



Interview ▶ Diplomatic meeting with the Dominican community in Andorra

NATALIA MENA
ESCALDES-ENGORDANY
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–What is the reason for your visit to Andorra?

–I have come for a one-off meeting with the Dominican diaspora living in this country, so that I can have a first contact with our Dominican community and know first-hand the needs they may have.

–Recently, a whole weekend was spent in our country, where you got to know the ski resorts and different places of tourist and cultural interest!! What can you say about our small territory, after your stay?

–If I had to describe it in one word it would be magical, it is a very well thought out state, despite being small it has everything. In it you can enjoy tranquility, security, gastronomy, cultural richness, the best shops and a ski offer of the largest in the world, as well as the latest in technology, I would say it is in the top ten of the countries of the European continent with characteristics similar to cities like Barcelona, but with more glamor.

It has also struck me that, although the official language is Catalan, it coexists perfectly with Spanish and French, with the three languages being spoken at the same time as natural.

–What are your goals at the head of the consulate?

–In a general sense, the main objective of the President of the Republic is to provide a good service to our citizens, so the function of the consular mission is to address the following aspects: 1) The protection of our compatriots and 2) the attraction of investments for the country, therefore these are the two key axes of our work in the consulate.

On the other hand, we try to offer the most human face in our offices and this is what we also intend with this meeting in Andorra, to come here to discover the Dominicans who live there and to find a way to bring them closer to this well-being.

We also carry out the typical passport and miscellaneous documentation procedures, as well as advice at all levels; social, labor law, gender, as many people with different problems and cases meet, to whom we are responsible for providing solutions both on local issues in Barcelona and Catalonia and in other countries.

–How has the pandemic affected its performance?

–I was called consul in September 2020, therefore in the midst of a health crisis, so our cardinal agenda is clearly diminished, because we have had to exercise many logical restrictions for the time we were living. We are currently resuming the organization of national events, as it seems that the situation has improved, but the truth is that there has been a great impact especially in social terms of our own mobility and connection with our fellow citizens, as well as in terms of bilateral relations with entrepreneurs and investors.

However, some of the working procedures have also been modified, as



César Baltazar Méndez Pérez

Consul General of the Dominican Republic in Barcelona

«We are interested in creating an honorary consulate of the Dominican Republic in Andorra that will face our citizens»

we now serve people by appointment, for example, when delivery to the consulate was freely available. However, despite the circumstances, we have responded to everyone and all requests.

–How many Dominicans currently live in the Principality?

–I do not know this fact right now, precisely for this reason we are holding several meetings in Andorra to make an official uprising, however we will not get a certain figure, as to have the real number we must go to the existing institutions in the country, which will give us an approximate but not exact amount, because many are informal, so the volume of resident Dominicans may be something intangible.

To do this prospecting we are relying on the figure of Mr. Enric Dolsa, who with his vocation for service, his

history in this country and his professional career as a politician and businessman endorse him as a connoisseur of the territory, we want him to help us really identify how many Dominicans live in the Principality, what they do, how they develop and thus be able to protect them.

The aim is to create an office where they can offer answers and support so that they can channel all their concerns.

–Do you plan to meet with any Andorran government leader?

–No, not at the moment, officially we don't have anything planned yet, when we set up the Dominican Association of Andorra, then we will start contacts with the institutions and those responsible for different areas, so that they are aware of the reality of this collective and be able to establish ways of cooperation and colla-

boration.

–What is the relationship between the two countries? Do you have any immigration agreements?

–There is no agreement, it would be good if it existed, in this sense we long for it to be so, because the conditions that both countries have can open up great business opportunities, as Andorra despite being a microstate is a tourist reference and our main source of income in the Republic is precisely tourism, so we agree on our economic model, but with the contrast that Andorra offers snow and mountain tourism and the Republic of the tropics, heat and beach so we are not competitors but complementary with all the advantages that this can bring. Our visitor is mainly European, mainly Spanish, but also Andorran, today without going any further when shopping in a store in the Principa-

lity, the clerk who treated me a very nice Andorran highlighted the great human warmth of our town especially the natives of Puerto Plata. He told me that he was captivated by our heavenly beaches and our people. I must admit that the affection is reciprocal and that we have a certain affinity in the treatment and a great mutual receptivity.

–Last year, the President of the Dominican Republic, Luis Abinader, took part in the Ibero-American Summit held in Andorra, where his testimony was passed to host the next summit in 2022. Do you consider that this event served to strengthen ties and bilateral relations between the two states?



«The aim is to create an office where we can offer them answers and support so that they can channel all their concerns»

«Andorra offers snow and mountain tourism and the Republic of the tropics, heat and beach so that we are not competitors but complementary, with all the advantages that this can bring»

–Of course. Our President Abinader has a very concrete vision of what the country needs for its post-pandemic economic recovery and took many steps in time for the opening of tourism, he is really determined to open the doors to all enclaves that may represent an advantage for our State and Andorra is not an exception, therefore it is another attraction and considers it an important potential partner for the exchange of investments and business.

