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## THE BASQUE PRESIDENT'S CLOSING SPEECH

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*Azken bederatzi egunotan Euskadin egon zarete; egun hauek, gure gaurko egoera sozio-ekonomikoa eta politikoa zuzenean eta hobeto ezagutzeko aukera eman dizuete. Kongresuan, gainera, ponentziak aurkezteaz gain, eztabaidak sutsuak izan dira Euskal Etxeen egoera eta etorkizuna aztertzeko.*

*Oso gustora izan gara, baina pena handiz agur esateko ordua iritsi zaigu. Zuetako askok Euskadi lehendik ezagutzen zenuten, beste askok ordea, ez. Zuen herrietara bueltatzen zaretenean oso inportantea izango da, bederatzi egun hauetan ikusi eta bizi duzuen kontatzea, azaltzea eta zabaltzea.*

*Kongresua inauguratu zen egunean, gauza bat komentatu nizuen: Euskadirentzat oso garrantzitsua dela nazioarte mailan ezagutua izatetik onartua izatera pasatzea hain zuzen ere. Errekonoizitu egin behar da, ez bakarrik ezagutu, gure errealitatea munduan zehar, herri gisa gure nortasuna baitugu. Zuen bizilekuetan errotutako Euskadiren puskak zarete, herri askotan eta euskal etxe askotan zailtasun handiak egon arren, zuen eginkizuna ezinbestekoa da beraz.*

*Euskal Gizataldeen bigarren Mundu Kongresua gaur bukatzen da, egin ditugun bileretan euskal etxeek eta Eusko Jaurlaritzak lau urtetarako ekintza plan amankomuna onartu dugu, era berean, deklarazio bat egin dugu gure herriari eta pake prozesuari bultzada bat emateko, hala ere, galdera, zalantza, ausnarketa eta kezka asko airean geratu dira, ezin diegu behin betiko erantzunik edo irtenbiderik eman, herri bakoitzean momentu bakoitzeko egoerari egokitzeko ahaleginak egin beharko ditugu, hau da, eboluzionatu eta eguneratu beharko dugu eten gabe aritu beharko dugu, gure jatorri eta gure helburuaren perspektiba galdu gabe.*

I was saying that after nine extremely busy days, for which we should firstly apologise to you for the tiredness we have inflicted upon you, we have arrived at a moment that I am sure nobody looks forward to and that is the time to say goodbye. It is time for us to realise that these working days are coming to an end and that we all have to return to where we came from, and from there, implement all those decisions that we have made together here.

During the opening ceremony I said that we all have a common goal which we should try to work towards. We have to try to move from the recognition that the world has of Basque society on to a true recognition of that reality in the world. Why? Because we have our own personality as a people, we are neither better nor worse than the rest and nor are we in better or worse conditions than others. But what we definitely do have is our own personality. And the fact that we claim our right to have this personality in the world should not shock anyone. In fact quite the opposite, it would seem logical for each people to have their personality and for that personality to be recognised wherever they go.

The Congress has finished with a declaration of support and I should like to point out that this declaration of support has elements of tremendous interest in its own right. And that is why, first and foremost I should like to express my thanks to you. You have believed in the Basque Institutions, you have supported the Basque Institutions and also this humble Basque President, and I should like to publicly thank you for that. I should like to especially thank the effort and the support that you provide both the Basque Institutions and the Basque President with.

Secondly, I think what you yourselves point out in your own final declaration should be highlighted: and that is that Basque Society at the end of its very long journey, will be what it wants to be. There is no society in the world that cannot be what it aspires to be and you cannot limit any society's possibilities. And so Basque society will also be what Basque men and women

want it to be, according to our plurality, respecting everyone, respecting our projects and our aspirations.

You also point out in your declaration, in third place, this step which we are all yearning for, which is the step involved in going from knowledge of Basque society to its world recognition.

And finally I should like to mention one section of the declaration: the one in which you say that the land a people occupy is more than simply a handful of square kilometres and depends, above all on the will of the people who live there. That is why you invite those who rule the Basque Country and Basque Society in general to construct a territory that is greater than the borders it has, to set up a network for the defence and promotion of everything that is Basque around the world. And in this way you have decided to make dreams come true. Why shouldn't we dream about such a beautiful thing as that? Why are we not even able to make it come true? What would our lives be if we didn't have dreams? What would our lives be without our people? What would our lives be if we did not have at the bottom of our heart the sense of belonging that we have to Basque society.

I shall finish on that note, by reiterating my thanks for your work. We do not pretend to have the answers to all the questions. This congress has simply covered one more stage, it has set a new landmark. We have decided what we want to do in the coming four years and that is sufficient. We cannot pretend to find a reply to all the questions. We are living in an age in which things change so quickly that it is very difficult to know what is going to happen tomorrow. We should be happy, therefore with the fact that we have been able to find a solution to today's problems. Those questions that we have in the future we will try to answer on a day-to-day basis. We Basques should be permanent apprentices of what has to be done in the coming world. The poor person who thinks he/she has his/her role in the society in which we live clearly defined!. We Basques don't have our role defined as a society but neither do political parties, the media, universities or companies. Nowadays, with the changes that we are being subject to, it is precisely peoples that ask themselves every day what they are and what they aspire to, that is those peoples that are able to reach high levels of progress and welfare for their citizens. And that is what we Basques have to do at an individual and at a group level: re-examine our role every day, think every day about what it is we have to do to improve and what it is we have to do to project Basque presence around the world in a dignified way, the presence of a small but honourable people in an ever-increasing reality.

Thanks, finally, recognition and thanks. I remember when I was little how I used to talk with my grandfather in our farmhouse at night-time. We did not have electricity then and I am not talking about 200 years ago, I am talking about 25 years ago and we used to sit on what we call the threshing floor. Outside the farmhouses there was always a bench and as there was no electricity we used to live according to daylight. So when night fell we would already have eaten and at daybreak we would get up. And we used dusk, a time when it was neither night nor day, to talk and the family talked either in the house or outside the house, about many things; things that unfortunately we can no longer talk about because of the television. And I remember that I was always worried about how a Basque such as my grandfather who had suffered a great deal during the war and had lived in other countries, about how he had been treated, about how the fact that he was Basque influenced the way he was treated, and how he had been able to project his own identity wherever he had lived. I remember that my grandfather always said to me «don't worry, Juanjo, you have asked me these questions on many occasions, and the truth is that a Basque or any other person who has to live in a place where he/she was not born has to have two things quite clear, and that if you have these two things clear it doesn't matter where you live». «Firstly», he said «you have to always think where you are living and secondly never forget where you come from». And he said to me that he had always had those two things quite clear in his mind. «Whenever I had to live in a place that wasn't my dear Basque Country, by applying these two ideas I knew how to get my feeling across to these societies, and they in their turn, were able to understand me».

And that is why I want to pay you true homage and recognition because you are surely people who have been following these criteria throughout your lives. You know where you live and

therefore you are working to create welfare and wealth in those societies where you live, but at the same time, you have never forgotten where you come from.

Thank you therefore, very much, and I should like my homage to all of you to be publicly recognised.

*Jaun-andreok, ordezkariak, lagunak denok, bihotz-bihotzez,  
mila esker zuen lanagatik eta laster arte. Kongresu hau bukatutzat emango dugu.*  
This Congress is now officially closed.