

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Opposition welcomes that the United Kingdom included a reference to British sovereignty over the territorial waters of Gibraltar during the exercise of its right of reply to the intervention by the representative of Spain before the UN 4th Committee.

In response to the statement made by Spain, the UK representative said that the “ United Kingdom has no doubt over its sovereignty over Gibraltar and the Territorial Waters surrounding it.” This goes a step further than the traditional reply which in the past has normally made a reference to Gibraltar and the isthmus but not specifically to the waters themselves.

The UK statement is particularly significant in the light of the recent action taken by Spain in pursuance of its claim that all the waters around Gibraltar are Spanish. It will be recalled that last year the European Commission approved the designation of Gibraltar’s waters as if they were Spanish, given that Member States can only designate sites under their own sovereignty. Madrid then proceeded to act on this designation by sending in the Spanish navy corvette, “Tarifa”, a fisheries protection vessel into Gibraltar’s waters. A RIB lowered by the corvette refused to leave Gibraltar when challenged by the Royal Navy. There have also been a number of incursions by civil guard patrol boats who have proceeded to behave as if the waters were Spanish.

In June, before the UN Committee of 24, the Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano informed the United Nations of these developments. He told the UN that instead of respect and support “what we have had from Spain is a challenge to the sovereignty of our territorial waters.”

Mr Bossano strongly condemned the Spain’s acts of aggression before the UN and accused Madrid of behaving in breach of Article 74 of the UN Charter. He also reminded the Committee that these recent Spanish actions against Gibraltar echoed those of the 1960s which were incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations.

The Opposition therefore considers that the reference to the sovereignty of the territorial waters made by the representative of the United Kingdom is therefore a very welcome development which follows from the strong defence of British sovereignty over our territorial sea made by Mr Bossano earlier this year.

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