

Conference by the President of the Government of Catalonia “After the 9-N: time to decide, time to add”

Barcelona, 25th of November 2014

Today’s conference, for which I am ever grateful for your attendance, and the interest that has been demonstrated by your presence, responds to the need and the responsibility I feel, as President of the Government of Catalonia, to expose a reflection and a proposal to our citizens regarding the political process occurring in Catalonia. In fact, I will try to answer a principal issue that many have asked: where are we and where are we headed?

I will try to deliver a clear message, which does not pretend to simplify a very complex reality but instead, to find or propose possible solutions to this complex issue.

I will mention three premises, which to me are essential in order to understand what I will explain to you later on this evening.

- Firstly, I am speaking here tonight for myself as President of the Government of Catalonia. My reflections do not implicate anyone else. Therefore it does not implicate the Government or any political party.
- Secondly, the political process that began two years ago and which was centred on the Catalan nation’s right to decide on its political future must be completed. We have made progress, but not enough. In fact, the most difficult part of that journey is still ahead and it is filled with obstacles. Having advanced so much, it would not be understood if we suddenly stopped on this chosen path. It seems obvious to me that to navigate the political affairs of Catalonia in the coming years it is by all means necessary to know with exact precision whether there is a clear majority in Catalonia in favour of the establishment of a new State and to act accordingly with the outcome chosen by the citizenry. Without this, it would not be possible to govern in Catalonia in light of the growing need for a harmony and connectedness between citizens and institutions. I insist, everyone, without exception, is interested in democratically completing the political process taking place in this country, whether it be the ‘Yes/Yes’ voters, the ‘Yes/No’ voters or those voting ‘No’.

- Thirdly, even though my intervention here today does not necessarily include concepts such as productive models, creation of wealth, welfare, societal models, civility or culture, Catalonia's international projection, democratic quality or institutional regeneration, it must be made very clear that the ultimate goal of this political process is to make a better Catalonia at the service of the people living here. A better Catalonia means a more prosperous, just, generous, more cultured and civil, a cleaner and a more transparent Catalonia, a country with more dignity and where it is universally respected. Those of us who are experiencing this process for the right to decide with more passion, commitment and conviction must be especially careful not to confuse the instrument with the objective. This objective is none other than the objective to build a country which is worthwhile. That through its modest size may it contribute to the progress of all of humanity. Today we can proudly say that with its exemplary civility, with its capacity of mass mobilization and its democratic pulchritude, the Catalan society is already contributing to the creation of a better world.

Hence, you will not find many other examples around the globe where popular movements have the same commitment, dedication and constructive spirit as the one found in Catalonia. The message is very strong: a nation can aspire to freedom through fraternity, without an instance of violence and with a smile despite having to constantly overcome the hostile attitude of the State to which it belongs.

Established these principles, I will attempt to answer the first of the major issues: where we are.

To begin with, I can tell you that the majority of the Catalan society and the Spanish State are moving in different wavelengths. While Catalonia is asking for better and more self-government, and more capacity for making its own decisions, the State is executing a process of political re-centralization without any contemplation. The State cannot formally erase the autonomy, but it is continually leaving it with less substance. This involution affects all the Autonomies, but in Catalonia it is being experienced in a different way. Consequently, it is being reacted to differently.

It can be said that Catalonia's determination to seek more self-governance is not the product of a passing outburst, but it is deeply rooted in its history. This year, as is well known, marks the three hundredth anniversary since the loss of Catalonia's own institutions and liberties; and the hundredth anniversary since the first attempt to regain them with the creation of the Commonwealth of Catalonia. This constant aspiration for self-government is part of our collective history and it is just as worthy for the Catalonia of the 20th century, made up of two million people and with little immigration, as it is for the current Catalonia with seven and a half million citizens whose family origins are mainly from outside of Catalonia. Therefore, one can affirm

with absolute rotundity, that the longing for self-governance is consubstantially part of the Catalan identity, part of our mentality and entrenched in the way we are.

Nevertheless, despite this clear association with self-government, it does not completely explain where we are today. In fact, in addition to this association with self-governance, one must take into account the Spanish State's vow to proprietorship as a constant in our contemporary history. This was the case with the Commonwealth of Catalonia and the Regionalist League of Prat de la Riba and Cambó one hundred years ago, the same with the Catalan Republic and the ERC of Presidents Macià and Companys only eighty years ago. This was also the case with the recovery of the Government of Catalonia and the return of President Tarradellas, almost forty years ago, the two decades of the CiU governments and President Pujol, the two tri-parties of President Maragall and President Montilla and it has also been the case in the two years of government which I have had the honour of presiding over.

In these last two years, and for the first time in one hundred years, these two historic constants, Catalan self-governance and Spanish State proprietorship, do not necessarily have to coincide. And I say *necessarily*, because this is a decision that the nation of Catalonia as a whole will have to take.

