

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 76/2006

15 June 2006

The Opposition considers that Gibraltar's new constitution is none of Spain's business and that when he goes to Madrid next week the Minister of State at the Foreign Office Geoff Hoon should not raise the matter.

However, if the issue is raised by Spain, then Mr Hoon should tell his Spanish counterpart in no uncertain terms that the planned referendum on the new constitution will be an exercise of our right to self-determination. Mr Hoon should also tell Bernardino Leon that this recognition of our referendum as an act of self-determination will be contained in the additional preamble to the constitution.

In October last year, in his address before the 4th Committee of the United Nations, the Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano expressed the view that while the Opposition preferred for the UN to be involved in Gibraltar's constitutional process, given the lack of interest that the organization had shown, the Opposition would settle for recognition by the United Kingdom alone that the referendum involved the exercise of the right to self-determination. Mr Bossano told the UN: *"We wish the UK to tell Spain, in appropriate diplomatic language, that our decolonisation is none of their business and that they should not stick their nose in where they are not wanted."*

Our wish is to agree with UK a new Constitution to achieve the maximum possible level of self government beyond which there is only emergence as an independent sovereign state. That, is the only way Gibraltar can be decolonised and UK released of its obligations under Article 73e of the Charter.

Last year UK explained that it did not subscribe to your policy that Article 73e reports have to continue until the General Assembly decides a territory has achieved a full measure of self-government. UK's view is that this is a decision for the territory and its former colonial power and not the UN.

We do not agree with UK.

We agree with your policy.

However, since you do not, in our case, show the remotest interest in participating in the decolonisation process currently underway, we will have to settle for second best.

When our current negotiations are finalised and we proceed with our decolonising referendum, we shall hold UK to its word and expect reports under 73e, to cease."

This is the position that the Opposition has defended consistently in Gibraltar, in London and in New York. It is also why we have taken a stand on the importance of the additional preamble to the aspirations of Gibraltar to cease being a non-self governing territory.

Once the United Kingdom has formally recognised that the referendum is the exercise of our right to self-determination, it is a logical consequence of this that the status of Gibraltar after we have exercised the right cannot be identical to what it was before.

When Mr Moratinos wrote to the Foreign Secretary in March this year there was an ideal opportunity for Jack Straw to clarify to the Spanish Government that the referendum in Gibraltar would not be a mere consultative exercise but the exercise of the right to self-determination. This is what Jack Straw failed to do as was made absolutely clear by the Leader of the Opposition in his address to the Committee of 24 and this is what Geoff Hoon now has the opportunity of rectifying on his visit to Madrid next Monday.

ENDS