

**STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION
148/2009**

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**WELCOMING ADDRESS OF THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION HON JOE
BOSSANO
ON THE SWEARING-IN OF THE NEW GOVERNOR VICE ADMIRAL SIR
ADRIAN JOHNS KCB CBE**

Your Excellency,

I extend a warm welcome to you and Lady Johns on behalf of Her Majesty's loyal Opposition in the Gibraltar Parliament and in the name of the Gibraltarian people.

We are delighted that our Queen has decided once again to be represented in our country by a military Governor to discharge her role as our Head of State. In the past a civilian, when provided with a plumed hat, was acceptable to some but was not the preferred option of this side of this House.

Gibraltar owes its name to a military conquest from North Africa, in the 8th Century, and its present character and identity as a distinct Nation to the British Conquest of the 18th Century. Someone with a military background such as Your Excellency is well equipped to understand that.

Our distinct identity meets the requirements of the UN Charter for Chapter 11 Territories whose people enjoy a legal right to self determination and our inclusion in that list in 1946 is proof sufficient, except for Spain.

About 2 weeks ago Spain told the UN Decolonisation Committee that in our case there is no right to self determination because that right belongs to those Spaniards that we Gibraltarians, dispossessed in 1704, who are the genuine inhabitants of our Rock and whose descendants have been perched on top of a nearby hill ever since. A town called San Roque which claims to be the real Gibraltar.

This old chestnut has not been heard in the UN since the bad old days of the Spanish dictatorship.

We, of course, have always rejected this view for the nonsense it is, but if the UK continues to support year in year out the UN consensus decision drafted jointly with Spain, calling for our decolonisation, then what else can we expect?

The constitutional change in Gibraltar has not been accompanied by a change in the UK position at the UN when it addresses the Committee on decolonisation.

UK continues to support the UN consensus calling for bilateral negotiations with Spain, in the spirit of the 1984 Brussels Declaration, but makes clear this support will not be translated into participation unless and until, Gibraltar is content.

In essence this is no more than the position UK adopted at the very start of the process. UK signed the agreement, but implementation required that it be ratified by a majority in this Parliament. In 1984, we opposed it from inception, voted against its ratification, called for a Referendum on the issue and campaigned against Gibraltar's participation. Now, everyone in Gibraltar considers it an **Infamous Agreement**, which is dead, and long overdue in receiving its burial.

It is UK's duty to conduct our international affairs on our behalf as we want them conducted and they have a clear duty to make known to Spain that the Brussels Process is finished and done with. Suggesting it is on hold, until Gibraltar is content to see it revived, will not do and does not go far enough.

The Constitution we have today is the product of the 1999 White Paper to provide a modern relationship with all the overseas territories. The UK stated this in 2004 and repeated it in the despatch, in correspondence with Spain and at the UN. UK claims the UN fails to recognise that all its overseas territories have acquired modern relationships, with UK as partners which can no longer be described as colonial in nature and that on that basis they should all be de-listed.

The Gibraltar Constitution contains a specific reference to our right to self determination. So does the Cayman Islands Constitution of June this year.

This has not prevented the High Commissioner for the Eastern Caribbean, newly appointed Governor of the Caymans, from making a statement that the Cayman Islands and all the other British overseas territories could have their Constitutions suspended and be ruled by their Governors as has been the case in the Turks and Caicos, should such a need arise.

The fact that **we** have a modern Constitution from 2006, or that the Caymans have one since 2009, tells us nothing about the degree of self government attained. Bermuda's 1968 Constitution is still the least colonial in content but is certainly not the most modern. In our judgement modernity is not the defining criterion for the attainment of a full measure of self government.

We have long argued that the way ahead is that each territory's constitutional change should be tested against a benchmark of criteria to measure the level of

self government attained on a case by case basis to take into account the peculiarities of each overseas territory. This view has for the first time this year found support from other participants at the UN and we believe UK should support this approach and abandon the annual consensus decision cobbled together to keep Spain happy.

In parallel to this perennial issue with our nearest neighbour we have the Tripartite Forum for local cooperation. This for the Spanish Government is directly linked to creating a climate of receptivity amongst our people such that, UK will at a future date be able to resume sovereignty discussions with Spain, with which Gibraltar would be content, to negotiate Gibraltar's decolonisation. This hoped for contentment is the basis of the attempt to square the circle of incompatibility in the position adopted by UK.

It is precisely because, the forum is and has always been a means to an end, that Spain's Government sees no contradiction in pretending to be providing mutually beneficial cooperation and at the same time challenging the jurisdiction of our territorial waters.

So far the Forum seems to have produced tangible benefits predominantly for Spain, in particular, the payment by UK of millions of Pounds as compensation for Social Insurance Pensions, frozen between 1989 and 2006.

Gibraltar's economy is and has been growing for many years, independent of the degree of cooperation from Spain, or the lack of it.

In 2007, we predicted that Gibraltar's GDP would reach £800M based on our own assessment of the economic variables which we monitor. This year, the first official estimate suggested a figure of £803M for financial year 2007/08.

We also committed ourselves in the General Elections, to achieving a rate of economic growth with a target of 50% increase in one term to reach £1.2 billion by 2011/12. Although others scoffed at this projection, we still stand by it and believe it to be attainable.

This is in marked contrast to the poor performance of the Spanish economy, and it is not lost on those who thought they could woo the Gibraltarians with promises of prosperity under Spanish rule, that the growing gap in economic performance is another nail in the coffin of Spanish aspirations to conquer Gibraltar.

In the context and against the background of this analysis, our position on the Tripartite Forum meetings, will continue to be to judge what emerges on its merits, in terms of its effect on our people and to ensure that it fails miserably to influence Gibraltarian opinion in favour of a deal with Spain.

If Her Majesty is indeed the Queen of Gibraltar in the same manner as she is the Queen of Australia, as the Gibraltar Government claims, then Her Majesty's Government in the UK has no business encouraging the aspirations of the Spanish pretender to the throne and Her Majesty's loyal subjects in Gibraltar have no desire whatsoever to switch allegiance from the Windsors to the Bourbons.

Your Excellency has no doubt already familiarised himself with the range of political views to be found within our society. We have clear differences regarding domestic as well as external issues. In our view, that is as it should be. The essence of the democratic process lies in providing alternative sets of policies for the electorate to choose between.

Thus, whilst our strategy on economic policies designed to achieve high growth, is linked to our inalterable commitment to the goal that Gibraltar should never again come under Spanish rule, it is also a policy objective in its own right.

We believe the higher the standard of living we can deliver to our people the less likely it is that anyone will ever be tempted to support a Spanish take-over. **But**, over and above this collateral benefit, we attach great importance to making it possible for all Gibraltarians who want to work and live in Gibraltar to be able to do so, and to make it so easy and attractive that many will want to. In our judgement this is not the case at present.

The different strands of our policies are therefore intertwined so that future governments of Gibraltar will be able to continue to preserve and protect our distinct way of live.

That this can be achieved and that Gibraltar can continue to prosper and see off the Spanish threat to our separate existence and identity, we have no doubt whatsoever.

Nor do we have any doubt that as Your Excellency and Lady Johns get to know us personally in the years that you will form part of our community, you will get to love this Rock of ours and defend it at every opportunity as has been the norm with previous governors.

Welcome to your new home.

ENDS