

**SPEECH BY ENRIQUE SANTIAGO DURING THE CENTRAL RALLY OF THE
44TH FIESTA DEL PCE**

(Approved by the Central Committee on the 24 th September)

We welcome all international delegations to the Fiesta del PCE 2022. We welcome all the people who accompany us: guests, trade unions, social movements, territorial organisations of the PCE, the UJCE. Thank you for being here and a very special thanks to all the people, members and friends of the PCE, who with their work and dedication make possible yet another year this great event of solidarity, culture, demands and social and trade union struggle that is the Fiesta del PCE.

A special greeting to thank comrade Abdulah Arabi, representative of the SADR and the Polisario Front, to whom in these difficult times we send all our solidarity and support to achieve their goal of building a homeland free from any colonial domination. Saharawi people, you know that you can continue to count on the support of the Communist Party of Spain as it has always been.

Today more than ever, we live in an agitated world full of social and armed conflicts, a world that is every day moving away from the necessary creation of a new multilateral order, where collaboration between peoples prevails in order to build a model of human development that respects the limits of the planet and puts an end to the great scourges of humanity, such as social injustice, the exploitation of people, hunger, disease, the plundering of natural resources and the pollution of the planet, and the denial of fundamental rights.

Our planet and humanity have sufficient natural, scientific and technical resources for this, and only the greed of an insatiable system and the suicidal voracity of capitalism make it unfeasible. We reiterate that today the capitalist system, besides being tremendously unjust, exploiting human beings and predating resources, is suicidal in that it drives a development that is increasingly incompatible with the preservation of ecosystems, of life and, therefore, of the survival of humanity.

Although the capital and the forces of reaction, both conservative and ultra-right ones, persist in their desire to deny reality, the seriousness of environmental degradation cannot be covered up, even more so after a summer in which climate change, increasingly irreversible, has manifested itself with a disproportionate capacity for destruction.

The United States, still the world and leading military power, is a major proponent of maintaining the suicidal form of capitalist production. A country capable of putting global security at risk to ensure that its military and economic interests prevail, launching an aggressive campaign across the planet to militarily encircle those it considers as enemies that threaten its strategic interests: China, Russia, the free peoples of Latin America and elsewhere in the world, and the new emerging Asian powers.

Today, as so often have, we point out again that capitalism is human exploitation, environmental destruction and war for the benefit of a minority, which is why we insist on the need to build socialism as the only way to guarantee peace, democracy, and human rights. The current world order is characterised by just the opposite: the weakening of democratic spaces and the regression of human rights in favour of war as a political instrument.

NATO represents this paradigm of unilateralism for the benefit of the arms industry. NATO's permanente extension eastwards since the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union have led to the military encirclement of Russia, whose requests for NATO membership formulated by Yeltsin were previously denied by NATO.

NATO has not only given up on becoming a defensive alliance in which former Cold War enemies Will work towards multilateralism, but has also reneged on its promises not to extend into the former Soviet space. One need only look at the map of NATO military bases in the northern hemisphere to see the military encirclement around Russia —as well as China—, which has every reason to feel its security threatened.

Even more incomprehensible is the United States and his determination to interfere in the China Sea as if it were its own backyard, threatening the sovereignty of the People Republic of China, as evidenced by its constant intervention in Taiwan affairs. The permanent challenge to the People Republic of China seeks to

drag China into a new arms race for the benefit of the US military-industrial complex and to force China to divert huge resources used for the country economic, social and scientific development.

The new military alliances of the United States and its military presence in the eastern oceans and in Far Asia leave no room for doubt about its imperialist ambitions and its attempt to encircle militarily what is already the world leading economic power.

Our party has not agreed with Russia military invasion of Ukraine and we have stated this publicly, recalling that in relations between states, especially in the nuclear era, political diplomacy, respect for territorial integrity and peaceful mechanisms for conflict resolution must take precedence.

