

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 118/2005
24 November 2005

The Opposition totally rejects the views expressed by the Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos and note that his latest statement confirms 100% the analysis that we have made on a number of occasions since the launch of the “trilateral process” a year ago.

To be fair to Mr Moratinos, what he is saying now reflects the position he adopted a year ago in anticipation of the creation of a process that, while separate from Brussels, as far as Spain was concerned is designed to permit a return to the sovereignty negotiations. It has been clear from day one that Spain expects to be able to take up once again the question of sovereignty at the “opportune moment”.

A year ago Mr Moratinos made clear that taking up the question of sovereignty meant resuming negotiations at the point they had previously reached by the Partido Popular with Josep Pique which was on the proposals for joint sovereignty which were rejected in principle at the 2002 Referendum.

The “opportune moment” would be, as far as Spain was concerned, when the confidence building consequences of the agreements in the “trilateral forum” had created a climate in Gibraltar which increased the probability of the 2002 referendum result being overturned. This analysis has now been confirmed by Mr Moratinos himself since he has actually made the point that far from failing to defend the interests of Spain, as the Partido Popular claims, what they are doing is the very opposite, by creating an atmosphere of dialogue and understanding in order to advance Spain’s interests.

Mr Moratinos has also made very clear that Spain believes that the co-sovereignty proposals were rejected because the “local authorities” of the Rock, the Spanish jargon for Government of Gibraltar, vetoed them because they did not participate in the negotiations. Mr Moratinos seems to be completely unaware, in spite of all the dialogue and understanding that is taking place, that no Government of Gibraltar has been willing to discuss let alone negotiate, the transfer of any part of Gibraltar’s sovereignty to Spain.

The Opposition want to send Mr Moratinos and the Spanish Government a very clear message. They are totally wrong in thinking that even if a Gibraltar Government in future were willing to take part in drawing up a joint sovereignty agreement with Spain, it would have the remotest possibility of being accepted by a majority of the people of Gibraltar. Madrid must understand that the reason for the rejection of the joint sovereignty proposals in 2002 was not because the Gibraltar Government did not take part in drawing them up, but because the people of Gibraltar did not want to see any involvement whatsoever of the Spanish state in our country, then, now or in the future.

Mr Moratinos says that what the “tripartite forum” of dialogue is doing is creating mutual confidence between all the parties involved so as to focus

better on the subject and at the right moment negotiate the sovereignty of Gibraltar. This confirms what the Opposition has said all along.

Independent of the merits of any question that may be under discussion, it is clear what the purpose of the exercise is. Contrary to what has been proclaimed by those who have been selling it to us from the other side of the border, including Mr Pons last week, the ultimate aim is not to improve the quality of life of those living in the Campo and in Gibraltar. It is to try and achieve for Spain with the carrot what they failed to get with the stick, they will not succeed.

ENDS