



End of the Year Message from the President of the Government of Catalonia

Barcelona, 30 December 2015

Dear compatriots,

As with every year on these dates, I would like to address myself to you and wish you all happy holidays and may 2016, which is about to start, be a good year for each and every one of you. And if possible, may it be a better year than the one we are leaving behind.

These are days of celebration and festivity, but not everyone can enjoy them with the same intensity. I am referring to the families who have suffered the loss of a loved one, to the people who have a severe illness, to those who have not found a job for some time, those who feel alone and to the people who have had to leave their countries to flee from violence, persecution and war in search of hope in a better world. My thoughts are with all these people and I hope they find the peace and joy that is missing.

The year we are about to close has been a year of changes on every level.

On an economic level, we find ourselves in an objectively better setting. There is more activity, more movement and more employment. The country is attractive in terms of investment and the creation of projects. We are exporting more than ever. We have achieved touristic and commercial prestige. And we are being recognised for our excellence in research and universities, and for leading in terms of professional formation. Together we are making good progress. The dynamic creation of jobs, and may they be of a greater quality, is the solid path to recover the levels of social welfare that Catalonia needs and deserves based on its capacity to generate progress and resources.

Yet, at a social level, too many of our fellow citizens still suffer from the havoc left behind by one of the largest crises seen in the last two decades. Circumstances of prolonged unemployment, qualified youths without jobs that correspond to their preparation, more risk of poverty, more inequality and more precariousness are challenges that appear before us in all their harshness and cruelty. The Catalan society and institutions are highly sensitized in these situations of vulnerability and social injustice, and we are working every day in order for the people who have

suffered in these difficult years to see the effects of the recovery and the fairer distribution of wealth that the country is producing. A wealth that, unfortunately, we do not control and that leaves us in very high proportions that end up being detrimental to the welfare of a major part of the Catalan society.

I cannot go on without mentioning that in 2015 we saw the threat of international terrorism very closely. From the Government of Catalonia we want to reaffirm, once more, our determination to act in favour of security against all types of violence and in favour of the pacific co-existence among all peoples.

This 2015 has also been a year of changes on a political level. We have gone to the polls on three occasions to choose our public representatives at a local, national and state level. With their vote, the citizens have decided which representatives must assume the responsibility to direct the public institutions in years of great complexity and major challenges, which we have not had for some time. A responsibility one cannot and must not avoid once one has been elected and has received the democratic mandate of the people.

In our country we have spoken much about the right to decide as a nation. We have spoken about it and, more importantly, we have exercised it. The polls on November 9 of last year and September 27 of this year constitute the most evident example of our willingness to decide our own future as nation.

However, standing beside the right to decide is the duty to decide. Less is spoken about the latter, but in complex situations it is unavoidable. Hugely complex political settings have taken place in Catalonia and the State. Settings that require dialogue, negotiation and agreements. In other words, to decide. To decide between very different ideas, people and parties. The fact that is no easy task does not exempt any of us from our duty to decide.

As president of Catalonia, I am very aware of the right to decide of our people –a pillar of our sovereignty. But I am also very aware of our political representative's duty to decide. In Catalonia, after three months of intense negotiation, we are still waiting for the formation of the new Government. In fact, the legal deadline to decide whether we have a new Government or we hold new elections ends on the tenth of January. The law does not allow a call for elections prior to this date. After which, the convocation is mandatory. Hence, there is little time and little margin left.

The case is similar in complexity at a State level. Those who in these last weeks have mocked and scoffed at the Catalan political situation will have to apply therapy on their own houses to solve very complicated arithmetic sums. However, in the same way that I have expressed my wish that in the few days that remain we can find a way to have a new Government in Catalonia and have the stability to allow for good work and the completion of the mandates received in the ballots, I express the same

wish regarding the Spanish state and the political situation generated after the recent elections to the Cortes. Both Spain and Catalonia should have stable governments that enter into dialogue and are open to agreements, each with their own democratic legitimacy.

It is clear that Catalonia wants to decide its own future. We are all essential in making this possible. To continue ignoring or belittling this will not provide any solution for the future.

We are living in times of uncertainties as well as opportunities. The most flexible bulrush is the one which can best resist the inclement of time and can straighten itself again once it has passed. We must know how to learn from the economic, social and political uncertainties of these last years to build shared projects for the future, where progress, social welfare, justice, democracy and freedom are fundamental pillars.

It is very true that we are facing months of doubt, with apprehensions and disappointments. However, I am resolutely convinced that in these last few years our country has undergone an extraordinary path. National project and social project are hand in hand in the willingness and hope of making Catalonia a great country, that is to say, a good country for everyone. I am confident that the year we are about to start will be decisive in making this widely shared longing a splendid reality.

I wish all of you a great 2016 and hope you can enjoy it in the company of those whom you love the most.

Long live Catalonia!