Today Russia is not the Soviet Union, nor is Putin party a left-wing party, but a nationalist, conservative and neoliberal party that constantly attacks the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, which has recently seen its candidates in the municipal elections threatened once again, falling victim to a campaign aimed at preventing its electoral and political growth.

But regardless of who governs Russia, the reality is that Russia has reasonable cause to be concerned about the placement of NATO weaponry on its borders, just as the US was concerned in 1962 about the installation of Russian missiles in Cuba. And it should feel threatened by the US drive to expand NATO eastwards, which is both unnecessary and counterproductive.

There is a shared responsibility for the consequences of this policy, as well as for the failure to comply with the 2015 Minsk Agreements. We are witnessing the biggest crisis in international relations since the end of the Cold War, a crisis that is changing global geopolitics, that has shattered any possibility of building a European security policy in the short term. Security will never come from more rearmament, but from policies of trust. Moreover, this war is increasing the risk of a nuclear incident in Europe, and is causing, in addition to human casualties, harsh social and economic consequences suffered both by the peoples of the countries involved and by the working class throughout Europe.

The misguided sanctions policy of the European Union is causing pernicious economic and social effects on the peoples of the countries that have agreed to them, even more so in Russia, the country at which they were aimed.

Just as we are critical of the Russian government, we note that in Ukraine we have been witnessing an anti-democratic drift for years. The regime that has been in place since the Maidan events, clearly influenced by the far-right, has been labelling as enemies of the homeland and pro-Russian agents all those organised expressions of the left or nationalist political forces that have questioned both the policy of intervention of Ukrainian sovereignty by NATO and the increasingly far-right drift of the Ukrainian government.

The Ukrainian government failure to comply with the Minsk agreements has been accompanied by the prior outlawing and repression of the Communist Party of Ukraine, which only 10 years ago, as the country third largest party, had its deputies forcibly expelled from parliament and was subsequently outlawed. The communist youth and trade unions and up to 10 other left-wing parties have also been banned and subjected to brutal repression. In Ukraine today there are no legalised trade unions or left-wing forces; no party that defines itself as socialist, communist or Russian-speaking nationalist is legal.

And the cynicism of the European Union in refusing to condemn this situation and demand its end is astonishing, but despite the seriousness of this war, there is a complete absence of diplomatic action, conflict defusing and peace building by the international community. The European Union has long since abandoned any mediation or intervention efforts to resolve the conflict, ignoring the fact that it will always share territory and geographical space with Russia. There is no doubt that it is in the interest of European countries to defuse the conflict and find a viable solution for the peaceful coexistence of all European peoples, including Russia, over the coming years.

In the process of monitoring the implementation of the Minsk agreements, sponsored by the now defunct OSCE, the European Union renounced an active role, leaving it to countries such as France and Germany, which ultimately failed in the face of the inflammatory attitude of the United States and NATO, unambiguously assuming a subordinate position to the US and renouncing any strategic autonomy.

European diplomacy should be working on reactivating the role of the OSCE in order to reach an agreement with Russia to end the war, which is an objective necessity for security and peace in Europe, instead of dedicating itself to sending arms to Ukraine and calling for the continuation of the confrontations until a highly improbable military victory over a Russia which is a nuclear power.

Our Party defends a clear and forceful proposal to put an end to the conflict in Ukraine: to immediately stop all military hostilities and to set in motion a process under the auspices of the OSCE, the organisation for cooperation and security in Europe born after the disappearance of the military blocs with the aim of ending the arms race in Europe, denuclearising it and establishing rules and agreements that guarantee shared security among all European peoples, both now and in the future, based on the commitment to a multipolar world.

The OSCE is the only security and cooperation organisation that brings together the countries of the European Union, the former countries of the Soviet space, Russia and other countries such as the USA, Canada and Turkey. It is probably the ideal framework for meeting and cooperation to redress this dispute.

China and Mexico have also made proposals for peace talks, with Mexico proposal, which includes tripartite mediation (UN, India and the Vatican), having been presented to the UN General Assembly in September.

