

## **Official message from the President of the Government of Catalonia on 11 September, Catalonia's national day**

September 11 is an opportunity for Catalans to remember with respect all those who, over the centuries, have struggled to build Catalonia.

To defend its institutions, its traditions, and its cultural and national values. A nation which forgets its history has no future.

This year we are also celebrating the hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of President Macià, to whom we dedicated a special tribute in Parliament last night.

Francesc Macià, the first democratically elected President of Catalonia is, and always has been, an example of patriotism and nobility of spirit for our people. A nation which does not honour its moral and civic leaders has no soul.

In a few months we shall also be holding a solemn commemoration of the six hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the decision by the Catalan Corts in Cervera to definitively establish the Generalitat of Catalonia.

Throughout history Catalonia's desire for self-government has been one of the distinguishing features of our country. A nation which is not true to its institutions has no horizons.

September 11 is also a good time to express our feelings, our aspirations and our national ambition. We may do this through festive events or touch on more serious issues affecting the situation of Catalonia, but always in a civic, peaceful spirit.

I would therefore like to invite you to participate in the public events being organised all over Catalonia. I am sure you will do so and we shall, once more, demonstrate the maturity and civic-mindedness of Catalan society.

I remember that, just a year ago, we were saying that Catalonia was going through a difficult time, which would have to be faced with realism, calmly but seriously. Facing up to problems, tackling the economic crisis, without hiding it or exaggerating it: making a realistic analysis of the situation and all committing ourselves to pull together.

I spoke about sacrifices, which we have indeed had to make and will have to go on making for some time yet.



The last year has been difficult for many families, for many employees, self-employed people and businesses. For the whole of Catalonia. But we shall carry on, showing our individual and collective qualities once again, combining strength and sacrifice, in a demanding and rigorous spirit.

We shall also be showing our capacity for solidarity in this country: to families, between neighbours, town to town, all over Catalonia. Solidarity is another of the values that has always characterised our people.

This does not mean that there is no danger of the social climate being adversely affected. But Catalan society is showing its strength admirably. There is light at the end of the tunnel and we must persevere.

At this time last year we were also talking about the negotiations under way between the Catalan and Spanish governments to agree a new system of financing, as envisaged in the Statute of Autonomy.

At that time I argued in many different forums that it was just, necessary and urgent to change an unfair system so that we could obtain more resources, as set out in the case presented by the Catalan institutions.

These resources are necessary, above all, to meet our social needs, in education, in health, in security, in infrastructures, in social policies.

I said then that I would only accept an agreement if it was fair and good for Catalonia, that we needed to negotiate tirelessly, without unnecessary histrionics. Being demanding regarding those things we consider non-negotiable but flexible when it was necessary and allowed us to reach agreement.

After many months of talks, we concluded our negotiations last July. The agreement is good for Catalonia, it implements the Statute and honours its spirit.

I believe we should all feel satisfied and legitimately proud of the results we have obtained. I would like once more to express my gratitude for the efforts of all the people and institutions who have presented their demands in a constructive spirit.

Now, we must look ahead. We are still suffering the negative effects of the recession. We may have struck bottom and may be due to begin a recovery soon but it will not be a matter of a few days.

A lot of effort and sacrifice is called for. At this time we need to take special care to ensure that individuals and families are not marginalised because they cannot carry on.



And, I am sorry to say, the times to come will be more difficult if negative, unjustifiably pessimistic attitudes persist or prevail. Individually and collectively we must be capable of showing our determination to win through.

Catalonia is a country with a long history and over the centuries it has had to face difficult situations. At the beginning of this speech I mentioned the need for nations to remember their history and honour their past.

But in Catalonia we have always known how to look forward. Now a collective effort is needed to achieve this and everyone can make a contribution.

The country's future depends on what all of us do in our daily lives. Building Catalonia, giving it a horizon and a future is a task for all of us together but also for each individual. We cannot have a nation if ordinary people are not involved in public affairs.

I am convinced that Catalan society today wants us to solve the problems we have and not to invent new ones. Catalonia cannot be the land of pessimism and does not want to be.

I think I am correctly interpreting the majority sentiment of our people when I say that they want us to use all our intelligence, our political strength and capacity for work in overcoming the main problem we have today: the recession.

And they want us to do this by acting responsibly, spending carefully and applying rigorous efficiency in our policies. To have ambitious projects for the future, distinguishing what is really urgent, relevant and necessary from what can wait for a better moment. Catalonia's first objective today is to pull through the recession. We are sure to encounter other challenges and other difficult situations. We are and we will continue to be ready to deal with them when the need arises. The full implementation of the Statute of Autonomy will meet resistance and lack of understanding in some quarters but nothing will stop us putting our desire for self-government into practice.

As President of all the Catalans, I shall lead, as I do now, the institutional response to the challenges we will have to face. And I am counting on all of you to contribute to Catalonia's response.

Every day I find new reasons to renew my confidence in the ability of Catalan society to win through in adverse circumstances. And I restate my conviction that with the commitment of all of you, and the strength of our institutions, Catalonia will go forward.

Thank you very much. I hope you enjoy our national day, and... Visca Catalunya!