

AEJ UK 50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER, London, 28th September 2018

By Miguel-Angel Aguilar, founder of the AEJ Spanish section and former AEJ Secretary-General

Dear William, dear David Haworth, dear colleagues,

First of all, congratulations on your 50th anniversary, that we are celebrating in such a splendid way since you have decided to share your party with representatives of other national chapters of the Association of European Journalists, and give us the opportunity of seeing first hand the difficult moment of the negotiations between Prime Minister's May cabinet and the European Commission about the terms for Brexit.

This gathering could veer towards memories and nostalgia for so many years gone. The Spanish section joined in 1981, 37 years ago, before our country signed the Treaty of Accession in June 1985. Since that Congress in Lisbon where we joined, we worked to organise the International Congresses in Oviedo, Madrid and Seville in 1991 and again in Oviedo. We also contributed for two years holding the General secretariat of the AEJ.

It was then that our common Association was formally registered at the Belgian Ministry of Justice. Years of working hard with David Howarth, with Athanase, with Kevin, with Carmelo, with Peter, with Otmar, with Juraj Alner when an international delegation went to Bratislava to defend the press freedoms threatened by Meciar's government. It was also when we strengthened our ties to UNESCO and the Council of Europe, something that William has worked hard to sustain and improve. We used to sing: *Its a long way to Tipperary, it's a long way to go...*

But we should rein in our feelings and think creatively about how to create an unshakeable compromise with our British colleagues so that our bonds born out of the defense of liberties that characterise the EU can remain tall and proud. While we look for the new generations that should ensure the continuity.