We want to show our solidarity with the democratic Saharawi Arab Republic and its legitimate representative, the Polisario Front, especially at a time when the Socialist Party has unilaterally decided to change the historical position of successive Spanish governments. The Communist Party of Spain promoted from the parliamentary group of Unidas Podemos a proposal in the Congress of Deputies so that the Congress would pronounce itself maintaining the historical position of our country to defend the holding of a referendum of self-determination in Western Sahara under the auspices of the United Nations.

This has been the majority position of the Congress of Deputies and we are pleased to have been able to put on record in the seat of popular sovereignty that a vast majority of the representatives of popular sovereignty maintain to date the position of support for the legitimate aspirations of self-determination of the Saharawi people.

In Europe, the advance of the far right continues in these moments of anguish and uncertainty about the future. It is essential that we communists, and all democrats in general, wage a forceful cultural battle against the advance of the ideas and arguments of the right. The far right permanently challenges the values of solidarity, social justice, and equality. We are aware that racism, the creation of pockets of exclusion of undocumented foreigners —despite the need for labour due to the decline of the European

population—, and patriarchy are also powerful tools for the advancement of fascism and the most authoritarian form of capitalism.

The far-right government in Poland continues to restrict public freedoms and civil rights. We expressly call for the immediate release of the Spanish journalist Pablo Gonzalez, imprisoned for 6 months in Polish jails on false charges, which is a serious attack on the freedom of information that must be preserved also in armed conflicts.

The Hungarian far-right government continues to demolish the rule of law and the fundamental freedoms of its citizens, and the far-right has become the second force in Sweden, with the possibility of governing. In Italy, the pro-fascist far right was the most voted force in the last general elections held on Sunday 25 September and will form and lead the government of the EU third largest economy, 100 years after Mussolini march on Rome.

The USA has found an opportunity in the Ukraine crisis and the parallel militarisation of European politics to increase the sales of its arms companies and to position itself as the first supplier of liquefied gas and oil to Europe. The PCE will work to stop this arms race and we will use our influence in Congress and in the government to prevent the increase of Spain defence spending to 2% of GDP as advocated by the PSOE and the right wing.

Undoubtedly one of the consequences of the war in Ukraine has been the transition from fossil fuels to alternative energies and the decarbonisation policies needed to combat the serious environmental crisis caused by accelerated climate change, which is the responsibility of capital, as President Petro has declared in the United Nations.

According to the European Commission, we have experienced the driest year in 500 years in Europe. This reality clashes with a new form of denialism which, without denying climate change, claims that it has no consequences or is inevitable. Fortunately, the majority of young people are committed activists against climate change, making even more evident the gap between governments that do not act and a majority of young people who demand action.

The changes in the economic and productive model needed to stop climate change are an opportunity to question capitalism. The PCE and the communist youth will promote and participate in climate mobilisations and accompany the climate movement from a perspective of socialist transformation.

The energy crisis has provoked such an increase in energy prices that all European countries have had to rethink the policies of limiting interventionism in this strategic sector. Our party and Izquierda Unida, as well as the whole political space of Unidas Podemos, have been defending for a long time the intervention of the energy sector in our country, first of all with measures such as the nationalisation of this strategic sector, and also demanding the immediate creation of a public energy company and the strengthening of the community sector for the production of alternative energies. And secondly, with a forceful policy to limit prices and distribute aid to the most vulnerable groups, in order to combat and eradicate energy poverty and avoid the unjustified enrichment of large energy companies taking advantage of this crisis.

The maintenance in the hands of the Public Administrations of the hydroelectric dams, whose concessions to private companies have been expiring over the last year, the so-called Iberian exception, the implementation of energy bonds and the tax on the extraordinary profits of energy and banking companies should be considered as a first step that should not distract us from our fundamental objective of ensuring that our country has a public energy sector that guarantees prices safe from market speculation.

In spite of all that remains to be done, we must claim that it has been our presence in the Spanish Government that has meant that our country has made the most progress in the European Union and has led these policies of intervention in the energy sector.

