

STATEMENT BY THE GSLP/LIBERAL OPPOSITION

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The Leader of the Opposition Joe Bossano has been interviewed by Cadena Ser in Spain following the remarks made by Mr Caruana to EFE on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the opening of the frontier.

In clarifying the policy attributed to the Opposition by Caruana, Cadena Ser was told that perhaps Mr Caruana had permission from Mr Rajoy to speak for the Partido Popular in Spain but he certainly did not have the right to speak for the Opposition in Gibraltar. In any event, what he had said was totally untrue and the very opposite of Opposition policy on the tripartite talks. This policy had been made clear as far back as 2004 when the process was launched.

The Opposition had made clear then that we were not against the setting up of the tripartite process in principle but that we would judge it by results and that in all probability there would be some things that we would be in agreement with and others that we would not as the results emerged. That continues to be the position and it has been reflected in the reaction of the Opposition to the trilateral process in the intervening years.

Mr Bossano also reminded Cadena Ser that the first initiative on mutually beneficial economic cooperation with the Campo area had been taken by the then GLSP administration, in conjunction with the then Mayor of Algeciras Patricio Gonzalez, over 20 years ago.

On the wider issue of the effect of the closure of the frontier and its subsequent reopening 25 years ago, it was explained that the achievement of parity during the years of the closed frontier would have been much more difficult to bring about without a closed frontier, which had created a shortage of labour and strengthened the bargaining position of the Unions. The result was that on the frontier reopening 25 years ago a unique position existed in Europe where the wages on one side of the frontier in Gibraltar were northern European UK wages and there was a huge gap with the wages in the Campo area. This was in contrast with the other borders in Europe, where wages on both sides of border tended to converge as the result of market forces and the demand for and supply of labour.

The Gibraltar position was unique in that it was determined by the performance of the UK economy and pay negotiations in the UK. Asked about how this affected Campo workers, Mr Bossano pointed out that a worker in La Linea could then earn the wages he was able to obtain as if he was able to travel on a daily basis to the UK, work in the south of England and come back to La Linea again at night because the wages here were the same as there.

As regards the agreement on the reopening of the frontier, Mr Bossano reminded the interviewer that in Opposition in 1984 the GSLP had been against the acceptance of sovereignty discussions with Spain as a quid pro quo for reopening and at the time this was condemned as capitulation. The Franco regime had closed the frontier because the UK refused to talk about sovereignty and it had remained shut over the years for this reason.

The passage of time has now vindicated that position since even Mr Caruana who had defended the Brussels Process in 1991 had since declared at the UN that it had been rejected by the Gibraltar in 1988 and it was now dead and buried. The UK had also de facto done the same by making future participation conditional on the agreement of the Gibraltar Government. There was no longer any political party in Gibraltar that defended or supported the Brussels talks. The advantage that Spain gained 25 years ago it had lost since as the result of the opposition to sovereignty talks by the vast majority of Gibraltarians throughout those 25 years.

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