



HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR

Ministry for Health & Environment

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PRESS RELEASE

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Gibraltar represented at Overseas Territories Biodiversity Conference

Gibraltar has been represented at a conference this week on the subject of biodiversity conservation in the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs). The meeting is taking place in London, at the Royal Botanic Kew Gardens Kew, which is itself closely involved in biodiversity work in several territories.

Dr Liesl Torres, Principal Secretary (Ag) of the Department of the Environment and Dr Keith Bensusan, head of the Strait of Gibraltar Bird Observatory of the GONHS, are attending a UK Overseas Territories Conference on Biological Diversity this week, in their respective capacities as Government scientist and representative of a wildlife conservation and research NGO. The conference will be attended by UK Government departments and NGOs, as well as those from most of the UKOTs including places as exotic as Montserrat and the Cayman Islands and as remote as St Helena and Ascension.

The conference aims to foster and facilitate working relationships between the various UKOTs on all environmental matters. It will focus particularly on the responsibilities of each territory, and of the UK Government, in relation to their commitments under various international biodiversity conservation agreements and conventions. Drs Torres and Bensusan are already well acquainted with many of the attendees and have worked closely with some of them. This reflects the Government of Gibraltar's commitment to share knowledge and experience with other UKOTs, as well as GONHS' long standing role in the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum, a UK-based NGO that works to promote and consolidate conservation work in the UKOTs.

As part of the conference, the delegates attended an event in the UK Parliament on the evening of the 12th March. The aim of the event was to provide an opportunity for UKOT environmental experts to meet UK Parliamentarians and discuss some of the issues and challenges they face.

Minister for the Environment, Dr John Cortes commented, "This Government like no other, values its contact with the UK Overseas Territories. Working with them on environmental matters will benefit all concerned, from the exchange of expertise and experience that will result. Gibraltar has an obligation to protect what is a significant part of the overall biodiversity of British Territory and Territorial Waters, and is committed to doing so".

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