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The Lehendakari and the General Secretary of the United Nations during their meeting in the Tunisian capital.

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At a meeting prior to the world summit on the Information Society

In Tunis, Ibarretxe presents Kofi Annan with the Bilbao Declaration against the digital gap

Some days later, he travelled to Munich where he demanded a role for stateless nations in the process of European construction

Lehendakari Ibarretxe travelled recently to Tunis in order to hold a meeting with the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, to whom he presented, on behalf of the Basque Country, the so-called "Bilbao Declaration" against the digital gap. This document was passed at the International Summit held in the capital of Bizkaia a few days before their meeting and attended by 2000 local leaders from all over the world.

The purpose of the interview, which was described as "very cordial", was to secure an undertaking from Kofi Annan to discuss and debate the contents of the aforementioned document at the

World Summit on the Information Society which was inaugurated in the Tunisian capital on the same day, attended by a large number of heads of state.

Basically, the argument of the Declaration presented by Ibarretxe is that the new information technologies should not be allowed to eradicate thousand-year-old cultures and peoples and should not be permitted to generate even more differences between the citizens of rich and poor countries, but contribute to removing the digital gap, precisely by reducing these differences.

In this sense, the Lehendakari conveyed to Annan the message that stateless regions and nations, such as the Basque

Country, must join the United Nations to prevent globalisation from "generating war or poverty and to promote solidarity and progress for all the peoples of the world".

Meeting in Munich of regions with legislative powers

A few days after his meeting with the General Secretary of the UNO, Ibarretxe travelled to Munich in order to take part in the Conference of Presidents of Regions with Legislative Powers, where he demanded a more active role for "stateless regions and nations" in the process of European construction. ➔

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In his speech, the Lehendakari underlined that his presence at the Munich Summit was due to the concern of "stateless nations about the situation of the constitutional project", in reference to the crisis brought about by the rejection of the European Constitution by France and the Netherlands and the situation of "impasse" in which this project finds itself in the other countries in which the Constitution has not yet been ratified. "All the problems that have been created for the European project are the result of the fact that on numerous occasions, decisions have been taken without consulting the institutions that are in closer touch with the wishes of their citizens", he pointed out

In view of this, the Lehendakari favoured reopening the debate on the Constitution, without waiting until the end of the two-year period established by the Council of Europe to allow a greater degree of social involvement in this process, to introduce the principle of quality between men and women and to respect the identity of all persons. "Only in this way will it be possible to prevent the project from failing", he declared.

Excessive legislation

In another part of his speech, Ibarretxe expressed his concern about the "excessive legislation" of the European Union and pointed out that the challenge is to do this better "by applying the subsidiarity principle, in other words, the idea that laws should be applied by the institution closest to its citizens".

Finally, the president of the Basque parliament advised regions with legislative powers to collaborate with the European Commission in the preparation of reports on the impact that the initiatives of the Commission will have on national and regional legislations. In this sense, the Lehendakari considers that "if we are an active agent that collaborates with European institutions to legislate better, the role played by the constitutional regions will be greater in the future and their presence in the defence of the interests of the groups they represent will be better thought out".

The Basque Country is to have one of the most important scientific laboratories in Europe

The Basque Country is to have, in the not too distant future, one of the three most important research installations in Europe, making it, among other things, a reference model for the rest of the world in advanced therapies against cancer. Negotiations between the Central and Basque Governments, and more specifically the agreement reached between nationalists and socialists to support the budgets of the Madrid government, have led to an undertaking by the Ministry of Education to make the first contributions to setting up this major "technological laboratory".

Specifically, the macroinstallation would develop a technique called the spallation neutron source which, in the opinion of experts, would provide important benefits for medicine as it would open the door to the latest cancer treatment techniques. Radiotherapy based on neutrons or protons is much more accurate than traditional methods as it is possible to isolate the area for treatment with greater precision and to increase the dosage in the tumour without damaging healthy neighbouring tissues.

