

Institutional message from the President of the Generalitat on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia

Hospital de Sant Pau, 10 September 2021

Citizens of Catalonia,

A nation is its people. That is why, on the occasion of the National Day of Catalonia, the first words must serve to recall all those who have left us because of Covid-19 and also to offer a warm embrace to everyone who has lost someone dear to them. Today, despite the progress of the vaccination campaign, there are still many Catalans suffering from Covid. I wish them all a speedy recovery. They have the support of the entire public health care and emergency system, which since March 2020 has been working tirelessly to protect our health, to cure us, to save us.

Therefore, from this location of Hospital de Sant Pau, which also houses a vaccination centre, I would like to pay tribute to all the healthcare professionals, nursing home professionals and other public servants who, together with those professionals engaged in essential activities, have worked to ensure our well-being during all these months.

Because the pandemic has conditioned and will continue to condition our lives. It has caused a deep social, economic and emotional crisis that exacerbates pre-existing issues and is compounded by the political conflict with Spain, unresolved for too long, and which has generated a great deal of frustration among all Catalans who want to be able to freely decide the future of the country.

This is the reality we live in as a country. And faced with this, we are compelled to express our dissent. To lift up our heads and lay the foundations of a new society, of a new country, awakening and employing all our energy, our creativity and our talent at the service of a country that offers well-being and opportunities for all. I know that in the midst of a crisis everything seems difficult. Impossible even. But I am convinced that as a society we have the strength to push for the series of transformations we need in order to once again move forward.

We need a social and economic transformation, geared towards making Catalonia a country renowned for its progress, for the quality of life it guarantees for its citizens. We need a feminist transformation that eradicates all forms of violence and discrimination and frees us from the entrenched male chauvinism that still dominates our society.

We need a green transformation to tackle climate change, to adapt to it and to mitigate its effects. The protection of the environment and biodiversity must underpin each and every decision we take, and must do so while keeping in mind the legacy we wish to leave to future generations.

And finally, we need a democratic transformation based on the civic commitment undertaken by each and every one of us. That helps improve and modernise

governance. And that has the capacity to transform the support of Catalonia's citizens for amnesty and self-determination into political change.

These four transformations are essential to tackle the current situation. To regain this country's drive and will to progress. I'm sure the vaccines will help. Because they are the best tool for beating Covid. At the same time, the NextGenerationEU funds should become a catalyst that drives this desire for change. We have the projects, we have the experience and we have the capacity to invest European funds, to multiply their transformative effect. No one knows this country better than we do. That is why we should be able to manage our share of the funds directly.

Our aim is to offer an immediate response to all the emergencies derived from Covid. But this crisis situation should not make us forget that the political conflict with Spain has yet to be resolved. That the majority of Catalan society has not forgotten and it wants to decide the future of the country at the polls. The crisis should not make us forget that the pardons have allowed our prisoners to be released but they have not halted a repression that continues to limit their rights – far from it; that the situation of our exiles has not been resolved, and that no way out has been offered for all those who have been repressed, are awaiting trial or are being persecuted by the Court of Auditors. That is why we continue to persist, with all our strength, with all our conviction, in advocating amnesty and self-determination. In advocating freedom and democracy.

Today the Parliament of Catalonia is made up of a large majority in favour of independence and an even larger majority in favour of an end to repression and a referendum. And this broad political and social consensus must be translated, once again, into an alliance between institutions, parties, civil society and citizens, in order to jointly reclaim this initiative. To make inevitable a referendum which for me is a democratic commitment that cannot be renounced and for which I will not rest until it is a reality.

Catalonia is on the verge of doing something it has never achieved before: engaging in negotiations with Spain, government to government, to address how we resolve the conflict. And we do so with the commitment of both parties to ensure that the result of the negotiation is endorsed by the citizens of Catalonia through a vote.

That is why we must be ambitious in our approach to the negotiation. With all the strength of our convictions, with full confidence in our ability to move forward. That is why we must unite our efforts, building trust inside and outside Catalonia, to manage a process full of obstacles, that will require time, unity and perseverance. Until recently, it was unthinkable for Spain to acknowledge the very existence of political conflict. And despite the obvious difficulties, we have managed to get Spain to sit down at a negotiating table, at which the Government of Catalonia will defend amnesty and the right to self-determination, with all the strength that we demonstrate every 11 September, filling squares and streets all over the country.

We will defend the referendum, because we know that it is the most inclusive proposal for resolving conflicts such as the one we are living through. Just as Scotland has done and will do again. A democratic, free process, where everyone can defend their ideas on equal terms, and where everyone can make their voice heard, through a referendum endorsed by the international community. That is why, in particular, I also want to address those Catalans who today, in a reflection of the plurality of the country, do not defend independence. Your political standpoint is legitimate, one which represents an important part of the population, and which must be listened to and taken into account. Together with all of you, I am sure we can agree that the best way to construct a shared future is to lay the foundations so that all proposals which have the backing of the majority of citizens can be carried out.

That is why I advocate for the referendum as the most inclusive proposal. Because it offers every option a chance to win. All choices must have the right to win and we must all accept the result. Because no project for the future can be based on an imposition over the majority. That is why a referendum is the most inclusive solution. The solution that does not oblige anyone to renounce their ideals and, at the same time, obliges us all to propose a vision, a vision for our country. Mine is clear. An independent and pro-European Catalan republic. Made up of free women and men, who want to build a shared future of well-being and prosperity for all.

Citizens of Catalonia. A nation is its people. That means all of you. It is a common language and culture, a history and government institutions. But above all, it is the bonds of fellowship that ensure that those of us who share our lives in this part of the world want to continue to build a future together.

The National Day, which we commemorate tomorrow, is just that. The collective affirmation that we are one nation and that we are one people.

Long live free Catalonia!