

SPEECH MADE BY THE LEHENDAKARI DURING THE CONGRESS  
INAUGURAL EVENT  
BILBAO, 9<sup>th</sup> JULY 2007

Kongresu honetara etorritako guztioi bene-benetan arratsalde on.

I really don't have to welcome people who are already in their own home, and you are in your own home here, the home of your mothers and fathers but also the home of your sons and daughters.

Welcome to everyone who has come from many different countries in the world. Welcome from El Salvador, welcome from Peru, welcome Colombia, from Venezuela, from Chile, from Argentina, from Uruguay, ... Welcome Basque people who have come from the States, from Canada, from Australia, from France, from Italy, from Spain, I hope you will enjoy your stay with us in your country over the next few days.

And my first thought, fundamentally, is linked to talking about languages. As you have seen, we have been speaking in English, in French, in Spanish,... because, well, our language, the Basque language, is the most ancient language in Europe. And there is a slight contradiction nowadays in the European Union: the most ancient language is not yet an official language in the European Union, but we will solve that. We have to work for that because the Basque language is our language but it is not our only language because the Basque people who live in the States speak in English, Basque people who live in the Pays Basque, in France, speak in French, the Basque people who live in Argentina or in Uruguay or in Chile speak in Spanish. So, the Basque language is our language but it is not our only language, because the Spanish language, the French language and the English language are languages of the Basque people, too, and it is very important right now to be able to speak several languages. I have been speaking with Gloria about that and this is the target for sixteen year olds. It is very important for people to speak different languages.

I am reminded of the words of Koldo Mitxelena, a linguist and universal Basque, which I once heard and they have remained with me. He said: "2000 years ago, what we know today as nations or states did not exist. Not in Europe or in the rest of the World. But the Basque people did exist. And I don't know what structures there will be in 2000 years' time, I don't know if the current States, today's nations will survive, but the same as 2000 years ago, in 2000 years time the Basque people will still exist."

And talking about languages, he added: "2000 years ago in Europe, we spoke Romance languages: Latin, Greek, which were tremendously important, and we Basques had to speak them, but we also spoke euskera, our language. Today the world speaks English, and Spanish and we Basques speak English and Spanish but we continue to speak in euskera, which must be some kind of miracle, isn't it? Considering we're such a small population."

And he said: "I don't know what languages will be spoken in the world in 2000 years time, maybe Chinese, English, Spanish,... and we Basques will speak Chinese, English and Spanish. But we'll continue talking euskera."

Orduan, orduan, munduko plazan euskal kultura eta gure hizkuntza kokatzea oso garrantzitsua da, eta hori denon lana da eta zeuek egindako lana gure euskal kultura eta gure hizkuntza euskara munduko plazan kokatzeko izugarria izan da eta ni joan izan naizenean EEBBetara, Argentinara, Txilera Joan den urtean, gogoan dut, Barilochean izan nintzen, eta hango jendearekin euskeraz hitz egitea, zuek badakizue zer den hori? Hori da ilusioa...

Pentsatu behar dugu etorkizunari buruz, eta gero etorriko da Gloria etorkizunari buruzko hitzaldia ematera.

Because today's Basque population is an open population. Euskal Herria, Euskal Hiria, There are 3 million men and women living here in Euskadi or Euskal Herria: in Alava, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa, Navarra and the French Basque Country.

However, although there has been no census made, there are approximately six million of you, Basque descendents living throughout the world. The Basque city "Euskal Hiria", is made up of nine million of us, nine million people who are increasingly united by new information technologies, nine million who in many cases we have not been able to meet: imagine all the things, aspirations, projects, ideas, hopes we had and today it is all within our grasp.

Globalisation does not deny local aspects, it does not deny the possibility that nations which are not States can work together. We have to weave a network of networks, in the field of the economy, in the field of society, in the field of wishes, in the field of concerns, in the field of projects. Today the Basques in the world can live closer together than ever before in our history. Today we are even closer. Today we can share not only the secrets of our hearts, we can also share our problems and our solutions for our daily aspirations, to position what before we called defining the role of the Basque people, the Basque culture in the 21st century. If we do things intelligently it will go well for us.