What has happened, therefore, that can explain what is occurring for the first time in so many years. I think there has been one principle cause and two complementary ones.

The main cause is the State's behaviour. Short and simple, the State has failed the majority of Catalans and it continues to do so.

The two other complementary causes are democracy and globalization.

Democracy has left us without any fear because it impedes the use of violence and gives us the strength we did not have throughout so many years. They can intimidate us, put pressure on us and mistreat us, but only up to a certain point.

Globalization, on the other hand, knocks down and diminishes borders, perceptual one as well, making us understand that we cannot face the demands and requirements of the 21st century with the mentality and clichés of the past two centuries.

Nonetheless, I was saying that the main cause of what is happening is due to the Spanish State's behaviour.

I want to leave it very clear, that since the recovery of democracy, the State has only been helped by Catalonia and by Catalanism. Since the political transition, there has been no decisive issue in the Spanish State in which Catalanism, with its different accents, has failed to positively contribute and, in some cases, it has done so in a decisive manner.

This State, is the same State which we negotiated with to agree on a new Statute of Autonomy, passed by the Catalan nation through a referendum in the summer of 2006 and which was fulminated by the Constitutional Court in the summer of 2010 after a pitiful sense of partiality, an extremely harsh campaign against it, with a collection of signatures by members of People's Party, then in opposition, and an ostentatiously inhibited Socialist Party, then in Government.

A State which during several months of 2012 was offered a Fiscal Pact as a solution after the failure of the statutory approach, and did not even sit at the table to talk about it, despite the reiterated warnings of caution on the increasingly disaffection and mental disconnect of a large portion of the Catalan population toward the Spanish State.

A State which underestimated the first vast mobilizations of a significant part of the Catalan society in favour of the right to decide and which continued to ignore them as they gradually gained in strength and numbers.

A State, which praised the silent majority which did not appear in the demonstrations but, at the same time, shunned the parliamentary majority in favour of the right to decide. A majority, which by the way, emerged from parliamentary elections held two years ago, which I advanced precisely to ascertain the strength in Catalonia to initiate this chosen path. I have always put the ballot boxes before making any big decisions.

A State which, a year ago, was offended when very different political parties in Catalonia, against all odds, were capable of agreeing on a date and a question for the consultation. It was offended because it was not warned of this accord, but it was the very same State, much before knowing the agreed question, that left no option to agree on anything that had anything to do with the right to decide.

A State which this April, shut the door once again on the Catalan parliamentarians who defended an agreed referendum and even offered the possibility of re-opening the debate on the date and question.

A State which this summer refused a non-binding referendum, straight after it was passed in a law and approved by Parliament with 107 votes in favour out of 135.

A State which did not have enough with suspending the Decree, which I signed, calling for the Catalan population to vote on the 9th of November, but which also made the Constitutional Court suspend the participative process designed in lieu of the consultation.

A State which says no to everything, which does not act or let anyone else do anything and attempts to frighten and scare the weak and vulnerable and opposes legality with legitimacy, instead of making them compatible. A State which conducts political affairs through the Courts and puts pressure on the public prosecutor's office

to disable, fine and even deny members of a Government their liberty for the sole crime of listening to the people and doing everything possible to put forward ballot boxes. And, let it be known, if it is necessary, we will do it again, without fear of unjust prosecution.

This is where we are now.

At this stage there are two questions which arise, which I believe require an additional reflection on my behalf

The first is whether we can expect a change in attitude by the Spanish State so that the aspirations of the Catalan majorities can be met.

The second is if Catalonia is capable of following the path until achieving its right to decide and implementing the outcome that would derive from it, this being the constitution of a new State.

Regarding the first question, I am personally quite sceptical regarding the possible reaction of the State. I have had enough experiences to not hope for much from a State that thinks, feels and acts very differently than the majority of the Catalans. The deep cultural, historical, economic, emotional and family roots that exist between Spain and Catalonia do not translate well nor do they have political equivalency. The reason is well known: there is no treatment of equals and, instead, the hierarchical and subordinate relationship has taken its place, from top to bottom. It is not too difficult to see who is on top and who is at the bottom, who rules and who has to obey, who dictates and who must take note.

In this unequal relationship, there is a well-known way to uphold the current situation: be good, help out, complain a little bit but not too much and accept, *de facto* and *de jure*, the hierarchy, thereby resulting in the famous Ortegúian "*conllevancia*". In fact, this situation is not only the one we have lived in for the greater part of history but it has also been the one present in the last thirty five years.

In these brief periods of time, like the current ones, where Catalonia rises to the ambition of a national project, where it intends to be treated as an equal, as any true nation would and where it wants to compare itself to other nations in the world from the perspective of the right to decide where nations like Quebec and Scotland are recognized, this "*conllevancia*" ceases to be and is replaced by "harassment and demolition". This is where we are now. The old and familiar ghosts of intolerance and prejudice come out of the State, and instead of winning back Catalonia it becomes indifferent to even trying to convince it to stay.

