



**HM Government
of Gibraltar**

**ADDRESS TO THE 4TH COMMITTEE OF THE
UNITED NATIONS**

THE HON DR JOSEPH GARCIA

DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER OF GIBRALTAR

8TH OCTOBER 2019

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman,

Gibraltar was placed on a list of territories awaiting decolonisation in 1946.

That was seventy-three years ago.

At that time, the world was emerging from the horrors of war.

The women and children of Gibraltar had been evacuated as part of the wider war effort.

They were forced to leave their homeland.

They found refuge in Morocco first and then in Jamaica, Madeira, London and Northern Ireland.

They endured the sacrifices of war in the name of freedom and of democracy.

Those same values of freedom and democracy that we cherish as a people to this day.

The people of Gibraltar first appeared before the Committee on decolonisation in 1963.

Mr Chairman, that was fifty-six years ago.

We did so because Gibraltar is one of the territories to which the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples applies.

And we have been waiting patiently for over half a century to realise our right to self-determination.

Mr Chairman, decolonisation is rightly hailed as one of the success stories of the United Nations.

At the end of the Second World War some 750 million people lived in Territories that were administered by colonial powers.

That was nearly a third of the population of the planet.

There are now two million left.

Your website celebrates that eighty former colonies have achieved their decolonisation since the formation of the United Nations.

That is indeed a matter of pride.

Yet we can only truly celebrate when that process has concluded.

And it will never be concluded while countries like Gibraltar are still waiting to be removed from the list.

Mr Chairman, the Charter is clear.

The responsibility of administering powers for the Non Self Governing Territories that remain is described in the Charter as a "sacred trust".

The interests of the inhabitants of those territories are described in the Charter as "paramount".

The right to self-determination of the people of the territories is fundamental.

So why is it taking so long?

The First International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism ended in 2000.

The Second Decade in 2010.

The Third Decade will come to an end next year.

Why has only one territory been removed from the list in nearly three decades?

Gibraltar has been coming to the United Nations for over half a century.

Here we assert bi-annually our right to self-determination and our desire to work with this Committee and the Committee of 24.

We want to accelerate our removal from the list of Non Self Governing Territories.

But it is almost as if we do not exist.

On 2 January 2007 a new constitution came into force in Gibraltar.

It refers to the principle of self-determination in its opening recitals.

This constitution increased the powers of self-government of the people, the Parliament and the Government of Gibraltar.

We sent it to the Committee of 24 and asked whether further steps were required in order to be removed from the list of Non Self Governing Territories.

The response was silence.

Every year, we invite the Committee of 24 to send a visiting mission to Gibraltar.

These missions are, in the words of the General Assembly, “an effective means of ascertaining the situation of the peoples of the Territories”.¹

¹ A/RES/73/123 (7 December 2018) para 10.

In June this year, the Committee of 24 noted the invitations extended by the British Virgin Islands, Montserrat and Guam to send visiting missions to their respective territories.²

There was no mention of Gibraltar.

Despite our annual invitation.

Again, Mr Chairman, it is as if we did not exist.

No reply on the constitution.

No reply on removal from your list.

No reply on a visiting mission.

I need not remind the Committee that under your own rules the people are paramount.

As a representative of the people, I can say that it certainly does not feel that way.

We have engaged with the Committee of 24 by letter since the June meeting and welcome the offer to meet with the Chair to discuss these matters.

Because we ask for no more and no less than those eighty former colonial and trust territories which have gone through this process before us.

I have no doubt that those of you who represent those eighty countries here today will understand our situation.

Maybe even sympathise.

More than fifty of you are in the Commonwealth.

² A/AC.109/2019/L.5 (12 June 2019).

Countries like Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Kenya and Nigeria.

Small island states like Fiji, St Lucia, Grenada, Antigua and Barbuda and Malta.

Gibraltar is where you all once were.

We embrace the same values:

democracy, good governance, human rights and the rule of law.

And underpinning those values is the right of peoples to determine their own future.

This is what your own people did.

Our turn must come to do the same.

We are a multi-cultural community.

For more than three hundred years Gibraltar has welcomed people from all over the world.

After 1704, merchants and traders from places like Genoa and Savoy in Italy settled in Gibraltar.

People from Ireland, Minorca, England, Portugal, Spain and France.

Sephardic Jews from North Africa who had been expelled from Spain.

Workers from Malta arrived with their families in the late nineteenth century.

Many came from India and made Gibraltar their home.

Thousands more came from Morocco in the twentieth century and enriched our multi-cultural society.

We – the Gibraltarian people – are the product of this mixture of different nationalities over more than three hundred years.

A people separate and distinct from the administering power.

A people who have lived in Gibraltar for longer than the United States of America has existed.

A people who enjoy the right to self-determination.

Mr Chairman,

fifty years ago in 1969 the fascist Government of General Franco closed Spain's border with Gibraltar.

The objective was to strangle our economy.

Families were separated.

Communities were torn apart.

The supply of labour and goods into Gibraltar was cut off.

Telephone links were shut down.

Ferry communications ceased.

The Spanish border was closed for some sixteen years.

That closure scarred generations of Gibraltarians.

But it made us stronger.

It cemented our identity as a people further still.

And it strengthened our resolve never to give up our sovereignty or our right to self-determination.

The tactics of coercion proved to be completely counterproductive.

Mr Chairman, the border must never be used as a political weapon again.

Later this month, Gibraltar could leave the European Union together with the United Kingdom, even though the overwhelming majority of the people of Gibraltar voted to remain.

In the exit process, we have held discussions with different EU Member States, including Spain as our nearest EU neighbour.

Those discussions resulted in special provisions on Gibraltar in the UK/EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Four Memoranda of Understanding have been negotiated between Gibraltar and Spain as part of that framework. These cover the environment, tobacco, law enforcement cooperation and citizen's rights.

Gibraltar and Spain have also negotiated a separate Tax Treaty.

It is clear that with goodwill and mutual respect it is possible to find positive solutions.

This is in the interests of both sides, as Spain's Prime Minister acknowledged before the General Assembly last year.

Gibraltar is already an important economic engine for the neighbouring region of Spain.

15,000 persons live in Spain and work in Gibraltar.

Gibraltar purchases over 1.5 billion euros a year in goods and materials from Spain.

The positive economic impact of Gibraltar accounts for 20% of the GDP of the neighbouring region.

A sensible, orderly and well-managed Brexit will benefit everyone.

We need to ensure that citizens and businesses are able to continue with their day to day lives.

We must learn the lessons of the past.

And so Mr Chairman, I repeat that Gibraltar wants to engage with this Committee and the Committee of 24.

The United Nations is bound by its own rules, indeed by international law, to engage with us also.

We hope to work together to secure the removal of Gibraltar from the list of Non Self Governing Territories.

The freely and democratically expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar must be paramount.

In this day and age there can be no other way.

Thank you.