It was Spain position that made the agreement of 9 September last possible, reached by the representatives of the 27 countries of the European Union. Three points of the agreement are particularly important:

- 1) Cutting the profits of energy generating companies that do not depend on gas.
- 2) Imposing an extraordinary tax on oil companies.
- 3) Reducing consumption.

Even so, being aware of the neoliberal character of the EU economic policies, we denounce that the policies of regulating access to energy according to purchasing power are being maintained.

We radically amend these principles and state that it is necessary to guarantee energy that ensures a dignified life for workers and at affordable prices. The energy crisis and the rise in raw materials has provoked a brutal increase in inflation that is significantly limiting the improvements in workers' salaries and pensions achieved in recent years thanks to the determined action of the Ministry of Labour, the trade unions and Unidas Podemos.

The working class is thus paying the consequences of the crisis that has been aggravated by the war in Ukraine. The increase in prices caused by a deregulated and irrational energy market and the overpricing that is being generated with the excuse of the war, has led us to an inflation rate of 10 %, while wages are stagnating or falling, to which the impact of the rise in mortgages due to the increase in interest rates irresponsibly decided by the European Central Bank must be added, further highlighting the serious error of having given this body absolute independence from the political leadership of the European Union and total autonomy to decide its policies. The European Central Bank must be placed under the political control of governments in order to prevent it from pursuing neo-liberal, anti-grassroots policies.

In 2021, 80% of the country lowest-income households, the working class, spent 1,407 euros per month on basic necessities. The rise in electricity, gas and energy prices has meant 173 euros more, food has increased by 53 euros and other basic goods by 35 euros in total. Add to this considerable rise another 150 euros on average due to the ECB's rate increase, leading to an average monthly rise of 411 euros per household.

It is imperative that this trend is reversed with swift action by the government, both to limit the rise in inflation and to give proper support to working men and women and the most vulnerable people in this country. We cannot allow the burden of this inflationary crisis, which employers are largely helping to generate, to be placed on the backs of workers.

The demand for wage increases will be a constant in the coming months, with trade union mobilisations announced since October throughout Europe, together with other measures such as limiting the price of basic foodstuffs or energy or housing rents, or increasing taxes on the rich or extraordinary benefits, for which we have already taken a step in the draft of PGE 23, will be the engine of mobilisations planned in Spain and also in the United Kingdom, Italy, France and Germany.

The situation of rising prices and inflation has only sharpened the confrontation between capital and labour forces in Spain. The confrontation is clearly expressed by the aggressiveness of the political right and capital towards the progressive government and especially by the presence of Unidas Podemos and the Communists in the government and in the Parliament, which passes laws attacking their privileges.

The opposition of the employers; organisations to wage increases is obscene, both in terms of the minimum wage and by preventing collective bargaining for the updating of wages reflected in collective agreements. The opposition of banks, energy companies and big media groups to the approval of extraordinary taxes that would force those who are making insulting extraordinary profits by taking advantage of this crisis to pay more taxes is growing every day.

It is insulting that the right wing and especially the Popular Party has taken advantage of this situation to start an irresponsible competition to lower taxes on the richest, while at the same time doubling down on its demands to the central government to increase the financing of the autonomous communities, which are precisely the ones that are refusing to collect from the wealthy. With total impudence, the right is imposing a model in which the burden of tax collection falls on the working classes, while at the same time tax exemptions for large fortunes and extraordinary corporate profits are generalised.

We do not forget the hijacking of the government of the Judiciary by the Popular Party and the judicial right, for four years now, systematically failing to comply with the rules of that Constitution that they always mention and defend when they want to attack the left. They are also clinging to the control of the Constitutional Court, failing to comply with the mandate for renewal expressly included in the Constitution, with the clear intention of turning this court into a legislative Chamber of third reading to annul all progressive laws agreed by the coalition government.

Entering the last year of the legislature, the different points of view within the coalition government between the Socialist Party and Unidas Podemos continue to be evident. The position of the PCE is that at this time it is essential to comply fully with the agreement of the coalition government, and to go further in the economic and social aspects, given that the energy crisis unleashed by the war in Ukraine and the increase in inflation have left some of the contents of these agreements far out of date.