Despite my scepticism, protective element against ingenuity or excess confidence, I know very well that, as President of the Catalan Government I must always leave the possibility of an eventual change in the State's attitude. I have done so thus far and I will continue doing so. My scepticism regarding the State's capacity to change its attitude in a positive way towards Catalonia will not be obstacle in my observation of a new reality, if it truly occurs. Scepticism doesn't mean intransigence.

A change in attitude by the State, and not just false promises, could come in two different ways. One, highly doubtful but equally desirable, would be a negotiated referendum with agreement, as was the case in Britain or in Canada. This is to say 'Yes' to the right to decide, 'Yes' to the right to self-determination and 'No' to an automatic independence without negotiation. This would be the ideal state of affairs, however, as things currently stand, it unfortunately seems more like science fiction.

The second way, which is more probable, but still unlikely at this moment in time, would be that the State make a proposition to face the conflict with Catalonia. It seems that there are more and more voices in Spain that express this view. Some may think that after the municipal elections in May and the general elections to the Courts or "*Cortes*" in autumn of 2015, these voices will put forward their principles. In this respect, I am also sceptical. If this State could not accept a cut down version of the Statute, how could it, therefore, accept a constitutional reform which would answer the aspirations of the Catalan majority? The State would have to have make many concessions, and I fear they are not quite used to it yet. Nonetheless, if this proposal by the State saw the light of day, my position as President has been and would remain the same: listen to the proposal, defend our position with the maximum consensus possible and put forward the condition that the final decision would rest with the people of Catalonia in a direct vote. We cannot just return to our offices now as if nothing happened. The Catalan people deserve better.

The second question which I referred to moments ago and which also deserves a comment is whether Catalonia will be able to continue on its chosen path through its own means. In this case, my belief is that it can. On November 9th, the country proved it could. We saw an outstanding and splendid culmination of the great social mobilizations. It also represented another feat: Catalonia's maturity as a nation, which doesn't simply recognise itself as a nation but also acts as such. We know that reaching maturity does not necessarily mean emancipation, but it always means a change of status. On November 9th, Catalonia changes its status because it broke the *status quo*; it overcame it by rising above it. I said it then, in front of more than one hundred journalists, that night Catalonia saw itself in the mirror and liked what it saw.

The day after, we Catalans had the same challenges and problems: high unemployment, poverty, inequality, precarious public finances, today is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women; and we still have the same instruments and scant resources to face these problems. But on the 10th of

November Catalonia became a freer country and therefore more sure of itself. We became more prepared, both in mind and in spirits, to build our future and reach our full potential.

However, we must learn the lessons from the path that led to November 9th. We must identify the weaknesses we have better and learn from our mistakes when we make them.

Allow me to make a brief reflection in this regard. In Catalonia it has been demonstrated that there is a winning formula. The formula is as follows: Organized and mobilized civil society + committed public institutions + a clear and shared objective = national success.

Let us apply this formula to the 9-N: Volunteers and entities + the Government of Catalonia and local Administrations + exemplary civility + ballot boxes = national success.

Explained in this way it can even seem simple. But the complexity of actually doing it is enormous, because, among many reasons, we are not talking about science and if it goes wrong, the combination of the human condition and politics can end up being volatile. We must be very conscious of the parts in this formula. Not one can fail. If one fails the success would not be the same. The formula must work entirely if Catalonia is to follow and complete the chosen path. When this happens, the effect it has is tenfold, i.e. the 9-N.

- Firstly, we should not to confuse the role played by civil society and public institutions. Both are equally decisive and absolutely complementary but they must have well-defined outlines and not overstep each other.
- Secondly, in highly complex processes, the detail cannot alter so it becomes the main affair. In a more colloquial language, we cannot waste energy, which we do not have, in worrying about smaller details. In Catalonia there have been eternal discussions on issues that at the moment of truth are absolutely minor, secondary or irrelevant. We must get straight to the point and identify what is essential. We must separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak.
- Thirdly, we must act courageously which does not mean acting fearlessly. If we do not fear anything it can end up making us unconscious of our actions. Courage consists of overcoming fear, which doesn't mean not having it. Returning to a more colloquial language, an excess of nerve can be equally counterproductive as a permanent complication, an enduring contraction that would result in inaction. In Catalonia there are two concepts that are very much our own and are not easily translatable: sagacity and rapture; a good and reasonable proportion of the two enables us to go forward in firm and sure steps.

