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PRESS RELEASE

No: 564/2012

Date: 6th September 2012

Government takes a very serious view of threats from Spain

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar takes a very serious view of the open threats against Gibraltar made by both the Spanish Foreign Minister Mr Jose Garcia-Margallo and the Agriculture Minister Mr Miguel Arias Canete. It is regrettable that official circles in Madrid have still not learnt the lesson that a policy of hostility and antagonism towards Gibraltar simply does not work.

In a radio interview this morning, the Spanish Foreign Minister has said that Spain will apply to Gibraltar in other areas the same treatment that is applied by Gibraltar to the Spanish fishermen.

This follows comments in the Spanish press yesterday where the Spanish Agriculture Minister issued an unequivocal threat to carry out measures against Gibraltar in consultation with his colleagues in the Foreign and Interior Ministries.

These threats will not deter the Government of Gibraltar from maintaining its policy which is that the rule of law must be upheld in the current dispute with the Spanish fishermen. The position of HMGoG is simply designed to ensure that Gibraltar's laws are fully complied with within our jurisdiction.

Moreover, as everybody knows, a technical report on fishing in the territorial waters of Gibraltar is being prepared for HMGoG. The Government has repeatedly indicated its political will to resolve the issue in the best interests of all parties concerned.

The only "harassment" that has occurred in the meantime is actually that perpetrated upon the two Gibraltarian fishermen who had their vessels taken to Algeciras by the Guardia Civil in breach of all applicable laws, rules and practices.

The latest threats from Spain are totally unacceptable between democratic partners in the European Union. It is shameful that the Government of a large and powerful country like Spain should continue to bully a small country like Gibraltar in this way.

The people of Gibraltar have had to endure decades of harassment and antagonism from successive Spanish Governments of different political colours, from a democratic Spain

and from a fascist Spain. Madrid would do well to remember that our proud history has shown that Gibraltarians do not succumb to threats.

HMGoG has no doubt that the United Kingdom will wish to ensure that the blatant and unashamed threats to the British people of Gibraltar are taken up with Madrid at the highest level.