The Spanish government needs to approve further increases in the minimum wage and to undertake a much deeper and more ambitious tax reform in order to multiply tax revenue from the extraordinary profits of capital and large fortunes. We are pleased that our efforts are yielding results and that in the next General State Budgets we will see important changes to ensure that those who have more pay more taxes.

We support the trade union demands for decent wage rises, which will absorb the increase in the CPI and allow us to maintain a decent life for the workers of this country. The increase of the minimum wage to 1100€, the reactivation of the collective bargaining table for the increase of wages, the fight against the precariousness caused by subcontracting, and the adoption of more measures favourable to the working class, require broad trade union and social mobilisations that show that it is a social clamour to achieve these objectives.

Wage increases must absorb the price increases of 2022, the conditions of subcontracting and tendering must be changed to guarantee full labour rights and wage levels equivalent to those of the subcontracted job, especially in the service sector. A social pact must be reached for care workers, to professionalise care work and improve their working conditions, to ensure that public companies do not subcontract and to protect middle and low incomes.

Our political commitment this autumn-winter will be to ensure the success of the cycle of trade union and social mobilisations, called to achieve the above demands.

The first step was the feminist mobilisations on 28 September, the Global Day of Action for Abortion Rights. Because, if there is one thing that ultra and far right-wing governments around the world are attacking, it is women rights. Ensuring legislation that defends sexual and reproductive rights, and expands them, will be our priority task, now that the new Abortion Law promoted by the Ministry of

Equality has reached Parliament. On 28S the women and also the men of this party will make it clear, once again, that we will not give up on advancing feminist rights.

This will be followed, on October 7th, by the generalisation of rallies all over Spain on the occasion of the International Day for Decent Work and under the slogan of Wage Justice, to continue with a big demonstration in Madrid on November 3rd 2022, to which union delegates, affiliates and sympathisers of CCOO and UGT from all over Spain are called. We will give a strong united response to the bosses in the face of the blocking of the development of collective bargaining, and the employers' refusal to guarantee the maintenance of the purchasing power of wages.

These struggles to improve the living conditions of the working class and to defend their gains cannot take place in isolation from other struggles to achieve new measures of protection and more rights for workers. Spain urgently needs a housing law that guarantees this fundamental right, and prevents a basic necessity such as housing from continuing to be the object of speculation. A law that protects mortgagors from any threat of losing their homes as a result of rising interest rates.

That is why it is essential to move forward with a tax reform that guarantees the state the necessary resources from large estates and the profits of capital, to be able to meet the needs of the working classes in these times of crisis. The tax on extraordinary energy and banking profits will be followed by a reform of the wealth tax so that the big fortunes continue to be taxed, despite the measures of the PP in those places where it governs so that taxes are paid exclusively by the workers.

It is also essential to support the efforts of Labour minister Yolanda Díaz and Consumer Affairs minister Alberto Garzón to control the price of food and basic products, guaranteeing the right to access food for the most vulnerable people.

Winning victories to improve the lives and protect the rights of our people and our class is also a strong stimulus to boost social and political mobilisation, and thus ensure a correlation of forces more favourable to our positions within the coalition government. Making our proposals a reality requires permanent social mobilisation and participation, in order to overcome both the usual reluctance of the Socialist Party to

profound measures of redistribution of resources, and the frontal opposition of capital and conservative forces.

In the period of transition in which the space of the Spanish transformative left finds itself, it is also essential to raise the levels of social mobilisation so that this can subsequently be converted into electoral mobilisation, which is essential in order to be in a position to continue promoting an agenda of expansion of rights and social transformations in our country.

One of the main challenges for this political year is to successfully tackle the municipal and autonomous community elections. Municipal politics is a tool for social transformation. It is an area where the two-party system has never managed to occupy all the space. The left that we represent has always played a leading role thanks to municipal autonomy, despite decades of bipartisanship in other institutions.