- My last reflection regarding this issue is that ideologies should not take precedence over our ideals. Very often, an excess ideology can hide a lack of ideals. Just as when one excessively worries about his or her own image it can, at times, affect their judgement. Wanting to appear decent is human and legitimate, it happens to all of us. We want to appear decent in front of our own people. Similarly, there are times in a country where the shadow of an ideology must be faded to allow the light of a common ideal to shine.

It is my understanding that, Catalonia is now in a one of those moments in time that do not occur very often and we must take advantage of this opportunity. There are times when one does not solely work for an ideology, not even for a single generation, but for many at the same time. Politics is highly framed to work exclusively for your precise area, your specific period in time, for your party, and for the present. There are times, however, when this the period turns into a time for everyone and the period is not just the present but it is also the past and the future. That is to say, the present time is the hinge that connects what many people of the past have done with what many people will do in the future.

It is in these moments where we must act with generosity, and with a lot of it, if it be necessary.

This is the analysis of where we are. The other big question that many people will ask is where we are going. Before we dwell more in this unknown area, although a little less unknown than two years ago, I would insist on the first premise of my speech: what I am telling you here today, this route-map included, only implicates myself, as President of the country. It must be understood, therefore, as a calm and positive reflection, as a commitment to take the best decisions and join forces as much as possible.

To know where we are going, I briefly make reference to what I stated in the General Policy debate held in our Parliament in September of 2013, more than a year ago. I stated that:

We want to hold a consultation in agreement with the State or, at least, within a framework of tolerance and, therefore, absent of legal conflict.

Adding:

If, despite our unequivocal desire for dialogue and negotiation, no agreement is made with the State, as President I am ready to use as all the democratic and legal instruments at my disposal to facilitate the people of Catalonia's right to freely decide on their future as a country, including calling elections. It is not the scene I desire, nor is it the best. However, I am willing to reach this point, as a last resort, if they intend to silence the voice and impede the vote of the people of Catalonia.

We are exactly at this point. The State aims to silence the voice and impede a vote for the Catalan people to decide on the political future of their country. And not only that, but the state intends to restrict, fine and, if it can, imprison those who want to listen to the voice and facilitate our citizens' vote.

The time has come, therefore, to use the only instrument that we have to carry out the consultation which we have been denied. I have no issue, no inconvenience whatsoever in saying that is not the best of instruments, but there is none other. When pursuing a great objective, and the right for a nation to decide on their political future is exactly that, you must be willing to make use of all tools available. Of these, almost all of them depend on the State's willingness: referendum, non-binding consultation, tolerated consultation. However, the elections depend only on us. And they are legal by definition. They cannot be suspended or invalidated... well, that is unless someone does not do the unthinkable.

Assumed, therefore, the decision is made to use the elections as the last and only mechanism available to know the public opinion on whether Catalonia should be constituted as a State or not, the question that should follow is what kind of elections should be held. Some terminologies often go beyond the grasp of most people: they call them plebiscitary, constituent, binding, etc. All of these definitions have a political base, but they do not respond to any legal status. Needless to say, when it comes to elections, and especially on the issue of Catalonia's political future, it makes no sense to be separate them from the existing legal framework. You have always heard me say, that if it depends on me, there would be consultation, and it would be legal. I could express myself with such clarity because I always kept it in mind, that if there was no other choice, the election itself would become a consultation.

Therefore, what kind of elections are we talking about? To answer this question it is very important to have three concepts in mind:

- The first would be that the Parliamentary elections in Catalonia would be within the framework of the current legislation. The discussion on whether it would be legal or not would cease to be. The alleged lack of legality is Spain's main argument in trying to prevent the Catalan consultation. Well, when elections are held in accordance with the legality of the State, there is no illegality possible.
- Secondly, it would be the political parties and the civil society groups who would turn these ordinary elections into the consultation Catalonia has, thus far, been denied.
- I will only call for early elections if the previous condition is fulfilled, that is to say, if the purpose of the election is to carry out a consultation. If they are to be used to change the Government or to change the composition of the Parliament, the elections would be held at the end of the legislature, in other words, at the end of 2016 after the four years of the legislature.

With the concept of an election/consultation and the procedure that would follow it made clear, I will try to answer one main question: what is the most decisive thing about elections or a consultation? In my opinion it is the result. Why? Because it reflects what the voters choose.

The result, and nothing else, is what determines whether there is a majority in favour of a particular issue, as well as the size or extent of this majority.

Allow me then to introduce an additional reflection that seems equally important: the result is what is most important and it should be clear and very understandable. It cannot lead to debate about what was voted on, nor can it give any excuses to confuse the interpretation of its results, whether at home, or anywhere else in the world. To do it correctly, everyone should know what the people of Catalonia have voted. And this principle has led us to do things in a certain way.

