

Official Statement by President Puigdemont on the Catalan Referendum

Barcelona, 9 June 2017

On the 27th of this month of June, it will have been exactly seven years since the Constitutional Court's ruling against the Statute of Catalonia. We followed a long path to reach its approval. Was there dialogue between the Government and the State? Yes, a lot of it. Was there agreement with almost all of the constitutional institutions? Yes, from Parliament to Congress and the Senate, all with a very wide majority. There was also an agreed referendum. Did it serve to find solutions? No, on the contrary: one single constitutional institution, strongly politicised, with expired members committed to the political party that today governs the State was enough to finish dialogue, pact and agreement. That Court is no better today. Today, due to a single and urgent reading, the Court can debar elected representatives in a fulminating way, without trial. Neither the well-founded individual votes from some of the Court's members, nor the strong warnings from the Venice Commission against this quick reform, which was done urgently through a single reading of an organic law, have been able to make the Spanish government rectify.

When asked what Catalans wanted, we presented proposals. All sorts of proposals. And all, without exception, have been refused or seriously cut down.

Therefore, we come from a long and disappointing series of No's from the Spanish government and the General Courts to all the proposals aimed at resolving, in an agreed and negotiated manner, the political conflict that exists between Catalonia and the Spanish state.

The only thing that has not been voted in Congress has been the Spanish government's proposal for Catalonia. Maybe this is because there isn't one, nor is it expected.

We should remember of all of this, especially those who from now on will have to explain how we reached this point.

Today, we know with a more clarity that this is not a question about legal frameworks. Everyone knows that the legal framework did not impede the Catalan demand to be addressed. Today everyone knows what the real problem is because they heard it coming from the mouth of the president of the Spanish government: "I don't want to".

With an "I don't want to", it is better not to go to the altar. And this isn't an individual negation: it is one of an entire political system (and probably a social, media and economic one as well) that forty years after the return of President Tarradellas from exile in France, it has been incapable of demonstrating any sort willingness to participate in the solution to the real and deeply rooted problem.

On September 28th of last year, in submitting myself to a vote of confidence in the Parliament of Catalonia and appealing to the Spanish political system to carry out a serious and loyal negotiation, I said the following:

“The resolution to the Catalan demand will be come about in the following way: referendum or referendum. We will pursue an agreement until the last day, we will work with the determination to hold an accordable referendum with the State at all times, but if we reach the end of the legislature and there is no positive answer in this respect, we are prepared and ready to reach the next step before proclaiming the effective independence of Catalonia and we will call a referendum for the second half of September of next year”.

We have pursued agreement repeatedly. We have actively taken part in the National Pact for the Referendum. We have sent proposals to agree on a negotiation. We have adopted parliamentary resolutions and a Government Agreement calling on the Spanish government to discuss the issue and negotiate. We have directly expressed to the Spanish state our firm willingness to sit down and negotiate a solution. We have explained this around the world, in London, Brussels, Paris, Boston, Washington, New York, Madrid.

But we are reaching the end of the legislature and have not received a positive answer. And so, in compliance with that democratic and firm commitment, today we held an extraordinary Executive Council to ratify, together with the Vice-president and Ministers, our willingness to call on the citizens of our country to exercise their legitimate right to self-determination that Catalonia, as a millenary nation, has to a referendum which will be held on Sunday, 1 October of this year, with the question “Do you want Catalonia to become an independent state in the form of a Republic?”. This question will be posed in the three official languages of the Principality of Catalonia: Catalan, Spanish and also Aranese in the Val d’Aran. And the answer our fellow citizens give, in the form of a “Yes” or a “No”, will be the mandate that this Government will commit to.

It is time for the Catalan people to decide their future. It is in their hands, and in the hands of us all, to make it possible. To prove that democracy unites us all above the legitimate and healthy discrepancies that characterise mature and convivial societies. That they are able to decide for themselves and respect all options of the answer to the question, all of them being equally legitimate and valid.

The government pledges to offer all the guarantees and will ensure the rectitude of the process of convening, organising and holding the referendum and calls on all citizens to collectively assume, with the utmost dignity and stringency, the exercise of the unalienable right above which the building of democracy lies upon: the right of people to freely choose the future of their country.

Long live Catalonia.

Carles Puigdemont Casamajó
President de la Generalitat de Catalunya