

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE GOVERNMENT

1 OCTOBER 2017

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wanted to talk to all of you tonight as President of the Government of Spain.

A great nation, one of the oldest in Europe and one of the most developed in the world; a mature, advanced democracy, friendly and tolerant, but also strong and determined, which constitutes a State under the rule of law, guaranteed for all. Our nation.

I have always believed that my main obligation, as President of the Government, is to abide by the law and to enforce the law. To protect and guarantee democracy. But also to protect social harmony and seek consensus. To be the President of the Government of every Spaniard—of those who voted for me, and of those who never will. This is what I have always done. And **this is what I want to talk to you about this evening.**

At this time I can tell you emphatically what we have seen throughout the course of the day: Today, there has been no referendum on self-determination in Catalonia.

Today, every Spaniard has been able to see that **our democratic State under rule of law maintains its strength and validity**. That it responds to those who defy it. That it reacts to those who would subvert it. That it acts with every legal recourse available in the face of any kind of provocation. And that it does this efficiently and calmly.

Today, what we have seen is not some kind of consultation; rather, it was just a show. One more episode in a strategy attacking democratic harmony and legality.

An episode disconnected from reality and from the majority of society, and which therefore has been an unmitigated failure.

With this irresponsible political strategy, the secessionists have tried to steal the voice of those who think differently from them. They have violated the most fundamental rights and **gone beyond the most basic limits of democratic decorum**. We could clearly see this in the plenary session of the *Parlament* [Catalan Parliament] of 6 and 7 September, when in just a few hours they wanted to wipe out the Spanish Constitution and the *Estatut* [Statutes of Catalonia] with a single stroke of a pen, at the same time

as they were liquidating the democratic rights of every member of the opposition.

To claim that the arbitrary actions and abuses that we have seen since then could pass for democratic exercises is to make a mockery of the very essence of democracy.

We have seen conduct and attitudes that are repulsive to anyone who believes in democracy and should ever never be repeated again: indoctrination of children, harassment of judges and intimidation of journalists, to give just a few examples.

I want to make it crystal clear that those responsible for these events—for those that have occurred today and for those that have brought us to this point—are solely and exclusively **those who have promoted the violation of the law and the breakdown of social harmony.**

Foremost in my thoughts are the many, many Catalans who have been fooled when they were called to participate in a mobilization that was illegal, logistically chaotic, and without any kind of guarantees. I understand the frustration that they might feel today, and I am sincerely saddened by it. But I am also telling them that the way to debate their political demands can never be to break the

law or to impose on others, but rather, to engage in a loyal dialogue in which everyone can be heard and understood.

I want to affirm before all of Spain that the vast majority of the people of Catalonia **have not wanted to play along with the script written by the secessionists**. This is indisputable. Today, the vast majority of Catalans have shown that they are law-abiding people, in the noblest sense of that expression. Without noise and without fuss, they have ignored the call to the polls, and in doing so they knew that they were taking the side of democracy, the side in favour of social harmony.

I would like to thank them most especially. They have shown signs of great civic responsibility and of the utmost respect for the principles that underpin our society. They have been able to resist the onslaught of the worse kind of populist practices.

They need to know that all Spaniards appreciate their attitude. With a stance of respect for peaceful and legal coexistence, together we have built and will continue to build a nation that has been able to construct a **full-fledged democracy** and a common commitment to wellbeing and progress.

Throughout our long shared history, we Spaniards have been capable of **overcoming our most painful differences, as well as what seemed to be our most insurmountable difficulties.** We have been an example for the entire world due to our capacity to believe in ourselves and to make progress with every step. And that is also true today.

The Government has maintained at every moment that this referendum was not going to be held. **And this has been known for months to those who have promoted this act of defiance. They admitted as much this week. They recognised it with absolute clarity yesterday. And today, they have confirmed it.**

They knew that the referendum was illegal, inadmissible, and impossible. But they decided to go ahead, and to promote a **veritable attack on the rule of law and our democratic model.**

A conscious, premeditated attack, to which **the State has reacted firmly and calmly:** the referendum that aimed to wipe out the Spanish Constitution has not existed.

It has been avoided with the foundation of the law, with the support of those who believe in democracy, with the

determination of the courts, and with the actions of the State security forces.

Here, I would like to thank the political parties that have shown their loyalty to the State in these difficult circumstances; to thank the judges and prosecutors who have applied the law without fear of the harassment that has targeted them; to thank the State security forces and municipal police. They have done their duty, and fulfilled the mandate they received from the courts. It would have been easier for all of them to look the other way as such a serious attack on our legal system was perpetrated—but they did not. They have all **responded loyally, with a commitment to democracy and to the rule of law.**

I would also like to highlight and express gratitude for the unfailing support of the European Union and the entire international community which, at all times, has understood that what was at stake here was the validity of our constitutional system.

And I want everyone to know that **we have done what we had to do. We have done our duty.** We have acted, as I said at the beginning, **under the law and solely under the law.** And we have shown that our democratic State has the resources to defend itself against an attack as

serious as the one that this illegal referendum has tried to perpetrate.

Today, democracy has prevailed because the Constitution has been fulfilled.

From the beginning of this senseless process, and throughout today, we have seen how some have **tried to circumvent the law, breaking the bonds of social harmony, and the limits of public order.**

But what they have faced instead is the **calm and common sense of those who know that their rights and freedoms are protected by the legislation in force, guaranteed by the courts, and backed by the rule of law.**

Today, we all have reasons to trust democracy. We have seen the failure of a process that has only served to sow division, turn people against each other, incite disorder in the streets, and provoke undesired situations. It has only served to cause grave harm to social harmony—something that we must begin to get back as soon as we can.

I am saying this loud and clear. I am not going to close a single door. I have never done so. That is not my

way of engaging in politics. I have always offered honest, sincere dialogue. But always within the law, and always within the framework of democracy.

Social harmony in Spain has always been based on agreements. And it must continue to be so. **I will not allow the commitment to concord** of the last forty years to be replaced by **a handful of people blackmailing an entire nation.**

They have had **many opportunities** to desist from their illegal endeavour. And they have not wanted to. We have asked them **many times** to correct their course. And they have not listened. They had **every reason** to rectify the error of their ways. And they did not want to do that.

I hope that they do so now. And that they do not insist on repeating their mistakes. That they refuse to take another step **down a road that, as has been made manifest today, leads nowhere.**

Tomorrow, we must begin to re-establish institutional normalcy. We are going to do it, as always, **firmly and calmly. And also, in a spirit of unity.** Therefore, I would like to continue to count on the support of the parties that defend our constitutional foundations.

Therefore, I intend to **convoke all of the political parties with representation in Parliament to reflect, together,** on the future that we want to face, together.

Furthermore, first thing tomorrow I will ask to **appear** before the Congress of Deputies.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If there is something that I should highlight from this day, it is the confirmation of the strength of Spanish democracy, the effectiveness of our institutions, the loyalty of our public servants, and the unity and responsibility shown by the vast majority of our citizens.

These are very solid foundations for Spaniards—and therefore for all Catalans—after all these centuries, to continue united on the path of freedom, justice, progress, and living together in democracy.

Good night, and thank you very much.