

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 131/2006
26 October 2006

The Opposition has today contacted Mr Azopardi regarding his views on the motion before the House for debate next week, on which amendments were already being prepared by the Opposition.

The Opposition has offered Mr Azopardi the opportunity of suggesting any amendments he might wish to see incorporated to consider whether they are already covered by the Opposition's own proposal, or alternatively could be supported.

As a result of a general discussion on his main concerns, which have already been reflected in his public statements, one of these concerns had already been addressed by the Opposition in its own drafting and the other only involved the substitution of one word which the Opposition has been happy to take on board.

The Opposition has always wanted the decolonisation process to be closely modeled on UN criteria and best practice, rather than on questions of modernizing the text of 1969 to reform the Constitution. This has been well known since 1999.

The Opposition has been committed to supporting a tailor-made Gibraltar Constitution as the Fourth Option in the achievement of a full measure of self-government in order to be decolonised. The proposed Constitution is therefore one possible

example of such a tailor-made Constitution which would decolonise Gibraltar but would not result in the international status being integration, free association or independence.

As has been made clear in the UN 4th Committee this year, if the text has flaws or shortcomings, the Opposition would seek to lobby for these to be addressed with the involvement of the UN and the UK. Any changes of this nature to the text would not alter the fact that the decolonisation mode remained that of a tailor-made Fourth Option Constitution.

What the UN recommends as best practice in the dissemination of information prior to the exercise of self-determination, is that in choosing the best option for each territory, the implications of each option should be studied and explained in detail for the clear understanding of the people of the territory.

The UN position is that the best option is whichever one of the four the people of each territory freely elect once they understand the possibilities and the special characteristics of their homelands. The approach that was adopted in Gibraltar on the setting up of the Select Committee was to look at the existing 1969 Constitution and agree amendments to it, without going into every other alternative on the basis that the tailor-made solution was, in the view of all the participants, the best option and the one that should be put to the people.

It can be argued that a full and open debate on Gibraltar's decolonisation should involve debate on all the possible options and giving people the choice of voting on an alternative to the new Constitution, such as integration with UK, instead of simply accepting or rejecting what has been negotiated.

The PDP has called for a full, balanced and comprehensive information campaign and debate on all aspects of the Constitution to enable the most informed choice to be made on 30 November. Given that the proposed choice is "Yes" or "No" and that many people may agree with some parts of the Constitution and not with others, it is difficult to see whether any amount of informed debate can resolve this problem.

ENDS