Batzuetan agertzen gara gizartearen aurrean munduan zehar biolentziarekin eta gauza horiekin eta hori ez da errealia.  
Herri langilea gara Euskal Herria, langileak gara, bake zaleak.

We are peace loving people, we are modern, we are advanced, we care about other people and pay fundamental attention to what intelligent societies should focus on: training their men and women. Societies which have well trained men and women, with the critical capability for analysis, will be countries and peoples, families and companies with a guaranteed future.

In these companies, these families, these countries, with these people, economic corruption will be impossible, political corruption will be impossible.

We've got everything in our favour. Basque society is a modern society.

In 2000 we attained the European average income. It was a great achievement. There were ten countries ahead of us at the time; in 2000 we stood 11<sup>th</sup> in terms of EU income. Today in 2006 we stand third in EU income levels with just Luxemburg and Ireland ahead of us. But look: it is very important for a Lehendakari to highlight these achievements and for you to find out about them because the media do not always show this country as it is, and it does not always explain who we are correctly. It is much more important that you know that we continue growing and looking people in the eye. We do not believe in the models which take effectiveness to its ultimate ends to the detriment of equality.

We believe in a sentimental economy. As Profesor Samuelson said “there is no economy without brains.”

And we believe that it is perfectly possible to look at the market fearlessly without having to stop considering people.

The second and final piece of information I want to give you is this: if we managed to attain the EU average income in 2000, currently earning 126% of the European Union average at the close of 2006, it is more important for a Lehendakari, for me, that this, that I am President of a caring population, meaning that we are also a balanced population. According to the latest data which was released a couple of months ago by INE, the Spanish National Statistics Institute, we are the second country in terms of balance in the EU. The rate of poverty risks, which is the parameter which measures this concept more realistically (what percentage of the population earns below 60% of the average wage). It is all well and good that your country has 126% of the European income level but what percentage of your country earns below 60% of this average income? So then: we have 9.5%, which puts us 2<sup>nd</sup> in Europe.

Not only are we third in income levels. And this is the most important thing for me, because I can see that if, at some point, the Basque people stop caring for each other, they will also stop being a people and stop being Basque. We have been capable not only of growing but also putting a face to the growth and defending and leading a process of ethical progress in Europe and in the world: sustainable human development

And why has this happened? Fundamentally, because we have committed to training, training our people. There are no miracles in life. Ez dago miraririk. Prestakuntza da gakoa, pertsonen prestakuntza. Pertsonak eta prestakuntza, bi pe horiek eta hirugarrena, falta duguna, pakea.

But these two “Ps”: Person and Preparation And he said that with the one we were missing, which we will achieve, Peace, we have the three elements which explain the fate of the Basque people over the last few years.

81% of our young people, men and women, particularly those visiting us from Gaztemundu-, 81 out of every 100 people, men and women (83 women and 80 men, which is also something I, as Lehendakari, am particularly proud of because the 21st century is the century of equality), 81% of our people between

20 and 25 said they had a university education. This is the Basque Country's great advantage in competitive terms throughout Europe and the World. This is our great advantage: 74% is the average in Europe, 63% in Spain, to put this data into perspective.

And so where do we go from here? From here we should defend our identity without worrying about it.

There are people who, in honour of globalisation, have tried to sell us the idea that we should all end up speaking English, that we should all passively accept the rules and the processes of transformation which occur in the world today and this is not the case: societies have to have an active presence to confront the processes of change and transformation. It's not true, I do not believe in determinism: This society will exist in the future and we will have the level of welfare, for our sons and daughters, depending on what we do today, on what we decide today.

Also from the point of view of defining what is Basque in the 21st century. Joining this network of networks. We are a small population, that's true, we were small in the 14th century and we'll be small in the 24th century. We live 450 kilometres from Madrid and 1000 km from Paris. That's not changed since the 14<sup>th</sup> century. We are an open population. We are an intelligent population. We have to take into account all these things, but never abandon the defence of our identity, our personality, our culture and our language.

Because if one day we leave all of this behind we will become a sinking ship in globalisation, going from port to port driven by the wind and not the decisions we make.

Among the Basque men and women who live here and those of you who live around the world, we all have a historical opportunity to decide on the future.

