



ASSEMBLEIA LEGISLATIVA DA
REGIÃO AUTÓNOMA DOS AÇORES



Honourable President of the Parliament of Andalusia and Vice-President of the CALRE

Regional Assistant Secretary of the Presidency for Parliamentary Affairs, representing the Honourable President of the Azorean Government

Leaders of Political Groups

Members of the Bureau

Allow me to initiate my speech with words of greeting, acknowledgment and gratitude to Mr. President Juan Pablo Durán, who, during the last year, served and dignified the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies - CALRE.

Dear President, welcome to the Azores and, in particular, to Faial island. It is here that, for the past forty-one years, as many years as the Autonomy of the Azores, the Azorean Parliament is seated.



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My genuine desire is that you may enjoy your stay and that these days arise in you the willingness to visit the remaining eight islands of this archipelago.

We are nine islands placed in the middle of the Atlantic, different from one another, with specific features, but complementary to each other and mutually enriching.

I would also like to take the moment to express my gratitude, not only for the encouragement and trust, but also for all your commitment, dedication and work towards the Conference, which gathers seventy-four Presidents of Regional Assemblies and Parliaments with legislative powers.

Furthermore, I would like to show my full availability and willingness in working together, in close cooperation, during this year, for the benefit of the CALRE and our Assemblies, Parliaments and Regions.

Makila, the traditional baton of the Basque people, symbol of authority and respect and, for centuries, support for travellers, and that I have just received, will be my travelling companion.



A journey that will not always be easy but during which I will work hard and commit myself to meet the three main goals I proposed to achieve last 10 of November, the day I was elected President of the CALRE.

The main goal is to continue with the work developed by the previous Presidencies, focusing our action on the contribution of the Regions for the elaboration of European legislation, since they are the regional and local authorities that better know their region and their people.

Besides strengthening our action, and considering that Regions are one of the levels of governance closer to populations, it is imposed on us the responsibility of acting in what concerns the growing dissatisfaction and alienation of citizens not only regarding European institutions, but also to their regional and local bodies of governance.

Thus, we must have the capability of restoring their trust in political institutions through, for example, greater transparency in the exercise of our functions, the use of new technologies or studies about the political impact in their lives, thereby bringing together the citizens and the decision-making centres and



increasing their involvement in political life, also raising their awareness for the benefits of being part of the European Union.

The second major goal for this year is economic and social cohesion.

Consequently, the cohesion policy and the community strategy after 2020 will be at the centre of our programme. We wish for a prosperous and harmonious development with opportunities for all European regions.

Employment creation, specially youth employment, business competitiveness, economic growth and sustainable development are essential priorities for the work of European institutions.

Finally, it is also our goal to place at the centre of the debate issues we consider to be of the utmost importance for a Europe which is more and more aware, social and sustainable, such as:

- promoting closer relations between the regions belonging to the CALRE, seeking to boost synergies. The richness of this 28-member Europe goes through multiculturalism, different languages, diverse geography and even through outermost



regions, which cannot be seen as a constraint to development but rather as an asset, giving dimension to Europe as a whole.

- climate changes, which are often ignored, but have a tremendous impact in all aspects of our life, or had the natural resources not have such a categoric supremacy in what concerns human survival. Paradoxically, however important it may be, people continue to adopt behaviours which do nothing to preserve it , that is why it is important to insist on a global ethics based on the respect towards Nature and on the awareness that resources are limited.

- and gender issues and what we still need to conquer so that all of us, men and women, are treated as equals, with equal opportunities, assessed by our skills and no longer by our gender. It is also our responsibility to insist on a path of pedagogy and information that allows us to contribute for a fairer and more equal society.

I cannot end my speech without saying a word of gratitude to the Leaders of the Political Groups and, through them, to all the Deputies, members of the Bureau and to all of the staff of this Parliament for their support and for taking this path with me, a



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path which is made day-by-day and which is strengthened with contributions from all of us.