In Catalonia, it should be made very clear that the existing centres of power, and therefore constituted States, will not wait with open arms for the emergence of a new State of Catalonia. For them, this scenario is a problem insofar as it means a direct confrontation with Spain, an established power in the world with a history that goes back several centuries. My aim is not to generalize with this statement, as it would not be fair and would be too simplistic. Over the past two years, I have personally observed that here are countries which understand and respect our right to decide as a nation. And I especially found that almost no one understands the immobility of the Spanish Government in light of this great democratic and State challenge which Catalonia poses.

The reason I am explaining all of this is to clarify a concept which will be crucial: we cannot give not even the slightest excuse for the outcome of the election or consultation to be misinterpreted and, therefore, debated and finally not accepted as valid.

If Catalonia, through a sufficient majority of the population, wants to join the collective composition of States it must follow the rules of admission. And the first rule that we cannot skip is to ensure, in a clear manner, that there is a social majority at the polling stations, and secondly, that we have followed the legal procedures to achieve it. All this is possible, but only under certain conditions which I will discuss tonight.

The first issue is that the question or programme must be a clear one. It cannot leave room for debate on what is being voted. We cannot have a clear result if the question is not clear itself.

To determine what it means to have a clear question or program, we must go to the root of the problem, which is no other than to know whether the people want Catalonia to become an independent State or not. Therefore, the question should be exactly that, and nothing else.

The difficulty we will find with this approach is that not all political parties will want to accept that the Catalan Parliamentary elections should revolve around this issue. Some parties will want to talk about other issues, and this will be reflected in their electoral programs. They will be in their right to do so. But if we all do the same, then the elections will not have a clear result, and this is what we need to solve this underlying issue. If we all talk about our electoral programmes about issues that should be discussed in ordinary elections, then how can we say that the issue of whether Catalonia wants to be State or not is resolved? Let us remember that the purpose of having early elections is to have the consultation. Not for any other reason. For all other issues, certainly the very important ones, the elections will be in two years time, but not now.

The conclusion of this first issue is clear. As it is legitimate that some political formations present their candidature at the parliamentary elections with a program which would cover other national issues, we must ensure that other groups present their candidacy with a program that if it were to obtain a majority, may that majority imply and endorsement by the Catalan population for Catalonia to become its own State. This is also legitimate, and much more so, considering other attempts of achieving this have been thwarted. Since Spain does not behave like the United Kingdom or Canada, we can only do it this way, which is not the best way, but it is the only way possible. In the form of early elections, with a clear program that focuses on the main goal, and with the aim of obtaining a majority in Parliament to convey a clear and understandable outcome seen worldwide.

The second issue to resolve is the part which would bring about most discussions and speculations. One single list or several? At first glance, it is evident that, as with all elections, there will be many lists. As I said before, there will be those who will negate the use of elections for the purpose of a consultation on the political future of Catalonia. Therefore, the discussion of a single or several lists is circumscribed to the scope of those who defended the 'Yes-Yes' on November 9th, including the parties who were not opposed to the second 'Yes' and who would like to be included in the list.

Well, in my opinion, and I reiterate that this is only my personal opinion, if there is more than one list in favour of the 'Yes', it should be a list that on its own obtains an absolute majority in the new Parliament. The question is not how many there are. The crucial issue is that the list has enough strength, critical mass, enough popular acceptance, enough of a majority so that it can be ubiquitously understood that the 'Yes' has won the consultation carried out in the form of elections. It is also evident that after the elections, agreements can be made with other parties which have obtained representation, but always from the legitimacy of having achieved a direct majority in the polls.

The third issue is whether this traditional and usual dynamic would allow the parties to implement an operation of this scale. The truth is that seems difficult, because,

objectively, it is. Very often, parties have and defend conflicting interests; this is why they are called parties, because they represent a part of everything. They mirror the pluralism of our society.

However, what is difficult is not necessarily always impossible. November 9 is a good example. There was a moment in mid-October when all seemed lost. But it was not so. We had to keep faith and believe that things could turn out well and risked it all. All or nothing. Prove to others and ourselves, that because something is difficult it does not mean it is impossible. And when the boat shudders, which it did, there are always people prepared to row hard, to avoid capsizing at sea and to reach the harbour with the crew unharmed. These people are essential, and fortunately, we have many of them in Catalonia, more than we think.

And so, in the face of this immense challenge we have before us, one which appears so rarely throughout history, the question is whether we will be able to compose a sufficiently broad, transversal and strong list with a clear enough programme, to obtain a majority in Parliament and substantiate, before the entire world, that Catalonia wants to become a new State? Will the parties, not all of them obviously, be able to set aside their differences and join forces just this once and only for a short period of time? Hence the title of tonight's conference: "*Time to decide, time to add*".

