

Declaration of October Eighteen

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Aiete International Conference and the end of the armed violence of ETA, the Basque pro-independence left wants to share with the whole Basque, Spanish and French societies, as well as with international public opinion, the following reflections:

- 1** Ten years after ETA announced the end of the violence, we can only verify the full compliance with this commitment. The end of its activity has been total and complete. It has also proceeded satisfactorily, as stipulated by international standards, with its disarmament and subsequent disappearance.

These processes are always complex, we must value the unanimity with which ETA made its decisions, which has subsequently avoided serious problems such as those that have occurred in other processes with similar characteristics.

Those who bet decisively, bravely and riskily on exclusively peaceful ways have reaped resounding and incontestable success. They demonstrated strong leadership.

In any case, success corresponds, no doubt, to the whole of the Basque people.

- 2** There was no trick, it was not a tactical calculation. Time reveals the unequivocally strategic nature of the decision that was taken. The commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means on the part of the pro-independence left movement responded and responds to deep ethical and political convictions. It is an immovable decision and it is forever.

The pro-independence left has proven the sincerity of its commitment and the fulfillment of its promises.

- 3** Moving towards a just and lasting peace requires the recognition and reparation of all, absolutely all, the victims. We do not forget any of them.

Today we want to make a specific mention of the victims caused by ETA's violence. We want to convey our sorrow and pain for the suffering they endured. We feel their pain, and that sincere feeling leads us to affirm that it should never have happened, as nobody could be satisfied with all that occurred, nor with it going on for so long. We should have managed to reach Aiete earlier.

Unfortunately, the past cannot be remedied, nothing we say can undo the damage caused, but we are convinced that it is possible at least to alleviate it through respect, consideration and remembrance. We want to tell you from our heart that we deeply regret your suffering and we commit to try to mitigate it to the best of our ability. We will always be found willing in that sense.

- 4** International experience shows us, and the Aiete declaration stated, that it is necessary to find a solution to the question of prisoners. It is an inescapable challenge for everyone, which necessarily involves putting an end to the exceptional prison policy and providing a comprehensive solution. We want to defend the active, resolute and decisive role of the prisoners in surmounting the armed strategy and their definitive commitment to peaceful and democratic ways. Without them it would not have been possible.

- 5** We reaffirm our commitment to defending dialogue, negotiation and agreement as the most effective and democratic method for settling and resolving political differences.

The resolution of the causes of the conflict is still a pending issue. The democratic resolution of this national problem is imperative. We are a people, a nation, that as such must be respected and recognized. Respect for our national identity is the first and necessary step to build a different future in which decisions correspond to the citizens of our country.