



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Address to the United Nations Committee of 24**

**Mr David Guerrero Liston**

**Representative of the Government of Gibraltar in the United States of America**

Madam Chairman,

I have the honour to address you today as the representative of the Government of Gibraltar in the United States of America.

I do so on behalf of the Chief Minister and the Deputy Chief Minister who have been unable to travel to New York.

The logistical issues created by the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing discussions for the future relationship of Gibraltar with the European Union have sadly denied us their presence.

My grandparents, Edward and Mary Guerrero, were born in Gibraltar.

They emigrated to the United States in the 1920s as part of that huge migration of persons from the old world to the new after World War One.

I have always been proud of my heritage and of what it means to be a Gibraltarian.

I was therefore delighted in 2017 to be asked to serve as the U.S. representative of the Gibraltar Government.

It is a role that I relish. It allows me to honour my grandparents, celebrate my Gibraltarian roots, and represent a people and a land that I love.

Madam Chairman, the people of Gibraltar may be a small community of some 30,000 people.

But we more than match the character and the determination of any nation.

We are a unique population.

Shaped by more than three hundred years of existence.



Into the thriving and modern country of today.

Our ancestors have inhabited the famous Rock of Gibraltar before the United States, Italy or Germany existed as nation states.

We are a combination of different identities and nationalities who have been moulded through time into the Gibraltarian of today.

A unique and indivisible people in our own right.

Gibraltar was captured in 1704 and ceded by treaty in perpetuity in 1713.

Perpetuity, means forever.

From that moment onwards, a new population settled in Gibraltar.

Merchants came from Genoa in Italy.

Sephardic Jews came from across the sea in Morocco.

Traders arrived from all over the Mediterranean, including from Minorca and Savoy.

Later, many people came to our shores from Malta.

More recently still, many families from India and Morocco have made Gibraltar their home.

And throughout our history, our diverse ethnic heritage has been enriched by hundreds of cross-border marriages between Gibraltarians and Spaniards whose descendants are proud to call Gibraltar their homeland.

All these are the ingredients of the melting-pot in which the Gibraltarian identity has been forged over more than three hundred years.

We are a country of immigrants, transformed by the inward movement of people from the outside world; a characteristic we share with many members of the United Nations.

We are a people separate and distinct – ethnically and culturally – from the administering power.

We are a people that, despite our diverse origins, has lived harmoniously for hundreds of years in a country that is barely twice the size of Central Park.

And all we ask, Madam Chairman, is for the opportunity to exercise the right to self-determination, just as many of the countries represented here today have done before us.

I submit, Distinguished Representatives, that the mandate of your committee is clear.

Your mandate is the decolonisation of the remaining territories on your list of Non-Self-Governing Territories in accordance with the wishes of their inhabitants.

In the times in which we live there can be no other way.

This is no longer 1704 or 1713.



This is 2021 and today what matters are the wishes of people to decide their own destiny in the international order.

We cannot redraw the boundaries of the world based on what Europe looked like three hundred years ago.

What's done is done!

We need to look forward into a future where dialogue and cooperation replace conflict and confrontation.

Madam Chairman, as you well know, the last twelve months have been difficult for people around the world.

The global pandemic has sadly taken the lives of millions of people.

Gibraltar has lost 94 cherished members of our close-knit community.

I am however pleased to report that in Gibraltar everyone over 16 who wished to be vaccinated against this terrible disease has now been vaccinated.

We are the first territory in the world to do this.

That was made possible by our small size and the steady supply of vaccines from the United Kingdom Government.

Gibraltar is very grateful for this.

Madam Chairman, I am happy to report that the COVID-19 pandemic has also fostered close cooperation between Gibraltar and Spain.

The supply of food, medication, PPE, equipment and supplies was maintained through the land frontier between us.

The movement of essential workers, who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar, also continued throughout.

You will know that on 31 January 2020, Gibraltar left the European Union together with the United Kingdom.

We then entered a period of transition which ended on 31 December 2020.

Those months were used to agree the text of a Framework Agreement for a treaty about the future relationship of Gibraltar with the European Union.

The Government of Gibraltar participated in all the discussions together with the United Kingdom and with Spain.

That Framework Agreement has built on the cooperation achieved in recent years which covered tobacco, the environment, police and customs cooperation and citizens' rights.

In addition, a Tax Treaty, negotiated by Gibraltar, was concluded with the Government of Spain by the United Kingdom, as the state responsible for our external relations. That treaty provides for



the exchange of information and the settlement of tax residency disputes now that we are no longer in the European Union.

These symbols of cooperation have helped reduce the understandable mistrust that has built up for decades between Gibraltar and Spain.

The Government of Gibraltar very much hopes that a new treaty can now be concluded.

Today, Gibraltar makes a positive economic contribution to Spain.

Fifteen thousand people live in Spain and work in Gibraltar.

Most are Spanish citizens.

Gibraltar imports some 1.8 billion dollars' worth of goods from Spain annually.

And Gibraltar accounts for some 20% of the GDP of the neighbouring Spanish region.

The interests of citizens and business on both sides of the border would benefit enormously from the security provided by a new treaty.

They would also benefit from a fluid border.

This would sow the seeds for an area of even greater prosperity on both sides.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of Gibraltar, I invite you Madam Chairman and the Committee to visit Gibraltar.

Come to learn more about this new situation at first hand.

Speak with the people whose protection is the sacred duty of this Committee.

Learn about our legitimate aspirations to determine our own future.

I urge you once again, as prior delegations from Gibraltar have urged you year after year, to send a visiting mission.

More than any words I utter here today, your meeting the people of Gibraltar, in their native land, will convey the character of a unique people, a people who cherish the right of self-determination, who celebrate their separate and distinct identity, and who love the land they have called home for over 300 years.

ENDS