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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Trilateral Forum – effect of Spanish SCI designation on co-operation in relation to Maritime and Marine Environment issues.**

The issue currently obstructing progress in the Trilateral Forum is not the need to generally resolve the question of sovereignty relating to Gibraltar or its territorial waters. The issue is the need to neutralise the effect on co-operation relating to waters of Spain's designation (and the Commission's Decision relating thereto) of a site of Community Importance in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters.

By its designation Spain has unilaterally "changed the goal posts" in the middle of the process and it is not acceptable to the Gibraltar Government that she should gain, or that UK/Gibraltar should lose out as a result. The task therefore is to ensure that any agreement to co-operate takes place in the context of the status quo ante, that is in the context of the position as it was before Spain's designation of the Site of Community Importance. In this way, all sides will co-operate in the context of the circumstances as they existed at the outset, and no Party will have gained or lost as a result of Spain's unacceptable action.

The UK/Gibraltar have no doubt whatsoever about exclusive British Sovereignty and Gibraltar's jurisdiction and control of the three miles of British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. Only Gibraltar laws apply in British Gibraltar Territorial Waters. There is no question of the Gibraltar Government accepting anything that puts this fundamental proposition in doubt. There is no prospect whatsoever of Spanish law or enforcement being applied to British Gibraltar Territorial Waters in the context of the EC Habitats Directive, any other EU directive or anything else.

In this context the Gibraltar Government will continue the search for a solution that would enable it to safely pursue the original agenda for co-operation in relation to waters in Gibraltar and in nearby Spain.

Meanwhile, A Gibraltar Government spokesman said:-

“The Gibraltar Government notes statements attributed in the Spanish press to Campo MP Sr Landaluce, that neither the Treaty of Utrecht nor any other subsequent international treaty grants territorial waters to Gibraltar. If Sr Landaluce truly and confidentially believes his own statements, then the Gibraltar Government would urge him to join it in calling on Spanish Government to agree to submit that very question to determination by the International Court of Justice. He must think that Spain has everything to gain and nothing to lose from doing so. If, on the other hand he does not, then he should stop misleading Spanish public opinion with false statements in which he himself does not believe.”