socialist!

We in the EU, led by the EPP family, have remained united during the Brexit negotiations, including on Gibraltar — because the Gibraltar problem is also a European problem, and we will stand with Spain!

What are people telling us about their concerns for the future? I give you some examples. We do not yet have a fully united EU. Millions of Europeans,

especially in the South and East, had to leave their homes during the crisis simply to look for work. We even lost a lot of skilled young people to the US. These young people are our future: we cannot afford to lose them.

That's why the EPP Group leadership met last spring in Valencia to discuss how to boost innovation. That's why we want to put forward a new investment and innovation plan to create 5 million jobs in Europe. It saddens me to imagine how many European families have been divided by the economic crisis: sons and daughters forced to leave. None of our families should have to be divided: our sons and daughters should not have to leave their homes to look for a better life.

The migration challenge is our most important issue. In the summer, I visited with EPP Prime Minister Boyko Borissov the border between Bulgaria and Turkey, where a 50-metre-high Turkish flag stands over the water: two continents meet there. Boyko has installed a few meters away a similarly huge Bulgarian flag to mark the external border of the EU. He reduced the numbers of illegal migrants nearly to zero. He showed me that it is possible to protect our land and sea borders if we have the political will.

The left cannot control our borders — we see this now in Spain. The right-wing populists do not respect migrants as human beings. Pope Francis was always reminding us on our Christian responsibility.

That's why: Our Europe feels responsible for helping people in need, but assures Europeans that nobody can cross our external border without a passport. Illegal migration has to be stopped.

We must also protect our public spaces. Just a few weeks ago, in the Christmas market in Strasbourg, we experienced another attack. I was in my office dealing with the Liberal Group leader about Brexit — when the phones started ringing. Shots had been fired. People were scared. One of our team was in the area. Yet again, an attack at the very heart of Europe. You know this reality all too well. Madrid, London, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Strasbourg — when terrorists attack one of our cities, they attack Europe as a whole. Thank God, our colleague was safe! Today we know that effective intelligence cooperation and data sharing across Europe can make a difference. The Europe we will build is a Europe that protects its people.

And we have seen, too, in Spain the effects of populism in being soft on the world stage — I refer to one of the world's worst crises of democracy, Venezuela. Podemos and the Socialists will not confront the dictator Maduro

— they have only empowered him! Maduro's Socialism has created the biggest humanitarian crisis in all the Americas. Dear friends, Europe must be united and firm. I want to protect *European values*, not Maduro's values!

Today's politics is not just about concrete political actions, but *identity*. What unites us in Europe? What is our foundation? What makes us feel European? Come with me for a trip across Europe: from Madrid to Tallinn, from Lisbon to Bucharest. The first thing you notice is that in every place you can find a Christian church — we share common roots! As the EPP, we are proud of the Christian identity of Europe; we must stick to our Christian values, to our European values, to our European identity.

Ultimately, dear friends, we must make Europe a truly *democratic* Europe. This Partido Popular convention in Madrid does exactly that — we are listening to our citizens! The EPP nominated me in Helsinki as the lead candidate of our political family for President of the European Commission. And yes, I want to be the next President of the Commission. If we are the biggest group in the next Parliament, we will secure a mandate for leadership. Let's give Europe back into the hands of the people. Let's start right here in Spain!

The choice is up to us. Spain is at a crossroads; Europe is at a crossroads. The EPP has a clear direction: no more fears, but hopes — no more egoism, but solidarity — no more divisive populism, but a common European future. So let's begin here: with the leadership of Pablo Casado, with a strong Partido Popular, and with a united EPP family! Together we will open a new chapter. Let's start today, right here in Madrid! ¡Una victoria del Partido Popular es una victoria para Europa!