

Statement by President Artur Mas after signing the Executive Decree calling for the Consultation of November 9th

I have just signed the executive decree that will make it possible for all Catalans to voice their opinion on the political future wanted for our country on November 9th.

It has taken the mass mobilization of citizens and many months of work to arrive at this day, a day which we will remember forever. It was in November 2012 when the people of Catalonia, through their votes in an election with a high participation, chose a parliamentary majority in favour of the right to decide Catalonia's political future – a right we are now preparing to exercise.

Since then, four principles have guided this process: broad social majorities, political consensus, a constant search for dialogue and respect for legal frameworks.

- Social majorities, which are the fruit of the massive popular demonstrations [occurring over the past several years] and, above all, of the free and democratic expression of citizens at the ballots. Social majorities, which through their vote, have elected a Parliament with a wide political majority in favour of the right to decide to find a political solution for our future, a solution which all Catalans must be consulted on. This is the way in which democracies express themselves and political projects are born: through voting. It is the responsibility of democrats not to deny reality, to listen to the voice of the citizenry, expressed at the ballots and to carry out electoral commitments, which are the public's mandate which we must always seek to fulfil.

- Political consensus, recognizing Catalonia as a nation, as a source of sovereignty that deserves to be consulted on its own future. Political unity to agree on a date, a question and the legal framework to make the consultation possible. Political unity, within an ideological diversity, to build and generate consensus. A political unity which is contrasted with the unity of those brought together only by the will to deny, to say 'no' to everything and to present neither a project nor an alternative; to not do anything at all, and to not let anything be done; or even doing everything possible so as to not let anything be done.

- Constant search for dialogue to be able to discuss and negotiate. No one can deny that we have extended our hand to dialogue at every moment. We have been open to reaching agreement on the question, the date and the legal framework. We have been open, and will continue to be open until the last moment, to coming to an agreement on the conditions under which it would be possible to hold a consultation. What we cannot do, however, is fall into the constraints of immobility, dressed in a so called legality, and do nothing at all. What a contrast with democratic states that allow their nations to voice their opinions and decide their own future! Democratic states that talk and let their people speak out; that come to an agreement so their citizens may vote; and use the law to listen to the people and not to silence them.

- And finally respect for the legal framework. It is under the scope of the Law on Consultations approved by the Parliament of Catalonia on September 19th that I sign this decree so that Catalans will be able to voice their opinion on the political future they want for Catalonia. A law which is the result of the exclusive competency on consultations defined by the Statute [of Autonomy of Catalonia] which is currently in force. A constitutional and statutory law which we demand to be respected. A law

that protects the consultation, that should allow the Government of Catalonia to exercise its rightful legal, political and institutional powers which it was bestowed with. What better way to exercise this competency than by hearing the opinion of the people of Catalonia?

I have the honour of being the 129th President of the Government of Catalonia. An institution created in 1359 which, since the first presidency of Berenguer de Cruïlles, has reflected the Catalan people's desire for self-government over the course of nearly seven centuries. Throughout these seven centuries, only external impositions have caused the suspension of self-government. Self-government the Catalan people have always sought to reclaim. Our roots are deep, as is the strength of our feelings and our will to survive in the future. We want to decide, we want to decide our future for ourselves, and we now have the legal framework and are at the right moment to do it.

I would also like to use this solemn moment to deliver a message to all Spanish citizens: Catalonia wants to decide its own political future, peacefully and democratically. The bonds of brotherhood that bring us together with the other peoples of Spain are intense and deep. We have a long history in common, a history that will continue with the desire to construct a Europe of the 21st century together with each other. In a democracy, we must solve the challenges that lie ahead with more democracy. It should scare no one that somebody expresses their opinion with a vote at the ballots. This is our commitment, as this is the mandate that has been given to us by a large majority of Catalans through their votes in the last regional elections. Catalonia wants to express itself, it wants to be heard and it wants to vote. The Catalonia that wants to vote is the one comprised of seven and a half million people; diverse in their origins, many of them from Spanish lands, and also of diverse languages. This Catalonia, a land of crossings and warm receptions, a land of cultures which over the course of centuries have crossed this corner of the Iberian Peninsula and the Mediterranean Ocean, is the Catalonia that wants to vote. And once Catalonia has expressed itself democratically, we will find the necessary frameworks for dialogue in order to construct the future. A better future for all. This is our desire.

Following the signing of this executive decree calling the consultation, the Government will use all of its powers to make it possible for Catalans to vote. Now is the moment to contrast opinions, ideas and proposals. Now is the moment for each one of us to offer what they believe is best for our collective future and for everyone to say their piece. Now is the moment for each one of us to exercise our individual responsibility at the ballots, to decide what we think is best for the future, for *our* future, and for the future of our children and grandchildren.

In this great hour for Catalonia, I would especially like to remember all the generations of men and women who have struggled for our country and believed in it. Generations of Catalans, Catalans from here and Catalans from elsewhere who have made Catalonia their home, who for centuries, decades or only years have made Catalonia a land of democracy, respect, tolerance, wellbeing and harmony.

To those who will not see or experience this great hour for Catalonia, or to those who will see it and live it in a different way, this decree is a tribute to you, in thankfulness, because without you we would not have made it here.

And to all of those Catalans who make up the Catalonia of today and of tomorrow, this decree is the challenge that is upon us, to decide and construct our own future.

Today is the beginning of a new road that will represent a new chapter in the long history of Catalonia.

I trust fully that in the end, all will be well. And I ask all to help with this duty.

I would like to convey a message to the European leaders and the European peoples.

Catalonia, my country, is one of the oldest nations in Europe. Nowadays, it is a modern society composed of seven and a half million people, about 70% of them non-Catalan in origin.

As with all other nations in the world, Catalonia has the right to decide its political future. This is exactly the message that broad majorities of the Catalan people have expressed to the world every year since 2012, by organising huge peaceful demonstrations in the streets of Barcelona, our capital city.

Two years ago, I called early elections. My purpose was to know how large the social majority in favour of the right of self-determination was. The turnout was the highest in three decades. The outcome was clear: more than two-thirds of the members of Parliament were in favour of the right to decide.

As a consequence, today I called for a consultation to be held on November 9th to know the opinion of the Catalan people over sixteen on the issue of self-determination. The question was agreed on with the majority of the Catalan political forces in December last year.

We stand for democracy, dialogue and peace. We believe that political issues must be resolved by negotiation and civilised attitudes. And we know that democracy is the most civilised way to resolve difficulties between nations. This is our will and our commitment.

Long live Catalonia!