The cohesion policy must continue on playing a relevant role in the future of Community policies. Spain has greatly benefited from the policy and is fully aware of its significance for improving the living standards and the future of all citizens. It is, at the same time, a reflection of an important dimension of the European culture, efficiently combining solidarity and economic competitiveness, and the efforts towards a sustainable development. The Spanish Government believes in the future of the Cohesion Policy and will bring its experience into the debates in a constructive manner.

The cohesion policy must offer evident results in terms of its contribution to EU economic growth policies. That is why it must largely follow the Lisbon process and more particularly, R+D+i investments, also keeping in mind aspects such as those linked to sustainability, especially renewable energies and energy efficiency. In relation to the foregoing, the regulatory framework of the policy and its institutional organization must take into account the existing differences between investments in infrastructures and intangible investments through a new legal framework that provides for the regularity and legality of said investments, in line with the political goals put forward by the Lisbon and Göteborg agendas.

EU least developed regions must remain the Cohesion Policy’s priority. The convergence process is long and needs persistent
policies with a long-term vision: throughout the history of the Union, phasing-out periods have always been applied to the least developed regions and this principle is to be maintained.

- Developed regions are innovation and communication centers; places where capital and work come together, as well as high-added-value services to companies, including research and development, which are necessary for the development of the entire Union. A requirement should be for Community funds to be managed through actions having an induced effect on other less-developed regions, either by undertaking innovating public projects or programs that may be replicated in other less-developed regions, or by allocating funds to actions having a significant overflow effect. The Cohesion Policy may also exploit the opportunities existing throughout the EU.

- Geography is important in cohesion policy terms. The recognition given to EU geographical areas and towns that have very special characteristics-- such as outermost regions, rural areas with low density of population, or towns bordering other continents, like Ceuta and Melilla-- by the Cohesion Policy for 2007-2013 should be reinforced.

- Towns play an important role as services, communication and innovation centers. The future Cohesion Policy must take this fact into account and towns must become important political actors in promoting and developing the policy.

- The good operation of management and control mechanisms in the Member States and the European Commission is essential for the policy to be successful. For such purposes, proceedings should be
simplified; also necessary are the legal safety of the agents managing community funds and the strict application of the association principle between Member States and the Commission, based on subsidiarity, including auditing and control activities, and a more flexible N+2 rule in terms of intangible investments, especially those seeking participation from the private sector.

Madrid, 6 February 2008