In addition to its use for medical research, the new infrastructure would produce industrial spin-offs as it would allow leading Basque industrial sectors such as the automotive industry, engineering and electrical, electronic and aeronautical industries to detect defects and to verify the uniformity of materials. Another area which would benefit from this new technology would be leading research projects in areas such as molecular biology, physics, chemistry, archaeology and engineering, among others

Located in Bizkaia

Once this project has been approved, initial efforts will concentrate on the creation of a consortium by the governments of Madrid and Vitoria, which is expected to be set up at the beginning of next year. One of the tasks will be to establish a definitive location for the new infrastructure. Several places are being examined, all of them in Bizkaia, as its promoters believe that it is important for the laboratory to be close to Loiu

Airport, the provincial hospitals, the Technology Power of Zamudio and the University. At this time, the Boroa industrial estate and the Ortuella-Abanto industrial areas are the favourite locations.

The macrolaboratory will have a total of 90,000 square metres and will employ administrative staff and 45 technicians and more than 40 top scientists, as well as other groups of researchers who may join the project at a later stage. Its construction will require a 300 million euro investment.

Other pioneering health research centres

In addition to the installation of the new laboratory, the Basque Country already has two others that are carrying out pioneering research into cancer and illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, schizophrenia and Alzheimer's disease.

The Technology Park of Zamudio is the home of Neurotec, a leading laboratory that belongs to the University of the Basque Country and conducts research into new ways of fighting against diseases of the nervous system. Scientists are focusing their work on analysing the molecular bases of these diseases in order to try to detect the irregularities that cause them and to design more effective drugs in order to improve the treatments in use at this time.

Ikerlan, for its part, is participating in two European projects. One of these aims to develop a rapid and efficient diagnostic system in the treatment of infectious diseases while the other will develop new advanced systems to diagnose cancer.



The Basque Country and Chile are collaborating in the study of bilingualism. The Department of Culture of the Basque Government signed a collaboration agreement in the area of linguistic policy with the Planning Ministry of Chile during the visit made to that country by Miren Azkarate. The agreement was signed by the Minister and Jaime Andrade, who is responsible for Mideplan, against the background of the First Seminar on Indigenous Languages, held in the Chilean capital in November, as a result of Basque-Chilean collaboration within the framework of bilingualism and the normalisation of indigenous languages. The Basque Government will contribute its experience in the process of the standardisation and normalisation of the Basque language and the indigenous languages of Chile. This "know-how" is very appropriate bearing in mind the revitalisation process of the Basque language and its recent introduction in both formal and adult education, together with the great differences that exist between the Basque language and those with which it coexists (Spanish and French), similar to the case of the Spanish spoken in Chile and the indigenous languages that country.

Euskadi, guest country at Expo-rural in Chile

The guest country at Expo-rural 2005, the main agricultural fair held in Chile, was the Basque country, represented on this occasion by the Culture Minister, Miren Azkarate, who was on an official visit to that country at the time.

The capital's exhibition centre was the meeting place for everyone involved in the world of agriculture in Chile, one of the main sources of wealth in that country. The Basque Country had its own stand where it exhibited Basque agricultural products with quality labels, as well as others produced in Chile, as a result of the collaboration between Chile and the Basque Country. One of the most important of these was Chilozabal cheese, a cheese produced in the style of Idiazabal on the island of Chiloe, with milk from Latxa ewes imported to the island from the Basque Country.

There are a large number of Basque companies in the primary sector in Chile, a country of great wealth not only from agriculture but also from forestry and fisheries. The results of the collaboration between both countries is taking the form of training courses in the Basque Country on winemaking, milk production, rural businesses and the training of Chilean personnel in agricultural systems. One of the main events of the fair was the speech by Miren Azkarate at the Seminar on Women and Agriculture, which was presided over by the Chilean Minister for Women.



Basque, a living language in the Southern Cone

The dissemination of Basque and Basque culture was the basis of the recent visit to Chile and Argentina by the Minister for Culture, Miren Azkarate. One of the objects of the visit was to promote the study of the Basque language and culture at university level as well as the Basque language classes at the Euskal Etxeas of these two countries that form the Southern Cone.

