

**Basque Country – the End of a Conflict?
Seminar at the Finnish Parliament
Helsinki, 12-Dec-2012**

Gorka Elejabarrieta's speech

Dear members of Finnish society,

The Basque Country is living very important moments, after long years of conflict our people finds itself before a historic opportunity to put an end to the conflict that has confronted our country with the Spanish and French states. The doors for change are wide open.

A little over a year ago international leaders met in San Sebastian with representatives of the majority of the Basque political and social spectrum at the International Conference of Aiete. As outcome of the conference the international leaders presented the so called Declaration of Aiete, which defines a valid roadmap for the resolution of the Basque conflict. A few days later ETA responded in a positive manner and declared the definitive cessation of its armed activity.

But the conflict still goes on. The Spanish and French states, who were also appealed to in the declaration, haven't responded yet to the call of the international leaders and their policies towards the Basque Country haven't changed so far.

The political conflict continues to be unsolved and the consequences that this has generated continue to exist. In spite of the definitive cessation of armed activity on the part of ETA, throughout the past year the arrests, police harassment and the violation of fundamental human rights haven't ceased on the part of the Spanish and French authorities. Peace is not just the end of an armed campaign. Peace must be based on justice.

Firm steps must be taken for the definitive resolution of the conflict. The Abertzale Left has taken steps in a unilateral manner throughout the past years. But we believe that the time has come to pass towards a multilateral phase, in which all of us implicate ourselves and all of us take steps to advance towards a solution. All the agents must implicate themselves in order to achieve a just and lasting solution.

On the one hand a process of dialogue must be opened among all the Basque political parties to agree on a new framework in which all political options can be defended and achieved. We are talking about a democratic scenario in which the right to decide of the Basques becomes recognized and can be exercised.

On the other hand ETA and the Spanish and French states should start a process of dialogue and negotiation to reach agreements in all that is related to the consequences of the political conflict; release of prisoners, decommission, demilitarization of the conflict, victims, etc.

The contribution of the international community in the resolution of the conflict has been decisive up to this moment and as it will be in the future to achieve a just and lasting peace, through dialogue and negotiation. International agents continue to play an important role in the resolution process. An International Seminar will take place in San Sebastian this Friday under the title "Dialogue and Coexistence", another one will take place on Saturday in Bayonne in which different international personalities together with representatives of the political parties and society of the Basque Country will reflect on and debate about the peace process, its current moment one year after the Declaration of Aiete and the steps to be taken

to advance towards a definitive resolution.

I would like to conclude by saying that in 2006 the EU Parliament adopted a motion in favour of the resolution of the Basque conflict and asked every EU Member State to promote it. On Monday the EU was awarded with the Peace Nobel. We believe EU and its member states could and should play a fundamental role on the resolution of the last conflict within the EU.

Thank you very much