

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 158/2006**  
**11 November 2006**

The Opposition totally condemn the comments made by the Spanish Foreign Ministry that Gibraltar has no hope of being admitted as a full member of UEFA in January when the member organisations of that body vote in the Congress.

This veiled threat suggests that the Spanish Football Federation, on instructions from the Spanish Government, is going to pull out all the stops to keep Gibraltar out. It reflects the continuing obsession of the Spanish Foreign Ministry to prevent Gibraltar's admission into the governing body of European football.

Spain is wrong to suggest that Gibraltar cannot be admitted on the basis that we are not a country recognised by the United Nations. What Madrid has failed to say is that this criteria was only introduced by UEFA in 2001, three years after Gibraltar's application, precisely at the behest of the Spanish Government in order to make certain that we would be excluded.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport has already ruled that Gibraltar's application must be considered against the background of the rules in 1999, when we applied, and not in 2001, when they were changed. This means that Gibraltar would be entitled to membership on that basis.

The Opposition understands that each national federation from each member country will have one vote in the Congress. There can be little doubt that every one of those countries will now be subjected to intense political pressure by Spain to get them to vote against Gibraltar.

The Opposition nonetheless welcomes the belated decision of UEFA to admit the Gibraltar Football Association as a provisional member.

In July the organisation had been instructed by the Court of Arbitration for Sport to admit Gibraltar at the next meeting of its Executive Committee in October. UEFA ignored the ruling of the Court on the basis that new evidence had been submitted by the

Spanish Football Association and argued that they wanted time to consider this evidence.

It has since emerged that the so-called new evidence was the Spanish claim that Gibraltar's sporting facilities, the Victoria Stadium, were built on disputed land. The Opposition totally reject this claim.

However, the argument used by the Spanish Government in their quest to exclude Gibraltar from UEFA shows the danger of accepting in any way that there is a dispute over the isthmus.

The recognition of this dispute was implicitly contained in the Brussels Agreement of 1984 and more clearly in the Airport Agreement of 1987 and the European Court pleading which followed. It was, however, explicit in the Corboda Agreement of 2006.

This shows that Spain will have no hesitation in using such a recognition against Gibraltar when it suits her own political interests. The analysis issued by the Opposition earlier this week on the new airport agreement have been proved to be correct in a very short time.

This is why the Opposition has made it clear that we do not recognise, understand or accept that there is a dispute over the isthmus and in Government we would write to the United Kingdom and Spain and tell them so.

The Opposition sincerely hopes that our sportsmen and women are not prejudiced in any way by this latest development when the vote takes place at the UEFA Congress in Dusseldorf at the end of January.

ENDS