–You have been in charge of your position for a year and a half, what is your assessment of its management? What have you done and what do you have left to do?

–I am very happy, because the people at the core of the exercise as head of consular mission express their satisfaction to me in various ways, they feel protected by our administration, they perceive the warmth in the treatment and we they convey that we are making the consular headquarters their home, in short their home, which is what a foreigner needs to feel when he arrives at the consulate of their country. We are giving a service according to your expectations and therefore we are pleased with this, as

it is our vocation and what we work for every day.

We have reduced staff, but extended the hours, because sometimes the public servants accommodate us in the places, and we want to have free or leisure hours and this is to the detriment of the citizens, so when we arrived we made some changes. Surely you know the saying «new broom sweep well» and this was one of the priorities, first because it is our vocation for service and second because if we want to expedite certain procedures must be with enough time to do them. For example, the delivery of the passport that was previously from 21 days is now done in a week, at most 10 days.

–When your term ends, what is your

destiny in mind to continue your diplomatic work?

–Regarding the destinations we were given to choose three places and I chose Barcelona, Puerto Rico or Boston, I had the first choice, however we are instruments of our country and our commander in chief, the President of the Republic, who has been kind enough to appoint us to the front of the mission, so I am a public servant and I am under the orders of where he disposes me to be. I am a man of the governing team, I feel committed to what we offered our people, which meant a change of direction of the country and we are achieving this in many aspects of national life such as: the economy, crime, corruption and impunity with which it was exerci-

sed, issues that are improving considerably.

–How can the consulate in Barcelona support the Dominican community living in Andorra?

–Precisely part of our last trips, including this one, are aimed at creating an honorary consulate here, which will face our citizens and which can resolve issues of both their interest and the relations between the two countries. Choosing the right person with the necessary vocation to represent our community, I think we are making a great contribution and what we need is to expedite this management to generate a space with our symbol and our identity, which serves as a refuge and protection for our citizens.



EL PERIÒDIC

–What is your opinion on the conflict in Ukraine?

–Although we are very far away, this

type of situation affects everyone, it is an issue that has global repercussions, the Republic is a territory totally dependent on oil and gas, we do not produce any of these fuels and obviously these conflicts tend to shoot up prices and this has an impact on the markets, the stock market and so on. It's an unfortunate confrontation about mindsets that we thought were already outdated. In the Cold War we were closer, with more latent resentments and the button was not pressed and both positions were controlled; I don't know why now with so many people intervening and crying out for not taking such a dramatic step, there hasn't been a good result. It is unfortunate that at this time dialogue is not enough to control these egos. ≡

The Dominican community in Andorra is demanding an honorary consulate

Enric Dolsa is nominated as the best candidate to head the office

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Last Thursday, February 24, the first meeting of a representative sample of Dominicans living in the Principality took place at the Font of Escaldes-Engordany bakery, demanding more attention from their government. The General Consolation of the Dominican Republic in Barcelona, César Baltazar, attended the meeting in which he was able to meet first hand each and every one of the attendees, to whom he conveyed the desire to create an office to deal with channeling all their concerns, to be responsible for organizing significant activities of the Dominican community, and at the same time to promote the culture and values they have as a people.

He highlighted the quality of the representation gathered as well as the success of the call, which was promoted by Enmanuel Santana and Lucy Fernández, who are actively committed to achieving an organization that defends and protects their interests in a close and effective way, in the small place of the Pyrenees.

The event was also attended by Enric Dolsa, a great connoisseur of the Dominican country and its people, as he has had several business



EL PERIÒDIC

► The meeting was held by the Dominican community, with the presence of César Baltazar and Enric Dolsa.

ses there for a long time.

The Andorran politician and businessman expressed his willingness to collaborate to make relations between the two territories

more fluid, especially in the field of labor, in which he believes that a more agile mechanism must be sought in order to bring in workers from Republic in Andorra, coinciding

with the high seasons in which a large number of staff is needed for slopes, hotels, restaurants and other services offered by Andorra, as one of the best tourist destinations

in the world.

In fact, the profile of Dolsa as honorary consul was proposed, a function that has no financial remuneration, but which is a diplomatic task of great value, which can be used by both countries to promote their interests and bilateral exchanges.

Participants shared experiences and anecdotes, which helped

Enric Dolsa
«We can bring between 300 and 400 workers per season»

César Baltazar
«Enric Dolsa's vocation for service and his deep knowledge of the two countries make him the ideal candidate to be an honorary consul»

to create a relaxed atmosphere, as well as a very pleasant and emotional atmosphere, strengthening the bonds they have as a group. The event was a declaration of intent with a commitment to continue working in this direction to form an honorary consulate, which will ensure the protection of Dominican citizens in the microstate. ≡

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