

Her Excellency
Dr Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Ceuta, 16th September 2026

Dear President von der Leyen,

On behalf of the Government and the citizens of Ceuta, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the words you addressed to our city today during your State of the Union speech.

Your statement that Ceuta's border is a European border, together with your clear message that Europe stands with Ceuta, carries a significance for us that goes far beyond the symbolic.

Ceuta is Spain, and Ceuta is Europe. Our geographical position places us at one of the European Union's most distinctive and sensitive external borders. It is a border where, every day, some of the main challenges facing Europe become tangible: the management of migratory flows, security, cooperation with third countries, the protection of fundamental rights and, ultimately, the defence of our common European space.

For this reason, what happens in Ceuta cannot be regarded solely as a local issue, nor even as an exclusively Spanish matter. When Ceuta's border is placed under exceptional pressure, a border of the European Union itself is being placed under pressure. Your reference to situations in which mass movements of people may be deliberately engineered and instrumentalised as a means of exerting pressure is particularly relevant for a city that has recently faced events of an extraordinary scale.

Our experience demonstrates just how important it is for Europe to have mechanisms capable of identifying such situations, anticipating them and responding in a coordinated manner when they occur. The use of human beings as an instrument of pressure is incompatible with the principles upon which the European Union was built and therefore requires a response based on European unity, solidarity and determination.

For this reason, we have taken particular interest in your announcement today of a new European emergency response framework.

Ceuta wishes to contribute to this debate. We can offer the real-life experience of a European city that knows first-hand what it means to manage an external border under exceptional pressure and the human, economic, social and security consequences that such a situation can have on a territory of limited size.

Exceptional situations require exceptional solidarity. No European region, regardless of its size or geographical location, should have to face alone a challenge that affects the Union as a whole.

The citizens of Ceuta needed to hear that Europe understands our reality, recognises the European dimension of our border and stands by our side. Your words have conveyed precisely that message of support and belonging.

For this reason, President von der Leyen, I would like to personally invite you to visit Ceuta.

It would be a true honour to welcome you to our city and to have the opportunity to show you first-hand not only our border and our social and economic reality, but also something that lies at the very heart of Ceuta's identity: the peaceful coexistence of different cultures and religious traditions within the same community.

Ceuta is a city in which people of different faiths, cultures and backgrounds have lived together for generations. This diversity is one of our greatest strengths and forms an essential part of who we are. At a time when Europe continues to defend the values of integration, mutual respect, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, we believe that Ceuta offers a living example of how those values can take root and become part of everyday life.

For that reason, your visit would have a meaning that extends beyond our status as an external border of the European Union. It would also provide an opportunity to discover a city that, despite the complexity of its geographical position and the challenges it faces, remains firmly committed to coexistence, social cohesion and the European values that unite us.

Your visit would hold enormous significance for our citizens. It would enable you to see directly the particular characteristics of one of Europe's most distinctive external borders, to engage with those who work every day to protect and manage it, and also to experience a society in which cultural and religious diversity is understood not as a source of division, but as a shared heritage that we are determined to preserve.

Ceuta wishes to play an active role in European solutions. We stand fully ready to cooperate with the European Commission, its institutions and its agencies in order to translate the words expressed today into increasingly close and effective European cooperation.

Ceuta will continue to fulfil its responsibility as both a Spanish and a European city, while remaining faithful to the values of coexistence, integration and respect that lie at the heart of the European project.

Allow me to conclude with a conviction deeply rooted among those of us who live here: Ceuta is not at the end of Europe. Ceuta is one of the places where Europe begins.

With our gratitude and appreciation, and in the hope that we may have the opportunity to welcome you to our city in the near future, please accept my warmest regards.

Juan Jesús Vivas Lara