

Rajoy to the Catalan President: the unity of Spain is nonnegotiable

First institutional meeting

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USPA NEWS - The acting President of the Spanish Government, Mariano Rajoy, received on Wednesday at the Palace of Moncloa in Madrid, the President of the regional Government of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, which was the first official meeting between the two leaders.

The President of the regional Government of Catalonia, Carles Puigdemont, called on Rajoy holding a binding referendum in Catalonia on the independence of this Spanish region. Puigdemont justified its request on the "democratic mandate" which, he says, received from the Catalan society, although the outcome of the regional elections of September 2015 showed a 52% vote against independence and only 47% of votes in favor. The claim was part of a document with 46 demands that the President of the regional Government of Catalonia gave Rajoy at the beginning of the meeting, including social, fiscal and financial policy, and an extensive chapter on "breaches" of the Spanish Government in Catalonia.

The meeting was held in cordial terms, as the two leaders revealed in his public appearances after the meeting. Especially Rajoy, praised the interview as the beginning of a normalization of institutional relations between Catalonia and Spain. Rajoy insisted to the Catalan President in the unity of Spain is nonnegotiable and warned that "no law, no democracy." The acting President of the Spanish Government said he was "open to dialogue and to work on issues that need our loyal collaboration" because "I always thought that together, we all win."

"I am willing to speak because I have an obligation to solve problems that have the Spaniards living in Catalonia," said Rajoy and said he had asked the President of the regional Government of Catalonia work together to reduce the deficit regions. Catalonia is the Spanish region with the highest deficit, a "capital" problem, in the words of Rajoy. "The public deficit can't be reduced only with Government decisions, concerns us all," Rajoy said. The Spanish Government has decided to raise the level of deficit regions, but collaboration and asks them to make an effort to meet the objectives of deficit. "I hope the cooperation of everyone," Rajoy said.

He also asked Catalan cooperation to reduce the level of confrontation between Catalonia and Spain. The Spanish Government submitted during the last term of more than 40 appeals of unconstitutionality against Catalan laws, while the regional Government of Catalonia presented 29 against decisions of the Government of Madrid. Puigdemont said that in his meeting with Rajoy was "will" to reach agreement, but refused to say whether after this interview the institutional deadlock between Catalonia and Spain is over. "It's early to see it," said the President of the regional government of Catalonia.

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