

# AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA

by Francesc de Dalmaes

Dear Mr. President,

First of all, we would like to express our congratulations on your election to the post of 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. As has been said many times, your victory goes far beyond mere percentages and signifies, in America, Europe and a major part of the world, a dose of hope in these difficult times that are marked by despair and political, social and economic uncertainty.

We are certain you are aware, Mr. President, that this enormous capital of hope that you have been capable of generating also represents the major challenge of your presidency. There is so much hope and so much need for change in your country as there is in many parts of the world where your country, the United States, has a direct and often severe influence. Knowing how to manage this capital of hope during your time in office will involve setting political and economic priorities, from the first few weeks, and also drawing up a new geopolitical and geostrategic map for the US administration.

Our deep respect and recognition of your legitimacy and independence allow us to outline in this open letter some aspects of domestic and foreign policy that we find are essential to making your policies coherent with the programme you

outlined during the presidential campaign. As you know, decisions made by the American president have an impact far beyond your borders and have a global significance, for good or for bad. These few lines were written for this reason and it is the reason why they should be read.

In terms of domestic policy, you promised to ‘establish financial regulations and rules of the road that ensure this kind of crisis doesn’t happen again’. It is a goal that goes far beyond any specific strategies that allow us to confront the worst financial crisis facing the United States since the Great Depression.

You also promised to intervene in the labour market to generate the ‘creation of jobs that pay well and allow families to support themselves’. It is a show of support for the less favoured classes that you wished to complement with health reforms enabling you to ‘reduce the cost of health care and expand coverage’. All these policies are aimed at enabling the collective progress of your society. You completed them with a commitment to a new era in the US education system that will be able to revitalise your ‘public school system to make it fit to face up to the new challenges produced by the twenty-first century’.

In international policy, in a specific act of great symbolism you promised us you would close



Guantanamo and ‘in a responsible way, put a clear end to torture and restore a balance between the demands of security and the Constitution’.

It is an international scene in which you want to ‘effectively reconstruct alliances around the world’. A strategy that has to allow you to ‘pull US troops out of Iraq, and establish new activities in Afghanistan based on diplomacy and the desire to decisively contribute to the political, economic and social development of the region’.

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These represent changes in America’s foreign activities that must be accompanied, again in your own words, by work to ‘reinvigorate international institutions to deal with transnational threats like climate change, that America can’t solve on its own’.

From Europe we should like to add the need for your knowing how to win and maintain the trust of the European Union, in order that you become a leading player in both dialogues and

negotiations. This call comes from the Old Europe, which still remembers the alliance and sacrifice that led to the liberation from Nazism and Fascism (even those nations such as Catalunya that were deprived of said liberation and had to endure long military dictatorships). It is the same Old Europe that was divided during the Cold War; the Old Europe that is needed far beyond the devolved military coordination that is NATO and that requires, demands and has to generate a common foreign policy. It is a new Europe that is essential to restore your image and your actions in the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Central Asia; a new Europe that, like America, competes with emerging Asian markets. Above all, it is a Europe, both old and new, that must be a reference point of a certain idea of democracy and respect for human rights.

These are goals for you, as well as common goals that count on the initial impetus provided by hopes and expectations that you have had the ability to generate. Now the time for speeches has ended. It is the time for action. We wish you luck (and long may you find more) and that you count us among your allies.

With respect and our sincerest best wishes.