

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 138/2006**  
**7 November 2006**

The Opposition notes the reaction of the Gibraltar Government to the statements made by the Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos in a Campo television interview which was recorded on Monday 30 October and transmitted last week.

The newspaper AREA contained an article which was written by the same person who interviewed Mr Moratinos for the television station which is in fact part of the AREA group. It is clear from watching the interview and from reading the printed text that the journalist did not attribute one single remark to the Spanish Foreign Minister that he had not made in the television interview.

It is therefore incorrect of the Government to assume that what was published by AREA in the newspaper interview was not what Mr Moratinos had said.

The interview dealt mainly with the agreement regarding flights to Spain and the use of the airport.

When asked whether the agreement meant that Spain accepted that Gibraltar's airport is British, Mr Moratinos replied that the agreement is similar to that of 1987, and that indeed Spain's position was made even stronger this time since it would be involved in participating in the management of the airport which is something that was not provided for in the 1987 agreement. Mr Moratinos said that for this reason the agreement left Spain reinforced and armour-plated when it came to the sovereignty aspect.

It is logical to assume that this is how Spain sees the acceptance by the Gibraltar Government to grant the running of the airport to a joint-venture with Spanish participation.

When asked whether the question of Spanish police controls had been difficult, Mr Moratinos confirmed this and said that it had been difficult but very fruitful for Spain because in the final analysis it was the Spanish police that would be responsible for the questions of immigration and customs. There would be no control in national territory of passengers flying from the national territory and that in a short time this would also apply to others with origin or destination in the Schengen. They also would be controlled by Spanish police and Guardia Civil. In other words, Spain would be left in a very favourable position.

This appears to be Mr Moratino's understanding of what he agreed in Cordoba which cannot possibly be a problem of language since there was a Spanish text signed as well as an English one.

It appears from the interview that what is being proposed for 2008, which the Opposition will not implement after the next general election, is not as has been stated here a mere convenient facility for advance clearance into Spain initially and Schengen subsequently if agreed. It is in fact something that Spain considers enables it to make use of our airport without recognizing it as a British airport and treating it as if it was in their own national territory, thus retaining what was achieved in the 1987 agreement.

Mr Moratinos, when asked about how things had gone during the two years that the forum had been meeting, said that there had been moments of difficulty but that they were fully satisfied that their position had been protected and defended, in the context that the priority objective of the Spanish Government was to recover the sovereignty of Gibraltar.

The Spanish Foreign Minister added that Spain's position on sovereignty had been strengthened following the agreements because of the presence of Mr Caruana in the process in which everyone had recognised the validity of Utrecht.

While it is true that the word Utrecht appears nowhere in the published text of the Cordoba agreement, it does contain a clear statement in relation to the isthmus and elsewhere that the Government of Gibraltar understands and accepts that the references in the agreement to sovereignty apply to the UK and Spain.

Spain interprets this as an admission by Gibraltar that sovereignty is a bilateral matter as provided for under Utrecht. This was made clear by the Spanish Ambassador in his speech in October at the United Nations. This is one of the things that will be rectified by us after the elections as we have committed ourselves to do since the agreement was published.

When asked about the effect of a change of Government in Gibraltar, Mr Moratinos said that this is the democratic process, but he added that any future Government in Gibraltar would in the end, he believed, adopt the agreements because they were

so good for everyone that they would have no option. It would appear, therefore, that Mr Moratinos does not think it is in his gift to permit or prohibit what an elected Government in Gibraltar may decide to do. It must also be obvious to Mr Moratinos that if the Opposition thought that those parts of the agreements that we do not support were so good for Gibraltar, we would say so now and there is no question therefore of us changing our mind in Government.

Indeed, when the Government of the day was defending the 1984 Brussels agreement and the 1987 airport agreement as being good for Gibraltar and some people were predicting that the Opposition would change their view in Government, this did not happen. Now there is unanimity in Gibraltar on these two agreements with those who previously thought otherwise having realized through the passage of time that these are unacceptable and were bad for Gibraltar.

The views expressed by Mr Moratinos have come as no surprise to the Opposition since they are entirely consistent with a briefing paper produced by the Spanish Government for other political parties in Spain immediately after the signature of the Corboda agreements. The statements in this interview, therefore are the way in which the agreement has been defended in Spain since 18 September.

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