
FINAL DECLARATION OF THE 2ND WORLD CONGRESS ON BASQUE COMMUNITIES

The representatives of the Basque Communities and Basque Centres from Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Chile, El Salvador, the United States of America, Spain, France, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom, The Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela, together in the assembly of the final session of the 2nd World Congress on Basque Communities,

- Proud heirs of our roots and our ancestors who were welcomed by the countries that we represent in this Congress and where they so diligently worked for their development, for the welfare of their families and for mutual support between Basque men and women.
- Moved to see once again the wish that the Basques of the Basque Country have to foster, bring closer and project towards the future, their relationship with those Basques who live overseas.
- With the firm will to carry on working in our social surroundings and at an international level for the Basque people and passing on to our sons and daughters this moral obligation that is raised by the challenges of the 21st century.
- Aware of the historical responsibility that we have as citizens of this increasingly independent world and over which hovers the threat of excessive standardisation and globalisation, with growing difficulties and limitations for smaller communities such as the Basque Country, which is struggling to maintain its space in freedom and in harmony with this new international context.
- Seeing for ourselves with great joy and hope that we have found a Basque Country that has a social, economic and political development that is better than four years ago.
- WE DECLARE our solemn, unequivocal and permanent commitment to the Basque Country, keeping the Basque Centres alive and uniting the Basque Communities around the identity of this people which is ours and for which we have a profound feeling of fellow citizenship and, therefore, of joint responsibility regarding its national and international future.
- WE WISH for the Basque Country to reach, at the beginning of this new century a situation of co-existence in peace and freedom with the level of self-government that the Basque people wish to obtain. Many of us are a result of two centuries of political conflicts and we want to be the last children of Basque exile. With the moral strength given to us by being the first victims in time of this situation, we ask those parties involved in resolving it, to show generosity, dignity and bravery in finding an agreement that heals open wounds.
- WE REITERATE our firm support of Basque society and the representatives of both public and private institutions and especially our President, Mr. Juan José Ibarretxe who will always have our support in his efforts to bring peace to the Basque Country.
- TO THIS END WE PROMISE to collaborate closely with public and private institutions in the Basque Country in defence of exclusively democratic channels of action.
- WITH THIS SAME END IN MIND we require from state governments, supra-state institutions and international bodies, respect for the individual and collective rights of the Basque Country and support for the decisions that Basque society may make regarding its future, making it possible in the mean time to have a direct presence in these institutions and efficient overseas projection to guarantee the defence of its identity as a nation on the international arena.
- AND FINALLY WE STATE that over and above any party-political option, we belong to the Basque Country and from the geographical distance that separates us we offer ourselves to your public and private institutions for the promotion in our countries of your institutional, economic and cultural interests.
- We ask the Basque Institutions to attend to, and even increase their relationship and ties with Basques living overseas. Over and above the laws that regulate these relations and the legitimate interests of all, we wish to face up to the future from a position of unity, a com-

bination of spirit and action and the integration of all us Basques wherever we may be, in one common project. A territory, the space occupied by a people today is more than just a handful of square kilometres. It depends, above all on the will of its inhabitants and for this reason:

- We invite the leaders of the Basque Country and Basque society in general to build an area that overcomes classic frontiers, a virtual territory which brings the Basque Country to wherever there may be Basques, in this way setting up a world network of defence and promotion of everything Basque.

Vitoria-Gasteiz, October 29th, 1999