

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos announced in the tripartite forum meeting last week that he had made proposals to tackle the “problems” faced by Spanish workers in Gibraltar. He said that these proposals, which were within the existing norms in Gibraltar, had been received by the Gibraltar delegation.

It is significant to note that because neither Mr Milliband nor Mr Caruana commented on the Spanish workers issue, the only version of events that exists is that made public by Mr Moratinos who seems to have sprung the issue at the last minute as it was not on the original agenda for the talks.

The Opposition is therefore concerned at press reports in Spain regarding the demands made by Spanish nationals who are currently employed in Gibraltar. Since the three parties in the forum need to agree to items before they can be discussed as part of the agenda, and in the absence of any other information, we can only suppose that the Chief Minister agreed that this should be the case.

The reports emanating in the Spanish media mention the possibility of there being a separate tax structure for these workers in Gibraltar which would allow them to pay less tax. The proposal seems to be that there could be a new tax structure created

especially for Spaniards, apart from the two that exist for the rest of the working population of Gibraltar.

Other more sensitive matters are also being mooted with suggestions that the Spanish state might contribute financially towards “finding a solution” implying that Gibraltar has been asked to put forward a cash payment too.

The Opposition recall that both the Chief Minister and the Minister for Labour have said in the past that the grievances of Spanish workers currently employed in Gibraltar have nothing whatsoever to do with the Gibraltar Government because the laws covering employment are the same for everyone regardless of nationality. Given that this matter is now a topic under discussion in the Tripartite Forum for Dialogue the public ought to be told whether the position of the Government remains the same, and if so, what is there to discuss with Spain about this matter.

ENDS