

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

7 September 2006

National Day Message from the Leader of the Opposition The Hon Joe Bossano

30 years ago the GSLP was founded to fight the position of the then British Government. This was that none of the 3 decolonisation options of the UN, then known to us, were acceptable to UK and that we had to remain as a colony and await developments in Spain. In other words, the position the Spanish Government has proclaimed at the UN ever since. Namely, the only option open to Gibraltarians is to remain as a colony unless and until Gibraltar becomes Spanish and is decolonised thereby. **We rejected this then and we reject it today.** Our position then and now has been to demand formal recognition for our right to self determination from the UK and to be able to use the right to choose the mode of decolonisation we want, to freely and democratically determine the new international status of a decolonised Gibraltar.

In 1992 as your Government we promoted the creation of National Day to mark the 25th anniversary of the 1967 referendum in which we rejected Spanish proposals leading to the integration of Gibraltar with the hinterland under Spanish sovereignty.

National Day exists for this reason and this reason alone. It is not a fun day, or a family outing. It is the celebration by the Gibraltarian family of its collective identity as a separate people with the right to their homeland and the right to nationhood, separate from Spain. Gibraltar should remain linked to the UK for as long as it wants, with ties that the UK itself is not able to terminate unilaterally.

This year we face fundamental issues including a range of agreements with Spain due to be signed on the 18th by which Spain will relax some of the restrictions imposed against us since the 1960's following our referendum. The terms of these agreements and what Spain gets in exchange is not known, except that leaks in the Spanish media describe this as an historic agreement for the joint use of our airport based on the 1987 deal and for a multimillion pound fund to compensate Spanish frontier workers withdrawn in 1969 by the Spanish Government. We will analyse what it all means when the deal is published, **but we want to make clear at this stage that we are not bound by it.**

Secondly we have a draft new Constitution where, for us, the changes in the text are not the important question. We have no difficulty in governing with the existing Constitution and delivering our manifesto commitments. For us the crucial question has been that the referendum on the Constitution must be the exercise by the Gibraltarian people of their right to self determination as provided by the Charter of the UN.

This is why we rejected UK's original position when they refused in March in London to give us an additional preamble which says this is the maximum level of self government UK will agree to if we are to retain our British sovereignty. We have now obtained a text that says this and a statement in Parliament that the UK accepts that the referendum vote will be

an act of self determination by the Gibraltarian people. However El Mundo has subsequently quoted Mr Hoon as having said that the answer he gave in Parliament had previously been negotiated with the Spanish and Gibraltar Governments. We are seeking an explanation for this.

Spain had said at the end of the March meetings that the new constitutional text would bring no change to our international status as a colony which would remain to be negotiated by UK with them. This Spanish position was not rejected by Jack Straw's letter in reply which the Gibraltar Government welcomed and we condemned. However one thing is clear that the UK's acceptance that the vote is an act of self determination is an important development. **Now that it has been said we must ensure it is not diluted.**

Remember even if you vote to reject the new Constitution you would still be making use of your self determination in exercising that vote so a massive turnout to vote is very important.

Finally, enjoy National Day and be proud of your Gibraltarian identity.

ENDS