For this conjunction, this union, this joint effort to happen I propose a method that serves a double purpose. Firstly, to overcome the partisan dynamic and, secondly, to protect the future of the Catalan parties which will still be necessary in the next stage our country will enter. The method through which I am to serve this double purpose is as follows:

- First, configure a list which includes the support of the political parties wanting to be represented.
- Second, the list would be composed of a broad spectrum of representatives from civil society, professionals and specialists in key areas for the creation of a State in Catalonia, and individuals proposed by the political parties involved.
- Third, all those involved deriving from civil society and the majority of those proposed by the political parties –perhaps not all - would accept not repeating their candidacy in the subsequent elections. Therefore they would present their candidature only once, as an act of service to their country.
- Fourth, the parliamentary mandate would be short, a maximum of a year and a half, from the establishment of a new Parliament and the election of the President of the Government of Catalonia.

- Fifth, in subsequent elections, the parties that would have given their support to this list can obviously present their candidature again as separate parties.
- Sixth, the campaign would be financed externally and not by the political parties, through a foundation or a non-profit organization set up specifically for this purpose.
- And seventh, any public funds that would be given to this list as a consequence of the electoral results would be distributed exclusively among the political parties involved to assure their financial viability in the immediate future.

This proposal intends to unite the parties, just once, for a short period of time, to win the consultation, to constitute a State, and preserve the parties in the future, which is also our obligation. When I spoke of generosity, this is what I was referring to.

The fourth issue, which to my understanding, requires a specific proposal, is what should the new Parliament and Government do if the proposed list obtains an absolute majority in the elections that are to decide the political future of Catalonia. I will remind you that in the above scheme the new Parliament and Government would have a maximum span of eighteen months to carry out their duties and achieve their goals.

According to my criteria, these basic functions would be as follows:

- First, if the ‘Yes’ vote wins, they should inform the Spanish Government, the European Union and the international community that Catalonia’s intention is to create the necessary institutions to form its own State through the mandate received at the polling stations.
- Second, propose formal negotiations, if necessary with the assistance of external mediation, to agree on the terms of the constitution of the new State in order for them to be fair, respectful and beneficial to all parties involved.
- Third, finish preparing the State structures to ensure the efficient transition until the constitution of the new State is established, as well as the necessary legislative framework using the reports prepared by the Advisory Council on the National Transition presented in the White Paper, published in late September.
- Fourth, initiate a process of civil participation during these eighteen months where the citizenry, the associations and municipalities can prepare the groundwork for a future Catalan constitution, to be approved in the next legislature and at the discretion of the established political parties

who would then represent the Parliament. The National Alliance on the Right to Decide may be a good point of reference.

- Fifth, ensure a parliamentary majority for the Government to warrant a normal governance of the country, the regular functioning of the Administration and the provision of public services whilst in office.
- And sixth, at the end of the eighteen month mandate the Parliament and the Government would carry out the new Catalan elections which would then be constituent and would coincide with the vote to determine the political parties. A referendum would be called for so that all citizens of Catalonia would be able to decide on the final proclamation of the new State with the full knowledge of how the Catalan State would establish itself in the European and global contexts. Through this unique double proceeding, elections and referendum, Catalonia would, once again, exert its sovereignty with the endorsement of the ballot.

Doing it in this way, in my opinion, we will have the best possible guarantees in an international context, which will be decisive if we are to join the alliance of States which, again, has its own rules that must be respected.

The fifth and final issue I wanted to comment on to complete this proposed route-map is the matter regarding the timing of the process. Up until now, I have made reference to the 'what' and the 'how'. Now we must deal with the 'when'.

You will understand that we did not invite you here tonight to discuss the exact date of these elections. Now that no one is listening, and if you can keep a secret, I must confess to you that not even the person who can decide on the matter knows when this will be...

This being an important issue, if we want to do things correctly, the timing must come as a result of knowing exactly what needs to be done and how it should be done.

Imagine that a boy or a girl wish to attain a driving license, and are old enough to do so. If he or she schedules a day to take the exam but arrives to the test without being prepared for either the theory or the practice, they will not achieve their goal and remain without a license, and therefore will not be able to drive. Conversely, if they have signed up to take the exam and have pay the cost but lie around and do not prepare themselves for the test, they will have to sign up once more and pay the fees again. The case is more or less the same in Catalonia; we cannot lie around and be idle, instead, we must prepare ourselves well as we can for the exam.

In practical terms, what does being prepared mean? The following are my views on this subject.

- Establish the ‘what’ and the ‘how’. That is to say, knowing that if elections are called they should only be for the purpose of carrying out a consultation on the political future of Catalonia and nothing else. Establish how this will come to be and what we plan to defend.

In short, solve the issues that I have raised and which I have tried to give clues and proposals on.

- Complete the task to ensure the victory of the ‘Yes’. A consultation should be carried out in the attempt to win it. After it takes place you can either win or lose, this part of the democratic game. But the attempt must be made in efforts to win it. In this sense, the N-9 provided information and clues if we consider that the participation would almost certainly be the highest we have ever had.

