



Statement by the President of Catalonia

Barcelona, October 8th, 2018

Ministers, High Representative Mogherini, Commissioner Hahn, Secretary General Kamel, a warm welcome to you all,

It is an honor to receive your visit in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, and headquarters of the Union for the Mediterranean's secretariat. Barcelona has played a central role in the creation and development of the Union for the Mediterranean and we wish to continue being a committed partner in future Euro-Mediterranean relations. We hope you will feel welcome here for many years to come.

Our sea, our Mare Nostrum, is a small metaphor of the globalized world in which we live. The Mediterranean is today the scenario of many of the challenges that we need to tackle urgently at a global level: migration; refugees; climate change; the need for efficient transport infrastructures...

There are, however, also great opportunities to be found. The Mediterranean is, and has always been, an enormous trading hub not only of goods and services, but also of ideas and cultures. A culture of trade that I believe needs to be enhanced and promoted. As President of the Government of Catalonia I am fully committed to reinforce the human and economic exchanges between our peoples.

Catalonia's relationship with the Mediterranean is not new and can be traced back in time. In the 13th century, the Catalan-Aragonese Crown created the Sea Consulates, an institution that dealt with maritime and mercantile law and had the aim of developing a safer environment for trade and diplomatic ties around the Mediterranean. Catalonia even had a sea consulate in Alexandria in 1264.

In 1995, as the Barcelona Declaration was being adopted, over 1,200 participants joined the first Euromed Civil Forum. This action promoted by the Catalan Government became the blueprint of future forums hosted by the Union for the Mediterranean.

Today, many Catalan enterprises and social entities continue to build bridges between our economies, creating opportunities and developing skills that will enhance our collaboration. The opening of the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area (PRIMA), dedicated to research on agro alimentary and water policies is the latest of the many initiatives for the Mediterranean that find their home in Barcelona.

Barcelona, Catalonia and the Mediterranean have a common destiny, but we can't only look back at our accomplishments together, we have to look forward at what we want to become.



Developing a Mediterranean Macro-Region should be one of our immediate goals. Regions, cities, countries, it is time to develop our ties at every governance level in order to achieve our common goals.

One of the aims of the European Union is to share its best policymaking practices, those that improve the lives of its citizens. This is what the Union for the Mediterranean should eventually become one day: a Union that shares the best policies between its members in order to achieve sustainable development based on the mutual recognition of our achievements.

The Union for the Mediterranean should also serve as a platform to discuss conflicts and that affect us all. This is, for example, the right forum to seek common policies that help put an end to the deaths of so many innocent lives who drown in the middle of the Sea. We must face this Mediterranean reality. Every death in the Mediterranean should make us ashamed by our lack of action. We need to find a coordinated and urgent solution. As has been proven repeatedly by the actions of NGOs based in our country, and more importantly by the massive demonstration in favour of hosting refugees that took place in February 2017, Catalonia is a welcoming and open society ready to take on its share of responsibility as a reliable partner in the Mediterranean.

The current times are undoubtedly complex around the Mediterranean. Catalonia itself has had its share of political struggles, and been in the spotlight over the past twelve months. Several members of the former Catalan government and social leaders have been in pre-trial detention or in exile facing false charges of violence, rebellion and sedition for almost a year. We demand their immediate release and return. Social activists and artists, not only from Catalonia but also from other parts of Spain, have also felt the latest wave of repression.

Last year the referendum of October 1st was met with the violence of the police sent by the Spanish government to Catalonia. However, 2,2 million people dared to vote despite it and 90% voted for independence. Today our government is committed to continue this non-violent struggle for self-determination and fulfill it according to the democratic will of Catalan citizens.

In the face of adversity, let us be guided by our common search for justice and peace. Let us put dialogue and cooperation at the forefront of the Euro-Mediterranean relations as a means to reach solutions as we have done in the past and will undeniably do in the future.

I hope that your discussions will be fruitful and that the cooperation and solidarity among our nations will increase in the coming months and years. I am sure that Barcelona will continue to contribute solutions to the challenges of the peoples around our sea.

Thank you for your attention,

Quim Torra i Pla
President of the Government of Catalonia