

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION 64/2008

1 July 2008

The Opposition has received a letter from the Councilor in the Falkland Islands Government who is responsible for leading on the position of the islands at the UN Committee of 24. The letter welcomes the change obtained in New York in the text of the new clause introduced in the seminar recommendations in Indonesia.

Opposition Leader Joe Bossano has defended the position of the Falklands at previous UN seminars in Trinidad and Tobago and in St Vincent and the Grenadines, as a result of his previous interventions he was given Honorary Membership of the Falkland Islands' Association,

The letter from the Falkland Islands says "I know you have been a good friend to the Falklands and defended our position in a number of forums over the years and would like to thank you for that and for this recent defence of our mutual position."

The new clause introduced in Indonesia originally called for a proactive approach to delist the territories in which there was no sovereignty dispute. The inclusion of the words "where there is no sovereignty dispute" which makes the recommendation not applicable to Gibraltar or the Falklands, follows what has happened in previous years in respect of other recommendations in other seminars. In these other seminars, some of which Mr Caruana himself has attended, he has been unsuccessful in getting the wording of the text altered and has criticised the fact that there has been no debate.

It is all these recommendations from seminars of previous years that get repeated and carried forward from one year to the next that Mr Caruana refers to in the press release that the Government has issued to rubbish what has been achieved on this occasion. It is only this new additional clause asking for a more proactive approach that has been altered in New York at the request of Joe Bossano, so that the territories with a sovereignty dispute are included and not left out of this year's new recommendations.

This is absolutely clear from the opening statement made by Mr Bossano to the C24 when he said:

"Last year when I addressed this Committee I reminded it of what had taken place in the Grenada Seminar regarding one of the items left pending.

Last month in the Bandung Seminar we were again faced with a similar issue regarding a statement attributed to the participants, on which no debate had taken place.

The proposed wording of the statement appeared to limit the decolonisation process to territories where there was no sovereignty dispute. I suggested alternative wording to correct this totally unacceptable, implied proposition, which the distinguished representatives of Argentina and Spain agreed was sensible and which they supported. It was left to the full Committee in New York to take the final decision on this matter.

I trust the final version of the Bandung Seminar Report adopted by this Committee will reflect this.”

It is regrettable that Mr Caruana should bring himself to undermine the efforts of others in defence of Gibraltar’s national interests.

When he addressed the Committee of 24 he himself said:

“These things of which I speak are sharply illustrated by the wholly unacceptable goings on at Regional Seminars, which by slight of hand and total lack of integrity of process, submit reports to this Special Committee that certain principles have been adopted by the participants, which have never even been discussed by the participants, and which are in reality, simply the fruit of the manipulation in the drafting committee room of sovereignty claimants and their friends, who, as member states, have access to the drafting committee room, which is denied to participants from the Territories.” A clear reference to what the Opposition had reported had just taken place in Indonesia and what has happened in past seminars.

At the time Mr Caruana addressed the Committee last month, the amendment to the text to remove the reference to sovereignty disputes had not yet been accepted by the Committee of 24 and Mr Bossano had not yet made the request. Clearly Mr Caruana was working on the assumption that it would not be accepted.

Its acceptance in New York after Joe Bossano asked the Committee to take into account his arguments is something that is good for Gibraltar and which all Gibraltarians should be glad off. It is obvious that Mr Caruana is indulging in sour grapes because he did not bring about the change himself.

Mr Caruana may have now adopted a policy that what the UN says no longer matters, but of course the status of Gibraltar is a question of international law and not a matter of opinion.

Gibraltar’s status continues to be in law that of a Non-Self-Governing territory just the same as the other 15 territories. The Opposition will therefore continue to

defend at the UN the policies on which it was elected to Parliament which in our judgment are in Gibraltar's best interests, whether Mr Caruana likes it or not. He may have a different policy which he is entitled to pursue.

ENDS