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SPEECH AT THE FIRST CORRIPIO-ALONSO FOUNDATION AWARD CEREMONY

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour to welcome you to the first edition of the Corripio-Alonso Foundation Awards.

Today, we are celebrating much more than the presentation of awards. We are celebrating a story of gratitude, roots and return — a story that finds its finest expression in this initiative: recognising those whose talent, dedication and example help to enrich and enhance Asturias.

We must not forget the journey that has brought us here, because every project grows out of a story and the reasons that give it meaning. Today, however, we want to look above all to the future. We want to turn our attention to the people and institutions whose work and dedication drive our society forward, enrich our culture, push the boundaries of knowledge, promote innovation, strengthen our social fabric and demonstrate every day that excellence remains one of Asturias greatest assets. They are the true protagonists of this evening. Through their work in fields as diverse as the arts, literature, research, social sciences, entrepreneurship, social welfare and sport, they help to build an Asturias that is more dynamic, prosperous and humane.

The outstanding response to this first call for nominations is a wonderful illustration of this. We have received numerous nominations, all of exceptional merit, reflecting the talent, creativity, entrepreneurial spirit, social commitment, intellectual rigour and pursuit of excellence that distinguish so many people and institutions in Asturias.

I must mention that the work of the judging panels has been particularly challenging. Selecting the award recipients from such an outstanding field of candidates has required careful deliberation and a great sense of responsibility. We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the members of the panels for their dedication, independent judgement, professionalism and the time they have generously devoted to this important task.

Our gratitude also extends to everyone who has made this celebration possible: those who have supported the project from the outset, those who have helped organise it and those who have worked so hard to ensure that this ceremony could take place. We would particularly like to acknowledge those who have contributed something just as valuable as resources or ideas: their enthusiasm. Projects intended to stand the test of time are built not simply on resources or ideas, but on people who believe in them, make them their own and devote their time, effort and passion to a shared cause.

I must also mention Susana, Andrés and Alejandro, who have embraced this project as their own from the very beginning. We would like to express our most sincere gratitude to them. If we are gathered here today, it is thanks to this collective effort and shared commitment, which have turned this initiative into a wonderful reality.

It is this same commitment to people, talent and excellence that lies at the heart of the five careers and achievements we are honouring this evening. Working in very different fields, these award recipients have shown us how dedication, perseverance and generosity can help transform society and keep alive the pride we feel in belonging to this land.

Allow me now to say a few words about each of our award recipients and to reflect on what makes each of their stories so special.

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Raitana Association for People with Disabilities

The work of Raitana deserves special recognition because, behind everything the association does, lies something that goes beyond any award: a daily commitment to people, their dignity, their independence and their right to participate fully in society.

Raitana embodies a form of social commitment that transforms lives and opens up opportunities. Recognising its work also means recognising all those who, through their everyday efforts, dedication and spirit of service, help to build a more inclusive and humane Asturias.

La Benéfica de Piloña

La Benéfica represents a wonderful way of understanding culture: as a space for meeting, participation and community-building.

By restoring the old theatre at La Benéfica, a place steeped in history, its team has transformed it into a vibrant centre for culture, creativity and participation — a space open to people and serving the entire community.

Its work demonstrates that preserving our roots does not mean looking only to the past; it means finding inspiration in them to build the future. La Benéfica has succeeded in turning its history into an opportunity, creating a lively, welcoming and accessible space where people come together, ideas take shape and culture becomes a driving force for change.

Javier Díaz Fernández

Known as Javier de Arroes, he has devoted his life to something whose value grows immeasurably with the passage of time: preserving the musical memory of Asturias.

For decades, he has travelled to festivals, gatherings and places throughout our land, recording the voices, sounds and stories of the people who brought our traditional music to life.

His extraordinary archive is far more than a collection of recordings. It is part of Asturias cultural heritage: a legacy that allows the voices of those who came before us to continue to be heard and discovered by future generations.

Recognising Javier de Arroes also means recognising the importance of preserving our identity and culture so that they can remain part of our future.

Jovellanos Forum Foundation

Some figures transcend their own time, their ideas continuing to raise new questions for every generation. Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos is undoubtedly one of them.

For decades, the Jovellanos Foundation has studied, preserved and disseminated his work. Its efforts reflect a commitment to keeping alive one of the most internationally renowned figures from our region and, above all, ensuring that his ideas continue to engage with the present.

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This work is rooted in the conviction that the ideas that have shaped our history should not remain confined to books, but should continue to shed light on the challenges of our time. Preserving this legacy is, at the same time, a way of safeguarding our intellectual heritage and carrying it forward into the future.

Dr Luis Fernández-Vega Sanz

Some professional careers transcend the boundaries of a particular discipline and become part of the history of a region. Such is the case of Dr Luis Fernández-Vega Sanz, whose dedication to medicine, knowledge and service has left a profound mark. Throughout an outstanding career, he has combined excellence in medical practice with teaching and research, making a decisive contribution to the reputation of ophthalmology in Asturias, both within our region and beyond its borders.

Behind the recognition of an outstanding specialist lies a man who has understood knowledge as a responsibility and medicine as a way of serving others. Over several decades, his dedication has not only helped advance eye care, but has also enabled him to train new generations of professionals and raise the profile of Asturias in the scientific community.

It is precisely this combination of excellence, commitment and a spirit of service that we find, in different ways, in all our award recipients.

To each of them, we offer our warmest congratulations and our deepest appreciation for their work, which goes beyond individual achievement to become an example for us all. Their stories remind us that behind every extraordinary career lie values worth preserving: the hard work that often goes unseen, perseverance in the face of difficulties, a passion for doing things well and a commitment to a region whose people continue to carry its name out into the world.

Each award recipient reminds us that great transformations do not arise solely from extraordinary gestures, but from the accumulation of years of work, quiet sacrifices and a steadfast determination to contribute to the common good.

Their achievements inspire us because they remind us that the progress of a region is built by people who believe in and work for it.

May God bless their lives, strengthen their commitment to serving others and ensure that the example we honour today continues to light the way for present and future generations.

Thank you to our award recipients for the example they set, and thank you all for joining us on this very special occasion.

May this evening remind us that talent flourishes when it is given opportunities, that excellence deserves to be celebrated and that there is no finer legacy than inspiring others to keep building a better future with enthusiasm and commitment.

Thank you very much.

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