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Over 120 delegates from nearly 30 countries took part in the conference on the Barcelona Process and the Executive Committee meeting of Liberal International which took place in Majorca over the weekend. The Liberal Party of Gibraltar considers that its participation in the event was very useful. The opportunity was taken to conduct extensive lobbying by making contact with other delegates who were new to the conference scene and to renew acquaintances with old friends of Gibraltar. The three delegates from Gibraltar Dr Joseph Garcia, Steven Linares and Leslie Bruzon are now back on the Rock.

The Conference included a welcome reception hosted by the Island Government of Majorca which is controlled by Unio Mallorquina a member party of Liberal International. This party has sent representatives to Gibraltar in the past for National Day. The Gibraltar delegates were able to have a brief exchange views with the President of the Council and Leader of Unio Majorquina Maria Antonia Munar.

Gibraltar and South West MEP Graham Watson was also present in the conference in his capacity as Leader of the Liberal Group in the European Parliament. This Group now includes Catalan and Basque MEPs. The opportunity was also taken to renew contact with Graham Watson and to update him on the political situation in Gibraltar. Mr Watson also briefed the Gibraltar Liberals on the on-going work he has been doing on behalf of Gibraltar.

There was also a very useful session on cooperation between Mediterranean countries under the Barcelona Process. This process was launched in 1995 by the European Union to foster cooperation on political reform, economic liberalisation and social issues between the countries of the EU and those on the southern and eastern rim of the Mediterranean Sea. There was a very interesting session on the Israel-Palestine situation which included participants from Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Egypt and a former Israeli Minister of the Interior. The Gibraltar Liberals had the opportunity to discuss issues further with the Middle East delegates in one of the dinners organised as part of the event.

Commenting on the conference, the Leader of the Liberal Party Dr Joseph Garcia said:

"The presence of Gibraltarian delegates was mentioned in one of the local newspapers before we arrived, so additional publicity was given to our presence there. Liberal International itself has in the past already approved resolutions supporting the right to self-determination of the people of Gibraltar and on the Second UN International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. This means that the lobbying work conducted during this particular conference was different to the work that has been done in the past."

Dr Garcia added:

"The presence of Government Ministers, Parliamentarians and politicians from Europe, Africa, Asia and North America gave Steven Linares, Leslie Bruzon and myself the opportunity to put across the Gibraltar point of view to them. It was also very useful to learn from the experiences of other countries, particularly from other small states, and to exchange views with these delegates on how to handle different issues."

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