



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **CHIEF MINISTER'S ADDRESS TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL POLITICAL & DECOLONISATION COMMITTEE – UN PLAZA, NEW YORK**

Mr Chair,

It is an honour to address you.

I am here as the directly elected political representative of the people of Gibraltar.

Because the People of Gibraltar undoubtedly enjoy the inalienable right of self-determination under international law.<sup>1</sup>

And in accordance with international law and your obligations to the People of Gibraltar, our decolonisation must be achieved exclusively through the application of the principle of self-determination.

That is to say, our decolonisation can be completed only in keeping with our wishes and aspirations as a people.

And in this pending exercise, there is no role for any party other than the United Nations, the Administering Power, the United Kingdom and us, the People of the Non-Self-Governing Territory.

We have repeatedly invited the C24 to visit Gibraltar to better understand the situation of our people, but they have never done so.<sup>2</sup>

The UN General Assembly has said that visiting missions are an effective means of ascertaining the situation of the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories.<sup>3</sup>

If the C24 does not wish to learn about the People of Gibraltar, why should it, or this Committee, entertain any suggestion that our decolonisation should be underpinned by anything *other* than our inalienable right to self-determination?

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with *inter alia* Chapter XI of the UN Charter and UNGA Resolutions 1514 (XV), 14 December 1960; 1541 (XV), 15 December 1960; and 2625 (XXV), 24 October 1970.

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. the record of my intervention before the C24 in June of this year, when I made the point that we had been extending this invitation for the last 30 years: UN Doc GA/COL/3358/Rev.1\* (13 June 2022).

<sup>3</sup> (UNGA Res 73/123, 2018).



We therefore appear before you to confidently assert that right, which forms the bedrock of all our international relationships.

In our relationship with the United Kingdom, we are safe in the knowledge that the Administering Power has repeatedly committed itself to never “*enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their wishes*”.

That commitment is not just political.

It is also legally binding.

It is set out in the Preamble to the 2006 Gibraltar Constitution and in the Despatch to it.<sup>4</sup>

It is a commitment that the UK has made repeatedly here, at the United Nations.<sup>5</sup>

This Committee needs to understand that in taking that position, the United Kingdom is upholding OUR rights under international law to decide OUR future, over OUR land and OUR home.

The United Kingdom is thus supporting your work and our right to self determination.

So I urge you to proceed with the decolonisation of Gibraltar in accordance with the principle of self-determination.

I urge you to remove Gibraltar from your list of non self governing territories.

And let me leave no room for doubt:

The People of Gibraltar will not consent to any discussion or negotiation of one iota of the sovereignty of our land, sea or air.  
We will simply not accept it.

And any idea that our removal from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories should be informed by anything other than our sacrosanct right to self-determination is untenable.

Indeed, Mr Chair, as we look to settle our future relationship with the EU after BREXIT, your Committee should understand that our British sovereignty is an asset for the whole region around us.

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<sup>4</sup> See Annex I, Gibraltar Constitution Order 2006 ([https://gibraltarlaws.gov.gi/uploads/constitution/Gibraltar\\_Constitution\\_Order\\_2006.pdf#viewer.action=download](https://gibraltarlaws.gov.gi/uploads/constitution/Gibraltar_Constitution_Order_2006.pdf#viewer.action=download)) and accompanying Despatch of 14 December 2006 (<https://gibraltarlaws.gov.gi/uploads/constitution/Despatch.pdf#viewer.action=download>).

<sup>5</sup> As recorded in the C24's most recent Working Paper on Gibraltar: UN Doc A/AC.109/2022/8 (28 March 2022) at para 8; and in the letter from the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom addressed to the Secretary-General of 23 September 2022: UN Doc A/77/322 (26 September 2022).



It is our British sovereignty and the Common Law, aligned with our entrepreneurial flair and the industry of the people of Gibraltar and the people of the region around us, that already creates wealth in and for Gibraltar and for the surrounding region.

In our negotiations with the EU we are working to produce a new UK\EU treaty that will remove barriers to mobility of people and goods, and enable us to create even more wealth, stability and prosperity for Gibraltar and the whole region.

Mr Chair, such a treaty will be the spark to re-energise the whole region, generating tremendous opportunities for all who are lucky enough to live in our privileged setting.

Imagine the energy and resources that Spain, the United Kingdom and Gibraltar put into arguing before you and with each other channelled, instead, into working together.

We seek to work with our neighbours in demonstrating that we can put aside historic disagreements.

We can show that there is a route away from sterile disagreement and toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

And we can show that with goodwill, hardwork and determination we can produce positive outcomes that do not require negative compromise by any party to negotiations.

We can do it respecting each other's positions, jurisdiction, responsibilities and international legal obligations.

And of course, recognising each other as a prerequisite.

And if we achieve that in the context of our perennial disagreement, then we will achieve something historic for the people we represent and for all humankind.

Mr Chair, last October our distinguished representative in the United States of America, David Liston, told you the EU Commission had just agreed to commence those negotiations.

We are a year in.

And we are making good progress.

The easy thing to do is to call doing such a treaty as it is too difficult.

The hard thing to do is to keep at it.

To redouble efforts and look away from apparently intractable disagreements, determined to find alternative ways to bring harmony where there has historically been discord.

I believe we can achieve that.



With continued goodwill and without concessions on matters of cardinal importance to each side.

I do confess, Mr Chair, that I have done easier things in my life.

But forgive me for quoting JFK when I tell you that all of us who are involved in this negotiation know that the prize at the end of this task is greater and worth pursuing, 'not because it is easy, but because it is hard'.

And I know that technical difficulty has not deterred the magnificent negotiating teams that each side has assembled.

Mr Chair, this Committee should therefore be clear.

When it comes to our political rights: Only we, the people of Gibraltar, will determine the future of Gibraltar.

When it comes to our decolonisation: Our inalienable right to self-determination must be respected and we must be delisted.

When it comes to our relations with our neighbours: We seek harmony and peaceful cooperation.

When it comes to our future relationship with the European Union: We will work to deliver unimpeded fluidity at our frontiers for persons and goods.

I look forward, Mr Chair, to the result of all of those objectives being achieved for current and future generations of Gibraltarians.

**ENDS**