HM Government of Gibraltar

CHIEF MINISTER'S ADDRESS

FOURTH COMMITTEE

OF THE

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

(SPECIAL CTTEE ON DECOLONIZATION)

OCTOBER 2026

Office of The Chief Minister

6, Convent Place

Gibraltar, GX11 1AA.

+350 200 70071

cm@gibraltar.gov.gi

Chair,

This is my twenty-fifth autumn in this room.

A quarter of a century.

When I first came here, in 2002, I was thirty years old.

I sat behind the great Sir Joe Bossano.

I did not say a word.

I listened and I learnt.

Twenty five years on.

Having addressed you 15 times, I speak to you for the last time as Chief Minister of Gibraltar.

And I do so in a year that history will not let us ignore.

Because this December, it will be eighty years since Gibraltar was first placed on the UN list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

Eighty years.

Four Chief Ministers of Gibraltar have come before the United Nations to make our people's case.

Sir Joshua Hassan came first, in 1963, to tell you Gibraltar is OURS.

Sir Joe Bossano brought us back in 1992.

He promised we would keep coming until you acted on our freely expressed wishes as a people.

Sir Peter Caruana rightly told you, for 16 years, that you should treat the self-determination of our people as paramount.

And I have addressed you, as Leader of the Opposition in 2011 and as Chief Minister every year I could since, to tell you the same thing in my own words.

Eight decades on your list.

Six decades of speeches.

Four successive leaders.

One consistent message.

Because the international legal principles governing our decolonization have not changed.

And neither have we.

So let me state the law, plainly, one last time.

Article 73 of the Charter makes the interests of the inhabitants of a Non-Self-Governing Territory paramount.

Not the interests of any neighbour.

Or of any claimant.

Only the people of a territory.

US.

The People of Gibraltar.

Article 1 of both International Covenants, extended to Gibraltar fifty years ago, declares that all peoples have the right of self-determination.

Resolution 1514 also says ‘all peoples’.

Not some.

All.

Resolution 1541 says the obligation to transmit information in respect of a territory applies when the territory is ‘separate’ and ‘distinct’ from its administering power.

A State that merely claims such a territory and has no legal ties of territorial sovereignty with it and has no standing in its decolonization.

And the International Court of Justice, in the cases of Namibia and Western Sahara, and in its Chagos opinion of 2019, has made these principles clear.

The right of self-determination is the governing principle of decolonization.

It requires the free and genuine expression of the will of the people concerned;

And the international community as a whole has an obligation to ensure that the right is fulfilled.

Territorial integrity, properly understood, is a shield for colonized peoples.

It is not a sword in the hands of expansionist neighbours – whether in Southern Europe, South America or elsewhere.

What stands against all of our unbeatable legal arguments?

Nothing but resolutions of the 1960s.

Resolutions procured by a murderous dictator whose legacy democratic Spain has rightly left behind.

And the people of Gibraltar have spoken.

In 1967, ninety-nine per cent of us chose not to pass under Spanish sovereignty.

In 2002, ninety-nine per cent of us rejected shared sovereignty with Spain.

We have been asked.

We have clearly and unequivocally answered.

All we await is for you to hear our answers.

And to start acting in keeping with the clearly expressed wishes of the people of Gibraltar.

Chair, since I last addressed you, something important has changed.

The Treaty between the United Kingdom and the European Union in respect of Gibraltar has now been signed and is being provisionally applied.

It was negotiated at our request and with my Government leading for our people at the table.

It removed a short but no less cruel iron curtain that General Franco drew closed to divide families and friends.

And our Treaty states, in terms, that nothing in it affects the positions on sovereignty.

So understand what we have done.

We have removed the barbed wire and the chain link fence.

But we have not waivered on our sacrosant sovereignty.

We have shown that our people can build friendship with its neighbour without surrendering a single one of our rights.

Cooperation we welcome.

But we will never capitulate.

Chair, I ask this Committee for two things.

First, stop recycling, year after year, a stale decision written for another age.

Second, direct the C24 to send a visiting mission.

Let them come and see a self-governing, democratic, prosperous people.

Confident in who we are.

And confident in our rights.

And then do what the Charter requires:

Recommend our removal from this list.

Chair, I was born in 1972, behind a frontier closed by a military dictator to break our democratic will.

It did not break.

My parents' generation kept our country alive.

My generation built it into a modern nation.

And our children's generation will inherit that nation with clearly established, inalienable rights.

I came to this room first as a young man who listened avidly.

I leave it as a father who has spoken passionately.

With children who understand clearly.

Because, you can keep us on the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories.

You can pretend that institutional inertia in the C-24 excuses you from acting.

But you cannot deny us our right to self-determination.

You may outlast this Chief Minister.

But you will never outlast the people of Gibraltar.

Because Gibraltar belongs ONLY to the Gibraltarians.

It always has.

And it always will.

Thank you, Chair.

And goodbye.

For now…

ENDS