

**Inauguration “Legacy: Spain and the United States in the Age of Independence,
1763- 1848”**

Your Royal Highness Infanta Elena and the Duke of Lugo,
Acting Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute, Mr. Cristián Samper
Director of the National Portrait Gallery, Mr. Marc Patcher
Director of the Smithsonian Latino Centre, Ms. Pilar O’Leary
Ambassador Carlos Westendorp,
Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre,
Distinguished Authorities,
Ladies and Gentlemen:

As Chairman of the US-Spain Council, I would like to express our satisfaction on opening this exhibition, here in the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

The US-Spain Council was created 10 years ago, in 1997, with the support of both governments to promote co-operation at a commercial, business, scientific and cultural level, and to create greater mutual understanding.

The Council is a non-government institution with representatives from the public administration and major cultural and academic organizations as well as leading Spanish companies with interests in the United States.

The relations between our two countries are by no means recent; rather, they have a long history rooted in the founding and independence of the United States of America.

Promoting the study and awareness of these historical ties is one of the Council's main goals.

The exhibition we are opening today is the culmination of a Council project which began last year in Madrid when, in co-operation with other institutions, we organized a series of lectures at the Royal Academy of History and an International Congress at the Casa de América, to mark the anniversary of Benjamin Franklin's birth.

At both events, we focused our attention on the relationship between the United States and Spain at the end of the eighteenth century, and the close ties between enlightened Spaniards and American patriots.

This exhibition aims to show the key role played by prominent members of political, economic, social, cultural and military life in Spain during the War of American Independence and their relationship with leading figures in the United States.

This historical fact is of great importance if we are to understand the ties between our two countries and, especially, if we try to appreciate the extent of Spain's help to the American patriots.

Such contributions are little known to the vast majority of Spaniards and Americans.

Finally I would like to thank the American and Spanish institutions that have contributed to this exhibition: The National Portrait Gallery, The Smithsonian Latino Center together with Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior (SEACEX) and the Fundación Consejo España-Estados Unidos.

And I would also like to congratulate the organizers of this magnificent exhibition, which I invite you all to enjoy.

Thank you very much.