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## The Catalan Prime Minister at the closing ceremony of the Architecture Congress

### Imatge:

El president de la Generalitat de Catalunya, Carles Puigdemont, a la cloenda del Congrés d'Arquitectura 2016

Putting an end to six months of a participatory process was a challenge, to say the least. The chosen venue was Sant Antoni Market... under (re)construction. A privileged venue, because few people had accessed it before. In the underground space, where the closing ceremony of the Congress was held, archaeological remains from several eras could be observed in plain sight; such as the wall of the bastion of Sant Antoni - part of the old city walls - and, at the same time, part of the retaining wall - belonging to the second city walls-, both lit throughout the night.

November 25th will be remembered as the closing date of the 2016 Architecture Congress but, above all, because it laid the foundations for architecture in the coming years. The Dean of the Architects' Association of Catalonia, **Lluís Comeron**, presented the conclusions of the

Congress to 800 attendees.

Comeron celebrated the fact that the Law on Architecture, currently being processed at the Parliament of Catalonia, makes it clear that "architecture involves general interest", conveying its necessary social role in improving social good. Architects "are committed with the development of a sustainable, equitable and inclusive urban environment", Comeron said.

The Dean of the Architects' Association reviewed all the conclusions reached during the last week of synthesis, as a result of the events held and papers received during the past six months: the future of architecture. Thus, the Dean spoke about the quality of architecture contests, which demand "transparent processes, and the presence of qualified juries". He also highlighted the global challenge faced by climate change, the New Urban Agenda and the right to housing. Comeron closed his statement and gave way to the Generalitat's Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister, **Carles Puigdemont**, made the institutional closure speech. "At this Congress, you resolved not to avoid problems, some of them deeply transcendent, but also did not avoid the challenges and opportunities approaching", the PM pointed out, and "you did it with courage and determination, which is what countries need in order to move forward, and what Catalonia needs to grow and progress as a country".

In this respect, Puigdemont made a call to "reflecting and sharing where we need to move towards" as a country, taking into consideration every transformation occurred around us. "We know the crisis is not only financial: it is a crisis of the model, but we are still "groping" the way to the future", he said. In his speech, Puigdemont asserted that "the success of architecture is being able to relate to change in a positive way, and doing it without losing its vocation towards future and making it available to the whole of society". "The gaze of architecture determines the collective gaze of the country", Puigdemont pointed out, and drinks "from the natural, geographical, patrimonial and social past" at the same time as it is expressed in the present and aims at "projection into the future".

Facing numerous representatives of the sector, who congregated at the Sant Antoni Market to listen to the conclusions of the participatory project opened by the Architects' Association of Catalunya, the Head of the Executive also stressed that Catalonia has passed several laws "along the same lines" as those suggested during the Congress. Amongst these, he highlighted the law on climate change, which "not coincidentally, was the first law that the Government I preside over passed".

The event was conducted by presenter - and architecture lover- **Oscar Dalmau**, who stressed the progress made by the Congress by including citizens in the debate on architecture: "there was a need to remove it from the bunker and taking it closer to the people". According to Dalmau, architecture is the only art you cannot disengage from: "everything is architecture, since we are born in a hospital until we die in a cemetery, all throughout going to school, our homes, our workplaces" and, therefore, we all must get involved in the spaces we inhabit.

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