And for this purpose we have to innovate. Innovation explains the existence of human gender. Radical innovation, radical innovation in approaches, because innovating involves committing to equality between men and women, because equality involves committing to sustainable human development, because equality means committing to sustainable and balanced development.

Therefore, the existence of the Basque people in the future from its political, social and cultural dimension, will be directly linked to our capacity to innovate.

And this is in a population which 20 years ago talked about Reconversion and nowadays talks about innovation.

These are fundamentally the majority of the reflections which you are surely going to develop in the next few days. We are here, in the Guggenheim museum, which represents another contradiction. Before I said "What a contradiction, right, that the oldest language in Europe is still not an official language in Europe." We all have to work to make Euskera an official EU language. How can it be that the oldest language in Europe, more than 7000

years old, is still not an official language in Europe? If it is just not our heritage, as the Basque people, it is the heritage of the European Union and Humanity.

But we are here in a demonstration of radical innovation. As a population besieged by the bad news which is permanently associated with it relating to ETA's terrible acts, we feel that now is a good time to put ourselves across differently to the rest of the world. It was not enough to say that we were a peace loving and hard working people. We had to represent this in something. And this house which welcomes us, which is the product of a social innovation initiative in the field of culture provides a cultural infrastructure, which shapes the new image of the Basque people in the world.

Through the Guggenheim we can see the symbiosis between tradition and innovation. The treatment of the metal structure in this building seemed to us to be linear, it seemed impossible that metal structures could manage the diversity of the curved shapes within them. So, the Basques can demonstrate to the world that this is also possible, because wanting to do it makes it possible. So we can also see through metal structures that it is possible to manage diversity, and possible to manage the future.

Here we are drinking new water from an old spring. As the poet Artzek said esan zuena: "Iturri zaharretik edaten dut, ur berria edaten, beti berri den ura, betiko iturri zaharretik",...

Look how we can define the history of a population in fewer words. "I am drinking water from the old spring." With all due respect to the author, I'll offer my own translation: "I am drinking new water. Always new water from the same old spring." This is the Basque People: a population which is 7000 years old. Our parents and grandparents drank from this spring, as did all those Basques wandering the earth and today, I have been commenting with Gloria, we are all drinking it: new water in the 21st century, new water from the old spring of the oldest population in Europe. This represents what we can do: we have to offer new water to our sons and daughters from the spring which our parents and grandparents drank from.

This is the evolution which we have to pursue, which an intelligent population has to commit to. I believe that the Basque population is really an intelligent population.

Eta bukatzeko, Gaur errekonozimendu batzuk egin ditugu. Bene-benetan momentu aproposa jendea gogoratzeko, eta zeuek egindakoa gogoratzeko eta gogorarazteko euskal gizarteari hemen Euskadin zuek egindako lana: euskera euskal kultura, gure pertsonalitatea, gure nortasuna munduan zehar, bene-benetan izugarria izan baita, baina jakin behar duzue danak, euskal herritarrok, hemengo euskaldunok, harro, oso harro sentitzen garela zuek egindakoarekin.

Therefore, this is my last message: We have mentioned anniversaries for some Basque houses here: 25 years in Gooding, 25 years in San Francisco, 25 years in Madrid, 50 years in Paris, 100 years of our Basque house in Mexico.

And so we could go on to mention all 160 houses, which demonstrate what it is like to be Basque in the world.

And I, he said in Basque, want to finish by giving you a message:

I want to recognise all our ancestors, very directly recognising yours: they made the Basque people, although small in numbers, very big in the world. It has been made big by its honesty, our capacity for work, our solidarity, setting an example as we developed our presence throughout the world.

You have to be completely convinced that we care for you here.

That I, as Lehendakari, what I would like to transmit here today is affection and recognition of your past and also all of you who manage Basque throughout the world. You have to know that what we are going to be as a people, culture and language, is not only in our hands but also in yours.

And now I will leave you in the best possible hands, thanks to the old professor who showed us all, Gloria has followed the lineage of that magnificent reflection: it had to be Bill Douglass who set us running with "Nora goaz?"

We are going to continue finding out about the next stops along the Basque people's journey from Gloria Totoricagüena.

Agur, eta besarkada huandi bat denoi.