The Culture Department of the Basque Government has set up readerships in several European and American universities. The University of Chile and the Pontifical University of Chile have been offering courses in Basque language and culture since 2004 with the participation of almost 300 students. In Argentina, Miren Azkarate signed an agreement with

the FEVA to set up a library on Basque-related issues, which will also offer classes in the Basque language to answer the growing demand present throughout the country. Since 1990, three programmes have been undertaken to allow Argentineans to study the Basque language and to train Argentinean teachers of Basque to run their own programme. Six years ago, this programme was extended to include Uruguay and was introduced into Chile two years ago.

This academic year, there are almost 820 students of the Basque language (42 native teachers and classes in almost 50 Euskal Etxeas), in other words, one out of every two students of this language outside Euskal Herria are found in Argentina.

The Basque language is heard for the first time in a European institution

The Basque language has been heard for the first time at an official ceremony in a European institution. This "debut" occurred at the plenary session that the Regions Committee, a consultative body that represents the regions of Europe, held in mid-November in Brussels.

The person who was given the job of addressing the Committee in the Basque language for the first time was the Lehendakari's Commissioner for foreign affairs, José Mari Muñoa, who considered it "an honour and a privilege". Together with Basque, the languages of other regions such as Catalan, Valencian and Galician were also heard when the presidents of their respective autonomous communities addressed the Committee. The Regions Committee has become the first body within the European Union to carry out the terms of the agreement reached by the 25 member countries in June of this year, in order to secure the recognition of the co-official languages in the Spanish State. This agreement is similar to the one signed recently in the Council of Europe, which will also be applied in practice.

Specifically, the agreement recognises the use of the Basque language in the plenary sessions of the Regions Committee, although under certain conditions. Anyone who wishes to address the committee in this language must notify his intention to do so at least seven weeks in advance of the date on which the plenary session is to be held.

Etxenike and Lacarra are awarded the Research and Dance prizes

The Condensed Matter Physics Professor of the University of the Basque Country, Pedro Miguel Etxenike, has been presented with the Research Prize awarded by the Ministry of Education and Science.

On this occasion, the Jury, made up of 5 prestigious scientists, considered the work of Etxenike within the speciality as highly significant and of recognised international prestige. Etxenike is considered to be a worldwide eminence and has been

guest speaker at more than 100 conferences. He has taken part in seminars at universities of recognised prestige such as Cambridge, London, Munich and Tokyo.

The Gipuzkoa-born dancer, Lucía Lacarra, won the Dance Prize for interpretation, awarded by the Ministry of Culture for her achievements in major dance companies in cities throughout the world. The high point in the career of this specialist in Spanish classical dance came when

she was invited to make a guest appearance at the Paris Opera. The Basque dancer is considered to be one of the top four exponents of classical dance. She began her career in the celebrated company of Víctor Ullate, and later joined the National Ballet Company of Marseille. After working as Principal Dancer with the San Francisco Ballet, today she is soloist with the Munich Opera in Germany where she has lived for three years.



Euskaltzaindia puts the finishing touches to its Dictionary

After 20 years of work, the Basque Language Academy-Euskaltzaindia has presented the last volume of the General Basque Dictionary, a macro-work consisting of 16 volumes, initiated under the direction of Koldo Mitxelena and completed today by Ibon Sarasola. This work represents the culmination of a long-held ambition of the Academy. This dictionary, considered "the most important research work ever undertaken about the

Basque language", represents an essential tool for anyone interested in the Basque language in depth, and especially for lexicologists, philologists and grammarians.

The 16 volumes contain a total of 125,280 entries and 280,000 sub-entries. Each volume has approximately 975 pages, making a total of 15,600. The dictionary contains quotations from more than 800 authors and 2000 works from the beginnings until 1970.

Pollak presents his documentary on Gerhy in Bilbao

The North American filmmaker, Sydney Pollak travelled to Bilbao to present his documentary "The best sketches of Frank Gehry" which includes a large number of testimonies of well-known actors, artists and friends of this prestigious architect, author of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao. The film lasts 90 minutes and is the first documentary of this celebrated filmmaker, whose works include "Memories of Africa". His work is well represented in the film archives of the Guggenheim Museum library, and is used as didactic material.