



PRESS RELEASE

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Address to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations

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

Madam Chair,

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 of Gibraltar who has tested positive for COVID-19, which means that neither he, nor the Deputy Chief Minister as a close contact, have been able to travel to New York.

It is an honour for me to represent the people of Gibraltar here today.

Though small in number, we are a proud people who have inhabited our home at the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea, the famous Rock of Gibraltar, for over three hundred years.

Three hundred years is a long time, Madam Chair.

Three hundred and seventeen to be exact.

This is longer than Italy, Germany or the United States have existed as nation states.

Indeed, it is longer than many of the Member States of the United Nations have existed.

And in those 300 years, a unique population has made Gibraltar their home.

A population separate and distinct from that of the Administering Power, the people of Gibraltar have distinct characteristics of their own.

We are also the product of immigration from all over the planet.

Traders and merchants from Genoa in Italy settled on the Rock in the eighteenth century.

Sephardic Jews from North Africa followed them.



Workers from Malta in the late nineteenth century, others from the United Kingdom, from Spain and elsewhere too.

And many merchants from India made Gibraltar their home in the twentieth century.

Morocco, our neighbours to the south, provided human and material resources in the 1960s, helping Gibraltar to survive the blockade imposed by General Franco's Spain.

They all represent an important component of the Gibraltarian identity.

Because that agglomeration of nationalities, religions and races, over three hundred years, have made the modern day Gibraltarian of today.

This is nothing new in the construction of a nation.

Many countries represented in this chamber have undergone that same journey.

The people of Gibraltar are a distinct people in their own right.

They are the only ones who must freely and democratically determine their own future.

Madam Chair,

The people of Gibraltar are protected by the United Nations.

That can be the only legitimate reason why Gibraltar remains on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories maintained by the Committee of 24.

All Members of the United Nations have a sacred duty towards the people of the territories in that list.

It is your duty to ensure that we attain full self-government and decolonization, so that we can take our rightful place among the family of nations.

Gibraltar has been listed as a Non-Self-Governing Territory since 1946.

There were over seventy countries listed then.

Many of you have achieved your political emancipation, your decolonization and your removal from that list.

The people of Gibraltar wish to follow in the footsteps of all those of you who have gone before.

They are entitled to exercise the right to self-determination and decolonization.

The UN cannot have one rule for some and a different rule for others.



Madam Chair,

Gibraltar has always supported the international effort over many decades for the eradication of colonialism.

In all that time we have heard plenty of good intentions expressed in this Committee and elsewhere.

But make no mistake, we want to see action.

The first three Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism have failed in their main objective. This is partly because of a collective failure to learn the lesson that one size does not fit all.

There is a need for imagination and for tailor-made solutions where required.

Gibraltar wants to work with the United Nations.

We want the United Nations to work with us too.

Sadly, too often our words have fallen on deaf ears.

All too often when it comes to Gibraltar the UN has whistled and looked the other way.

That is why you should urge your colleagues in the Committee of 24 to send a visiting mission to Gibraltar.

If that Committee continues to ignore our invitations to visit and learn about our country first-hand, how can it provide you with useful information, suggestions and recommendations regarding Gibraltar and the legitimate aspirations of our people? How can you even pretend to have an informed debate in these circumstances?

You cannot fulfill your mission if you do not venture out from the boardrooms and the offices here in New York.

Madam Chair,

Gibraltar was proud to have been the first country in the world to vaccinate its entire adult population.

We did so with a free supply of vaccines from the United Kingdom.

And we also vaccinated many thousands of frontier workers of different nationalities who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar.

When our businesses went into lockdown because of the covid pandemic, we helped those same workers economically too with regular cash payments.



That is, Madam Chair, how neighbouring countries should behave.

For many years we have had a relationship of conflict and confrontation with Spain.

This has stemmed from the Spanish government's outdated territorial claim to our homeland, which we will always reject.

We cannot redraw the boundaries of Europe back to what they were three centuries ago, when Spain ceded Gibraltar to Great Britain in perpetuity.

We have to accept the reality before us today.

That reality is the emergence, over hundreds of years, of the people of Gibraltar with a right to their land.

This means that Gibraltar must be looked at and understood from the perspective of where we are today and not through the prism of how it was three hundred years ago.

The well-being and aspirations of people must be the first priority.

There are hopeful signs, Madam Chair.

The Governments of Gibraltar, the United Kingdom and Spain negotiated a political agreement on 31 December for a new UK-EU treaty on the future relationship of Gibraltar with the European Union.

The European Council has now given the green light for negotiations to commence.

Gibraltar remains committed to an outcome based on that New Year's Eve Agreement.

However, if an agreement with the European Union cannot be reached on those terms, Gibraltar is also making preparations for the eventuality of No Negotiated Outcome.

But as I said, our preferred option remains to secure an agreement.

This is as much in the interests of Gibraltar as it is in the interests of our neighbours in the surrounding region of Spain.

Gibraltar continues to make a positive economic contribution to the neighbouring region of Andalucia in southern Spain.

There are some fifteen thousand people who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar, over nine thousand of whom are Spanish citizens.

Gibraltar imports over 1.7 billion dollars of goods and materials from Spain.

We account for over 20% of the GDP of the neighbouring area.



Madam Chair,

The people of Gibraltar may be small in number.

Some 30,000 in all.

The territory of Gibraltar may be small in size.

Some six square kilometres.

But we are a proud people and a proud nation.

And once again we reassert here, in the right forum and in the right way, our right to self-determination.

Once again, we remind you that we are a distinct people, whose identity has been enriched by the contributions of people from around the world, whose character has been forged over 300 years, and who are more than ready to take our rightful place in the family of nations.

Once again, we request that you recognise, respect and ratify our right to self-determination.

And I urge you not only to listen, but also to act.

That is your sacred duty.

ENDS