

## **A Message for the New Year from the President of the Catalan Government**

*Barcelona, December 30<sup>th</sup> 2014*

The year, 2014, is drawing to a close and we will soon embark on another; the New Year is about to begin. As it is tradition, I would like to wish you all happy holidays and all the best for 2015. I would also like to make a few reflections regarding these very decisive and transcendent moments our country is undergoing.

Of all the festivities of the year, I believe these to be the most endearing to spend with family and friends. It is for this reason that our thoughts should go out to those who do not have the joy or luck to fully enjoy these days, either because of a loss of a close friend or family member, or perhaps due to an issue of poor health, welfare or work has become reason for concern.

I am sure that I speak for many thousands and thousands of fellow citizens in expressing my deepest sympathy to those who are feeling solitary or in need and are, therefore, more vulnerable.

The year we are leaving behind us has been a year of changes, of important changes.

To begin with, changes in the economy. For the first time in seven years, since the beginning of the crisis, there has been economic growth in each quarter of the year; there has also been, for the first time, less unemployment in every month of the year in relation to the previous month; and, for the first time, jobs have been created in a sustained manner. These are changes in the right direction. Changes which I am confident I will be able to endorse and accentuate throughout 2015.

Social inequalities, however, have not been abridged. Poverty, or the risk of falling into it, has not declined and even though there is more employment there is not enough for everyone who wants to work. We cannot claim the crisis is over until we have resolved this. We are overcoming it and with the effort and energy of many, we are changing the situation. But there is still much ahead of us and, therefore, we cannot relax, not even a little bit. The Government I preside is clear on this and will continue to work to fight against inequalities, protect fundamental public services and help create new opportunities.

Another change that has occurred in 2014 was brought about by the Administration's commitment to transparency and good practices. The Law on Transparency and

Access to Public Information which was passed by Parliament, the transparency web page put forward by the Government and other measures of this type have placed the Generalitat at the forefront of the democratic regeneration society has called for. In saying this, I do not mean that everything is being done well, but there is a firm commitment to do things better, to tackle irregularities and bad practices, to make civil servants or authorities accountable for their actions and to manage public funds with the same circumspection as if they were our own, precisely because they belong to all of us.

This has not always been the case, or at least it hasn't been so enough. There is an extended consciousness and a greater need to eradicate bad or dubious practices and to reinstate a nearer, more transparent and more agile Administration.

The other great change witnessed in 2014, is that for the first time in three centuries, Catalans wishing to vote for the political future of the country and for the political freedom of Catalonia, could do so.

As many as two million three hundred and fifty thousand people did so. Never have we come so far. Not ever.

In spite of the State's prohibition and full institutional apparatus against the vote, many thousands of Catalans freely exercised their right to democracy, freedom of expression, self-affirmation and respect. A democratic exercise that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be considered as normal and not as an exception. It should welcome dialogue and negotiation instead of judicial prosecutions.

It is wrong when a State decides to prosecute those who wish to allow for public participation and give voice to the citizenry. It means that there is something that isn't working and this not a lesser matter.

November 9<sup>th</sup> also proved that unity strengthens us as a country. We could not have reached this point without the involvement of civil society, volunteers, the various political parties and the Government. We should take note that unity does add up, it make us stronger and it allows us to go forward in a firm way. Unity allows us to better understand what we want, both as a country and as a society. In this way, unity also gives us the encouragement to succeed.

Unity is what the State fears the most. The State wants us divided, each to his own. It knows that this way we are weaker and more vulnerable. We should be very conscious of this; we must take note and act accordingly.

In the upcoming weeks, new decisions will have to be made and they will be complex and not exempt from risk. The path that led to November 9<sup>th</sup> was full of obstacles, many external and some internal. All of which were overcome.

If I did not doubt to personally assume the decisions which I believed most adequate then, I will not doubt to do the same in these next steps the country must take. It is

my responsibility as President to not avoid making decisions, regardless of how difficult they may be and as long as I have the confidence that was conferred to me through your votes I will continue to do so. It will be through your votes that, when the time comes, will lead this country into the future we want for ourselves.

I wish the best for all of you and the people you love for this year, 2015, which we are about to begin. A 2015 which I hope will be better year for all of us. A year we should experience intensively, with the hope and confidence that, between all of us, we will be able to build a better Catalonia.

Long live Catalonia!