



Cambra de Comerç
de Barcelona

JOAN CANADELL I BRUGUERA
PRESIDENT

The Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation of Barcelona, together with the Catalan Chambers of Commerce, cannot remain indifferent to the situation in Catalonia and therefore we request the mediation of the European Union in accordance with the following statement:

A. For 15 years, successive legitimate governments of Catalonia have tried to negotiate improvements in self-government and in the finance of Catalonia, in particular to reduce the excessive fiscal and infrastructural deficit that some professors of Economics have valued at an accumulated 400 billion euros.

B. No Spanish government has negotiated during this period. They challenged the new Statute of Catalonia which was approved with the support of 90% of Parliament in 2005 and approved by referendum in 2006, with a final ruling in 2010. This led to the beginning of the so-called 'Catalan process', which has repeatedly called for a referendum to determine if the majority of the society wants to continue in Spain or enter into a new era as an independent State in the form of a Republic.

C. In October 2017, the Catalan representatives, with an absolute majority in Parliament and complying with their electoral programme, held a referendum with a large participation of the electorate, but this was met by a repressive response from the police forces of Spain. The Spanish Supreme Court jailed and forced into self-imposed exile 16 representatives of the government, parliament and civil society, 9 of whom have been sentenced to a collective 100 years in jail, after 2 years in pre-trial detention.

D. Last week, Catalan society took to the streets in the form of mass demonstrations and a general strike with broad participation, and once again the police response has been disproportionate. There have been unpleasant images of riots from the protesters, but also images of serious and unjustifiable police abuses of power that are not befitting of a consolidated European democracy. Serious injuries have been inflicted upon protestors, with many of the victims being students.

E. From the government of Catalonia and different business and social actors, there have been repeated calls to the acting Spanish government to sit down and negotiate, and the answer has remained negative, as in the last 15 years.

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Based on this, the chambers declare:

1. We ask the Spanish government to urgently set a date with the Government of Catalonia to find a negotiated path to resolve this political conflict, in accordance with the statement issued by the President and Vice-President of the Government of Catalonia on Saturday, Oct 19th.
2. We ask the President of the European Council, the president of the European Parliament, and the president of the European Commission, to demand a concerted way out of this conflict that has now lasted for 15 years and is seriously impacting businesses in Catalonia and the welfare of its population. Catalonia is the Spanish economic engine, producing 25% of exports, 19% of the GDP, and is the premier tourist destination of Spain, but it has been clearly mistreated by the Spanish state, receiving much lower investment than is deserved and suffering repeated breaches of the commitments previously made.
3. The fact that no Spanish government, nor political leader, is willing to talk with the legitimate President of Catalonia to find a solution risks placing the conflict at a point of no return, and will result in more mass demonstrations and more instability, and therefore will directly affect the Spanish economy and in turn, the European economy. We demand an urgent intervention from the European Union before it is too late.
4. We respect the protests of Catalan civil society, as the sentences handed down to those involved in the "Bid for Independence" have clearly been totally unfair. We call upon the protesters to remain non-violent and demand that the police forces act according to the European protocols. We condemn the acts of vandalism and the disproportionate police violence that we saw this week.
5. We regret some of the images shown by the media, but we state that the vast majority of industrial, logistical and services activity continue working as usual in Catalonia.

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