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“THE SHANGHAI EXPO WILL HELP TO SHOW CHINA HOW MUCH MADRID OFFERS TO FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT”

BY: MADRID GLOBAL

WHEN DID YOU REALIZE THAT SPAIN NEEDED TO IMPROVE ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION?

The Framework Plan 2000-04 launched the first strategy on Asia Pacific. Subsequently, two more schemes have been adopted, one in each term, and the progress has been spectacular. I am privileged to have been responsible for the implementation of the last two schemes; for we believe there is no other alternative for Spain. Being in the best of terms with the Pacific basin countries is simply a historic obligation without which our own economic growth, our cultural dimension and our technological development would be impossible.

GENERALLY SPEAKING, WHAT HAS THE ASIA-PACIFIC PLAN 2005-2008 MEANT FOR SPAIN AND, MORE SPECIFICALLY, FOR MADRID? WHAT WERE ITS MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS?

The balance of the previous term includes numerous achievements, such as the opening of Embassies, commercial and cooperation offices, Cervantes Centers, Consulates and Technical Offices that represent, all together, a 40% increase of our presence and visibility in the area. At the same time, Spain has launched Comprehensive Market Plans for the most relevant countries in the region, we have carried out active policies in the area of culture, education, technological development and innovation, gender equality, dialogue among cultures and reaching out to citizens. And of course, we have tackled a number of challenges for our foreign security, such as the fight against terrorism, illegal immigration, piracy and organized crime.

“Between 2004 and 2008, the presence and visibility of Spain in the Asia Pacific region has increased over 40%”

In many of these fields, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation has cooperated actively with the City Council of Madrid in achieving these goals, such as the Japan Plan, and the initiative to

internationalize the city or the upcoming Shanghai Expo, to name a few. In turn, we have received the strong and effective support of the city of Madrid, which has translated into the opening of Casa Asia in Madrid, its active participation in Forums, Tribunales and Foundations and, in general, in all those sectors of activity for which we have requested collaboration and assistance.

THE ASIA-PACIFIC 2005-2008 PLAN HAS BECOME A MILESTONE IN THE PROMOTION OF RELATIONS WITH ASIA. WHAT ARE THE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE ONGOING 2008-2012 PLAN?

We must consolidate our achievements, but we also have to find new areas for action. This is the most vibrant area of the planet, with a bright future ahead, that is undergoing major changes and developments, and our country must adapt to them with flexibility and through innovative policies which take the new global conditions into consideration. The economic and financial crises, energy and climate change, the new multilateralism of the fight against intolerance and terrorism are just a few. In all of them the countries of the Asia-Pacific region play a crucial role.

“Asia-Pacific is the most vibrant and promising region of the planet, undergoing the greatest changes and developments, and our country must adapt to them with flexibility and innovative policies”

WHAT ARE THE MOST RELEVANT INITIATIVES? IS THERE ANY ONE CONNECTED WITH MADRID SPECIFICALLY?

The Shanghai Expo will absorb most of our activities in 2010, as well as the Spanish Presidency of the European Union during the first half of 2010. We are designing proactive policies for both, especially for the Expo, to achieve the greatest visibility, such as the Madrid Pavilion or our collaboration with the City Council in the organization of numerous events during the Spanish Presidency of the Union.



Los institutos Cervantes son un medio de difusión de la imagen internacional de España y de Madrid. En la imagen, el Rey Juan Carlos durante la inauguración de la sede del Instituto Cervantes en Tokio.

Photo: Cervantes Institute

In the long term, what I have described as “reaching out to citizens” has become one of the axes through which Madrid participates actively, such as the Forums with Japan and China, the Tribunes with India, Korea and the Philippines, the participation in the Foundations with Japan, China, Australia and India, the strengthening of Madrid in Casa Asia and, a possible new bid of Madrid for the Olympic Games, are just a few examples of this very active cooperation of which I feel very proud.

THE CITY OF MADRID, THROUGH ITS INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY AND ACTION OFFICE, MADRID GLOBAL, REPORTING TO THE DEPUTY MAYOR, PROMOTES ACTION IN ASIA AND CHINA. HOW DOES THAT FIT INTO THE STRATEGY OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT?

Madrid Global brings together the international dimension of the city of Madrid. My General Directorate has maintained a close and friendly cooperation with them from the start. It's the Mayor of Madrid himself who is behind these policies. And the Minister of Foreign Affairs himself supports and encourages them. We are implementing joint actions highly beneficial for both institutions. In fact, the internationalization of Madrid is part of the Plan for the area, as can be seen in the Asia Pacific Plan 3 launched by the Ministry in 2009.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN TERMS OF PROMOTION OF THE SPAIN AND MADRID BRANDS IN CHINA?

This is one of the areas where we are focusing our efforts. By themselves, proactive policies from both sides are pointless, unless they are well received by the productive and social sectors. China concentrates our greatest efforts in this area, due to the relevance of this country for Asia and the whole world. Accordingly, a major investment has been made in the Shanghai Expo, where the Spain Pavilion will convey the image of our country in all kinds of sectors, through the greatest investment we have ever made in a single event. And the City Council of Madrid seeks similar goals for its own brand, albeit with more limited resources.

“We are making a great effort to disseminate the brands Spain and Madrid in China; proactive policies are pointless, unless they are well received by the productive and social sectors”

HOW DOES THE PARTICIPATION OF MADRID IN THE SHANGHAI EXPO 2010 FIT INTO THIS STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPMENT?

The theme of the Shanghai Expo is the cities, which fits nicely with the goal of making the Spanish capital known in China, and promoting a better knowledge about its tourist and cultural offer and, more importantly, with everything Madrid has to offer to foreign investment and technological development.

DO YOU THINK THE BRAND SPAIN EXISTS IN ASIA AND CHINA? AND THE MADRID BRAND?

Yes to both. What we must do is to find the best ways to promote them. That's our intention and we will do our best to achieve that goal.



El Pabellón de Madrid en la Expo de Shanghai contará con dos estructuras reales de la capital española: la Casa de Bambú y el Árbol del Aire

Photo: Ayuntamiento de Madrid