

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 97/2007

24 October 2007

The Opposition note that, as we predicted a year ago and have repeated on many occasions since, the United Nations 4th Committee has again approved without a vote the consensus decision on Gibraltar. This now goes forward for the approval of the whole General Assembly in December.

The only difference between the consensus approved last year and this latest one is that this time the UN consensus decision welcomes the implementation to date of the Cordoba agreement. To date, this has resulted so far in £ 25 million being paid out to former Spanish workers, who stopped paying social insurance in 1969, by way of compensation for frozen pensions. The same payments have not been made to anybody else who continued contributing when the frontier was closed.

It needs to be understood that none of this constitutes approval by the UN of what has been done, since the wording, submitted jointly by the UK and Spain, is approved without a vote. The rest of the decision is identical to what was passed a year ago before the referendum had taken place.

The consensus decision urges the UK and Spanish Governments to reach a definitive solution to Gibraltar's decolonisation in the spirit of the Brussels agreement of 1984, while at the same time listening to the interests and aspirations of Gibraltar.

It is clear that notwithstanding that the 2006 referendum and constitution created a modern and mature relationship with Gibraltar, which UK claims cannot be said to be based on colonialism, UK's position at the UN has not changed. It is in fact word for word identical to what it was supporting before the referendum and before the new constitution came into effect.

The verbal statement explaining the position of the UK for the record does not in fact alter the policy reflected in the consensus decision.

It merely limits itself to saying that UK would not proceed down the route of coming up with a definitive solution to Gibraltar's decolonisation, as they are urging themselves to do in the consensus decision, unless Gibraltar was content that they should do so.

Clearly, the contentment or otherwise of Gibraltar that may or may not be reflected by its recently re-elected Government, does not alter the official position at the UN which remains the same. This is crystal clear by reading the actual text of the UN decision, agreed with UK support, which again this year makes the definitive solution to Gibraltar's decolonisation a pending matter requiring agreement with Spain.

While it is welcome that UK has at least made such a reservation, it nonetheless makes a farce of their claim that Gibraltar's decolonisation is not proceeding because of the antiquated criteria of the Committee of 24. This same criteria applies to all the other British Overseas Territories, however, the difference is that in no other one is that decolonisation subject to an agreement reached by the UK with a third party.

The net effect of this is that our position at the UN today is no different from what it has been since the 1984 Brussels agreement was welcomed by the UN in a consensus decision drafted jointly by the UK and Spain, except that the UK has now signaled, as an aside, their unwillingness to pursue our decolonisation with Spain without the support of the Gibraltar Government of the day.

The policy of the Opposition continues to be that Gibraltar's decolonisation must be completed in exactly the same way as that of every other British Overseas Territory, and that it is entirely a matter for Gibraltar and the UK in which Spain should have no say whatsoever in any shape or form.

This is the view that we will continue to defend irrespective of what anybody else may think or might wish us to say.

ENDS