The regime always had a gap through which the alternative, the hope, the real left could find its way: the town councils. It is in the municipality, the sphere in which the lives of our people develop, where all the social contradictions of our time are expressed and made concrete. It is in the day-to-day life of our neighbourhoods, towns and cities, where we see the dire consequences of neoliberal policies: the suffering caused by unemployment, homelessness, cuts in public services, the high cost of living and the lack of expectations.

It is also the arena in which our people organise to demand improvements in their lives, the spaces in which the alternative is built. The struggles for the preservation of the environment, employment and the primary sector in the face of photovoltaic macro-projects, relocations and population emptying, macro-farms and hypertensive crops, for access to decent housing, for the improvement of public services, for democratic memory, for equality between women and men, etc. take shape in our towns and cities.

From the town councils we have been the main promoters of municipal public services, participatory municipal budgets, neighbourhood associations, environmental protection, public housing, sustainable mobility, and today we are at the forefront in the fight against betting shops, against real estate speculation, against corruption.

Popular participation, programme and unity have guided the work of Izquierda Unida and the Communist Party of Spain to change the daily lives of our neighbours.

All our recognition and gratitude to our mayors, councillors and regional deputies, both those in opposition and those in government. They have been an example of dedication and commitment in the worst of the pandemic, demonstrating that in difficult times only the people can save the people.

The PCE must prepare intensively for the next municipal and autonomic elections, with the aim of making them a political victory for the left against the conservative forces and the ultra-right. We must work to increase our institutional representation, that of the alternative left in general, and that of Izquierda Unida and the PCE in particular, in order to continue governing where we do and to achieve new governments where we do not yet govern. And we also need that progressive majority in the towns, cities and autonomous communities to continue adding to the construction of a new country that needs to have a left-wing municipalist reference.

The municipal elections are not resolved only with a candidacy and an electoral campaign, although they are essential. To achieve our objectives we need a mobilisation of citizens and the people, a broad political process that involves our neighbours, that brings together movements and organisations, and that hegemonizes the public debate. Involve, add and hegemonize. To unite around some ideas those who suffer from the lack of housing, public facilities... and those who struggle day by day, all the political forces that make up the space of Unidas Podemos, and others who are more likely to join the process of adding up, to which we are committed.

The PCE will devote itself to building the candidacies of Izquierda Unida, to guarantee our presence in the maximum number of town councils, to form the broadest candidacies of the left, and to organise even broader processes when the conditions are right, and to go it alone when this is not possible, always taking up what already exists in UP and taking the necessary steps to add to the process of building a new country. In either case, the presence of the PCE and the IU must be a guarantee of credibility of the candidacies.

After the municipal and regional elections we will continue to promote participatory processes, with people and groups willing to join the process of expanding the space for change.

A new project for a country built with proposals arising from areas of participatory elaboration, which reflect the aspirations of the social majority. A process that brings illusion back and guarantees participation while offering workers, students, professionals, pensioners, young people, the elderly... to join in the task of changing our country, always taking firm steps to guarantee all human rights for everyone.

Our challenge is to expand the space for change with a proposal for a country with which to continue fighting for the defence of democracy, freedoms and our rights.

The political forces that today are part of Unidas Podemos, together with many others that in the different territories of the State also dream of a country that guarantees a dignified life for all people living in Spain, have the immense responsibility to contribute to this new process.

We will contribute our experiences, our militant enthusiasm, our capacity to create alternatives, our vocation to defend democracy and human rights in the face of the multiple and serious threats that we face today.

Only by adding and accumulating forces with each of these processes will we be in a position to stop the right and the far-right, to add up to expand the strength of the space for change, combining the strength of the trade union and social struggles, the strength of the street and the institutions, the strength —hopefully increasing— of our presence in the government.

We need all that strength, properly used, in these turbulent times in Europe and throughout the world, to continue to carry forward forceful measures to redistribute wealth and guarantee rights, to leave no one behind, to continue on the road to building a fairer society, a socialist society.

Long live the struggle of the working class! Long live the working class! Long live the PCE!