

# *Spain's Prime Minister Wants Dialogue with Rivals to Form Coalition Government*

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Madrid, December 22 (RHC)-- Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says his party, which lost its parliamentary majority in recent elections, will engage in dialog with rival parties to try to put together a new government.

"We have the responsibility to launch a process of dialogue to offer certainty within and outside Spain," Rajoy said in Madrid. "Spain cannot afford a period of political lack of clarity that would spoil the progress achieved during these years."

The Spanish premier warned that if the political parties fail to reach agreement on a power-sharing government, Spanish King Felipe VI will dissolve parliament. Under Spain's constitution, parties have a two-month deadline to form a government after elections; otherwise the king can declare new elections.

Chances for Rajoy's center-right People's Party (PP) to form a unity government look thin without support from left-wing parties.

In the general elections on Sunday, December 20th, the ruling PP won 123 seats in the 350-seat parliament – far below the threshold to enable it to form a government on its own; the Socialists finished second, followed by two new parties, the anti-austerity Podemos and the pro-business Ciudadanos.

The Socialists, along with the two new parties, have made clear that they will not back Rajoy in a new government coalition. The leader of Spain's Podemos Party Pablo Iglesias, which came third in the Sunday general elections, said he will not allow the ruling party to form a new government and will soon begin a round of talks with all other political parties to discuss alternative solutions.

The ruling PP has been criticized for policies that have contributed to a 21-percent unemployment rate. It has also been accused of corruption.

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