Furthermore, the main issue on the timing of the events, which I mentioned moments ago, is that the whole process should be completed by the end of 2016, as we prepare to make all final decisions with all their consequences. Therefore, there is little time for such an immense task.

Having made all of these reflections about the ‘when’ I will only add this final one: the ‘when’ will not be a problem once all the other issues are solved in the right way. I believe I have proved that when needs to be I have shown neither idleness nor reluctance in using the power that corresponds to me as President which is to call for elections.

To all those who think that this electoral rhythm is excessive, I say unto them that in normal conditions they would be correct to think so.

I would also like to have elections only every four years. I would like to have more tranquillity and be able to carry out my activity with a less hurried schedule. In normal conditions. The problem is that we are not living in normal conditions. It is not normal that every year more than a million and half people go out to demonstrate; it is not normal that a country should hold a participative process in precarious conditions and have two million three-hundred and fifty-thousand people show up to the polling stations; it is not normal that a country which, through a referendum, voted for a Statute and sees that same Statute unjustly hacked by a partial arbitrator; it is not normal that a country’s population cannot express its opinion on the political future of its own country with the hindrance of the State; it is not normal that the Minister of Education, the Vice President and the President speaking before you, have to go through the Penal Code for having completed their electoral promise and their parliamentary mandate, and for having put ballot boxes so that the population could express their opinion in a free, democratic and civilised way. It is not normal that the central Government, and this is not a minor issue, through the Constitutional Court suspends a decree approved by the Government of Catalonia on fuel poverty to

protect those whom are most vulnerable. It is not normal that a country cannot approve, without the State's opposition, an internal regulation on commercial schedules which intends to ensure a business model which would improve trade and make cities more successful. It is not normal that a country has to constantly defend the use of its own language in schools through legal battles in Tribunals. It is not normal that a country should receive, on behalf of the State it belongs to, an investment in infrastructure far below what that country contributes in terms of general wealth. It is not normal that a country should have a systematic and permanent fiscal debt of such high proportions that it punishes the welfare and progress of its own people. It is not normal. We are not in normal conditions. This is why we must make different decisions and have different attitudes. Believe me: with traditional decisions and attitudes we would not be able to face the exceptional situations and challenges like the ones we have now.

Throughout my speech I tried to offer ideas and suggestions to guide this final stage of the political process, based on the right to decide, that Catalonia began two years ago. By definition, the final sprint of any process or activity tends to be the most decisive phase. You are closer to the goal, fatigue accumulates with the distance travelled, you have had to overcome many obstacles and the occasional trip from someone, you have had to overcome moments of weakness and at the same time, you know you have the depth to cross the finish line with the knowledge that the effort was worthwhile.

You also know, or must know, that the errors made in this final stage will cost you double or triple. This is the time when there is more shoving, more nerves and more things at risk. This is the time when your strength must not fail you. In fact, it is the time where all that is essential cannot fail.

Today's speech is my, both modest and honest, contribution to help the success in this final stage. To get where we are today, many generations of Catalans have given everything, some even their lives. Behind us there are constellations of dreams, hopes, aspirations and efforts of thousands and thousands of Catalan compatriots, many of them, by the way, who came from outside of Catalonia, and are showing us the light and guiding the path which we must complete.

But what really gives meaning to this, is the legacy that we will bring to all those who will come after. On November 9th, there were many people queuing outside the polling stations, with excited faces, perhaps they were thinking of an absent loved one or experiencing the joy of being able to cast their ballot, a simple ballot, to help build a future country, their country. It is precisely this notion and this challenge of a future country, that gives meaning, full meaning, to what we are doing.

In my reflection today I have spoken to you, above all, about the 'what', the 'how' and also the 'when'. But I have not talked about the 'why'. That is, I have not talked about what is most important. If I were to do it today I believe it would be an abuse of your

patience. Therefore, rest assured, I will not. However if, in between the daily governance of the country, which is a lot of work, and the political process in Catalonia, which is also a lot of work, there is energy, ideas and a little time, I would like to spend time next year to tell you about the country we imagine and want to have. In fact, rather than 'to tell you', I should say 'tell each other', because building a country is always, by definition, a collective task. I can I put my grain of sand, just like every other citizen in Catalonia.

Today, I will mention three questions that must be answered on the Catalonia which will emerge after this period of development that we are living.

- Do we have the capabilities to build a truly worthy country?
- Do we have the ideas?
- Do we have the instruments, apparatus, and tools?

To the first two questions, my answer is yes. Catalonia possesses the ideas and capabilities needed to build a well-founded country. In part, we already have one. But only in part. A country that concentrated a 6 percent unemployment rate, a 19 percent in terms of the poverty risk, and a school drop-out rate of 30 percent during its greatest period of economic growth, which was only a few years ago, is not the country we deserve.

