

Lehendakari's New Year's Eve Address 2019 - Iñigo Urkullu Lehendakaria:

*Agur t'erd!*

I am grateful for the opportunity to share this special moment as we end 2019 and begin 2020.

Very special greetings, on this occasion from beside the Tree of Guernica, to the Basque Community in all the countries of the world, a community that is searching for new horizons and new opportunities, while maintaining their identity and their link with Euskadi, the motherland, the *ama lurra*.

In 2019, we celebrated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Spanish Civil War. We commemorated the anniversary of the exile of Lehendakari José Antonio Agirre and his Government. We also celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the return of Lehendakari Jesús María Leizaola from exile.

Looking at the past helps us to reflect on and to be aware of the suffering endured and the obstacles overcome. The Tree of Guernica symbolizes and reminds us of our values and aspirations, our Historical Rights. And also of the injustices endured and, especially, the ability of this People to carry on.

In this framework, with this way of looking, I suggest we concentrate our resolutions around one word that summarizes the reflection on the past and the desires for the future. That word is "UNITE".

If there is anything that characterizes Lehedakaris Agirre and Leizaola, it was their ability to unite regardless of any differences, to maintain their cultural identity and the Basque language in the hardest moments, to search for what brought Basque society together in a context of maximum adversity. The Tree of Guernica is the symbol that unites, joins together, and combines the diversity of sensibilities of our society.

Today we're living in different times, characterized by profound global difficulties and uncertainties. We have challenges that go beyond one generation. Those are the challenges of Paris. We need to consolidate the appropriate conditions to face them, uniting forces and adding drive. That is my resolution and proposal for the new year.

- We are facing the challenge of employment

Quality employment, especially for the young. We know that nothing will be the way it was before the 2008 crisis. It's now on us to promote a new model for employment which is more participative and inclusive, new models for companies and employment. We need more *auzolana* to achieve more and better employment. That is our first goal.

- We are facing the challenge of the environment

This has already begun. The climate emergency, the energy transition, and sustainable mobility are part of our priorities. They are part of the agenda of Basque institutions and society. We need to unite commitment and ability to accelerate the responses and develop new sectors and opportunities

-We are facing the challenge of demographics.

There are no magical formulas. A cultural change is necessary. We need measures and resources to help families and the work-life balance. We must guarantee equal opportunities.

- We are facing the challenge of integration and solidarity.

We have presented a Basque Migration Plan, an agreement between institutions and social entities to share a positive response for welcoming and integration. We are a welcoming people; we must be a welcoming People.

Equality and solidarity are two basic aspirations of Basque society.

They are part of our identity. We have the firm commitment to reinforce public policies and advance in effective equality between men and women, guaranteeing balance and social justice.

We are currently in the middle of the debate about Basque Self-Government

What's easiest is to agree on that future ONLY between those who think alike. What's hard is widening the agreement between those who think differently. It means a change in attitude, a more open and inclusive way of understanding who "we" are as the Basque People.

The key is making the effort to unite, increasing the points of agreement in that respect.

We cannot rest on our laurels. Innovation, innovation with an ethical meaning that seeks to improve the common good, is the key to the future of our economy, our institutions, and our society as a whole.

We have to unite our drives to extend the culture of individual effort, of striving to overcome, and of collaboration: *auzolana*.

The year 2019 is ending. It's been a year of collective effort. Basque society and our Country, Euskadi, have continued moving forward. With hardships and problems, but it's been a positive year.

The new year won't be easy; I'm convinced that, once again, Euskadi is going to make it through; we'll move forward and progress together.

We must set aside that which divides us and set what brings us together front and center, uniting our drive to face the challenges and make the most of the opportunities that lie ahead.

Under the Tree of Guernica, at the gates to the new year, I stress that what is important for Euskadi is to UNITE.

Agirre and Lezaola laid out a progressive path of everyday commitment, made of hope and anticipation for a better future.

They are an example and this is the model that we propose.

My desire for this new year is for us to throw ourselves into what matters, to focus on UNITING.

*Eskerrik asko, zorionak eta urte berri on!*