



Euskadiko Lehendakaria
El Lehendakari de Euskadi

Vitoria-Gasteiz, December 2016

Munduko euskaldunok, lagun agurgarriok,

I am writing these lines to you now that the new Basque Government has recently been formed.

The beginning of this year, which is now coming to an end, saw the visible launch of Donostia as the European Capital of Culture 2016. A real opportunity for our Country that has allowed us to insist on the need to build bridges between those who are different as the foundation for coexistence within Europe and the world: two spaces for global interaction that have to be erected from the values of respect and openness.

This year has also been remarkable for the celebration of the 80th anniversary since the creation of the first Basque Government, presided over by Lehendakari José Antonio Aguirre. We have also remembered the 75th anniversary of his journey into exile via Berlin to New York, with an intermediate stay in Montevideo. These are three cities that currently house active Basque communities and euskal etxeak.

Lehendakari Aguirre had to face transcendental and extremely difficult years. He formed his Government during the Spanish Civil War, which was followed by the outbreak of the Second World War. In those days, the idea of making democratic principles and the civilized comparison of positions prevailed in Europe and the world seemed like a dream of visionaries. Aguirre and his Government was one of them, and history has proved him right.

This memory is our commitment today. Keeping the flame of the Basque Country burning is the best tribute to our forefathers. We have the opportunity to continue working together for the ideals of democracy, peace, dialogue, integration and progress in our society and worldwide. To continue deploying our economic, cultural, social and solidarity activity internationally.

Today we maintain this same spirit and the priorities program, with the year 2020 as our horizon. In the Basque Government we have set ourselves some very demanding challenges:

- The promotion of human development, social integration and equality as well as the guarantee of quality social services for everybody.
- The generation of more and higher quality employment, economic recovery and sustainability.
- Making progress in Coexistence and Human Rights so that, with Peace confirmed in the Basque Country, an authentic social coming together is achieved.
- The updating of our Self-Government, combining democratic principle and legality in order to reach a New Political Status that recognizes Euskadi, the Basque Country, as a Nation.

As occurs in other countries, we are facing huge challenges. We are aware that to overcome them it will require a lot of effort and commitment as well as the participation of the whole society. In addition, it demands an open attitude to other realities. As Basques, we all belong to a Country that has succeeded in combining the promotion of its own values, personality and identity, with a spirit that is always open to the world. Today, more than ever, we are called on to increase our presence and participation on the international stage.

At the beginning of this new phase, I would like to confirm that we are going to continue working to strengthen the Basque community abroad and to forge even closer relationships between those who are part of it and the Basque institutions. In line with this, we offer you a new tool: the Basque Global Network (www.basqueglobalnetwork.eus) social network, created with the mission to be the meeting point for all Basques abroad. I encourage you to join this initiative and trust that you will continue accompanying us on the exciting journey to project Euskadi to the world.

For Christmas time I send you, from the physically geographical Basque Country, my warmest greetings, as well as my best wishes for the New Year 2017 to you and all your families.

Eguberri jai zoriontsuak eta Urte berri on!

Iñigo Urkullu Renteria