A country that has been through six years of economic recession and has a 20 percent unemployment rate is not the country we should have: many countries went through the crisis and the recession, but most don't have the unemployment rate we do. A country with increasing inequality is not the country we want. A country where solving sensitive legal cases can take years is not the country we want. A country with too many suspected or actual irregularities and corrupt practices is not the country we want.

In contrast, a country based on solidarity, like the one we have, is the country we want. A country that is creative, dynamic and entrepreneurial, like the one we in fact have, is the country we want. A country with advanced sciences, quality universities, cultural potential, and innovative spirit, like the one we are starting to have, is the country we want. A country with a growing international presence, with an increasingly globally recognized and valued capital city, is the country we want. A country with a strong and committed network, that can manage resources and public interest services efficiently, is the country that we have and want. A country with individual talent and personal excellence is the country that we, in large part, have. And a country where people and their lands have the opportunity for progress, wellness, and rights, with a sense of social justice and equality, is a country that we are already starting to have and fully recover.

Surely, Catalonia can strive to become a country with a sound economy that will create wealth; a country with a welfare state that can guarantee justice. Austria and Denmark are already like this. The size of their territories and populations match our own. But, in many ways, they are either better, or they do things in better way.

However, the tools these countries have at their disposal are more numerous and better than ours. They possess the decision-making capabilities of a State. Even though their capabilities are somewhat limited, because the necessary federalization of Europe restricts classical and traditional sovereignty, their capabilities are much greater than ours.

If Catalonia's self-government had at least gradually drawn closer to the kind these countries have, as it did several times, we would not have the conflict we have today.

In principle, most Catalan men and women don't have a problem with coexisting alongside the Spanish State. However, our government's situation is the opposite of what it should be. With each day that goes by, we're pulled further away from the tools that most European countries have.

Our conclusion is clear: we need the tools to build the country we should have; a country a lot of us want and wish for.

Will we know how to put these tools to good use? This is the question people are asking. However, if we do not have these tools, we will never know. In fact, we have not had them for at least three centuries. For three centuries, we thought we could at least share them with the State we are part of today, but instead of bettering or strengthening these tools, our right to them has been denied and diminished as time has gone by.

I will conclude on a personal note. Please excuse me, as speaking of one's proposals or opinion is not the same as speaking of oneself. On this occasion, however, I feel the need to speak for myself in order to clarify misunderstandings and act, on my own behalf, with utmost transparency. At this moment – especially in light of everything I've just said – politicians and commentators, as well as people who are less involved in politics, are wondering what my role should be throughout the remainder of this process.

A few of the more wily, sceptical, or personally interested folks – one never knows – have not given the matter much thought and have simply declared that what I really want with all of this is to save myself from the political shocks, or we could even say tsunamis, that are on the horizon. When I hear comments like these, the truth is that a little smile creeps up on my face, and I hope it's not too obvious. Because I think, if I need to save myself, the question is 'from what?' From the insults, accusations, and attacks against myself, or against those whose only fault has been to be my friend or relative, even when their involvement in politics is minimal? From what else am I to save myself? From the difficulties of the day-to-day governance with my co-workers

in the Government? From the day-to-day affairs of this country? From my often half-hearted decisions? From the fear of not being able to pay our bills at the end of the month, as we would like to do if we had a ministry of finance of our own? From complaints of disobedience, perversions of justice, misappropriations and usurpations of justice? God knows that everyone would want to save him or herself from all of that! But still, we can sense that some of these acts of "kindness", these caresses, may go further...

However, putting aside my "salvation", for which so many charitable souls have concerned themselves, I do have to answer a key question in a serious and solemn way: How am I to personally respond to the institutional generosity that I have asked of our citizens? Today I proposed something that requires great generosity from a great number of people, and I know that those who ask for generosity need to be willing to practice this generosity, too. If I am asking parties, just for now, for this one time, to step aside, and for civil society to step forward without trying to advance any personal political careers, how am I to respond to this petition for generosity?

I want to put across two messages of personal commitment, which I believe will clarify any questions that may arise.

- My first message and commitment is this: If I am put forward as a candidate, and we win with an absolute majority, thereby winning the consultation, when my term finishes in a year and a half I will not seek re-election as President of the Government of Catalonia. I explicitly stated this two years ago, but I am reiterating it today.
- My second message and commitment, which may seem surprising, though I mean it wholeheartedly, is this: I am willing to be at the top of the list, but I am also willing to be at the bottom. That is, I could be the first, or I could be the last. You may see clearly that my proposal includes no personal conditions. However, there are project conditions, which will provide the highest guarantee that Catalonia and its people will move forward and do it well. But there are no, and there definitely should not be, any personal conditions on my behalf.

This is a time to join together and make decisions. Not a time to impose personal conditions.

Thank you once again for your patience and presence.