



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

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HIGH PROFILE FOR GIBRALTAR ISSUES

This evening the Foreign Secretary William Hague telephoned the Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo in order to express the British Government's, the Prime Minister's and his personal support and his backing for Gibraltar in light of the provocative statements by Spanish Foreign Minister Mr Margallo over the weekend.

Mr Hague also expressed the UK Government's sympathy for those affected by the Spanish actions and he thanked the Gibraltar Government for the sensitive way in which it has handled the situation.

The Chief Minister, despite being away from Gibraltar on his annual leave, has had an extremely busy day speaking to many of Britain's media outlets.

He began the day on the BBC's 'Today' programme and he has also spoken to the BBC World Service, The Guardian newspaper, Sky News, Al Jazeera and many others.

Tomorrow morning, he starts his day on BBC's Breakfast programme at 8.10 (Gibraltar time) and he will quickly move on to BBC World Service and then Good Morning Scotland. Radio and Television stations from as far apart as Columbia, Cyprus and New York are also hoping to speak to him on-air.

These interviews have given extensive coverage to the artificial reef laid by the Government and to the campaign of bullying and harassment against Gibraltar and its people that the present Spanish Government has embarked upon.

The Chief Minister has been clear about the purpose of the artificial reef created in BGTW – the aim is to ensure that fish stocks in BGTW are managed in a way in keeping with established precautionary principles of conservation and also as part of active management of the marine environment.

A report on the marine resources in BGTW was published in June. The report highlighted the need for measures to be taken to preserve, and enhance the marine environment. The report noted that artificial reefs would have a strong beneficial impact on the

biodiversity of the waters around Gibraltar. The blocks laid in BGTW are, therefore, the first step in a wider marine conservation programme to increase fish stocks throughout BGTW.

In his interviews today, Mr Picardo made clear that HMGoG is engaged in discussion with all local stakeholders on a strategy which will allow Spanish fishermen to fish in a sustainable manner and in accordance with Gibraltar law.

He was also very clear in telling the world's media that "hell would freeze over" before the artificial reef was moved by the Gibraltar Government.

HMGoG's marine strategy, the full effect of which will be seen in the coming months, also includes :-

- Measures to increase the population of all marine species (i.e. reefs and sea grass beds);
- Increased resources for environmental protection and enforcement;
- Regulations to control marine recreational activity whilst providing safeguards for the local marine environment;
- Increased monitoring and collection of data of fish stocks.
- Forthcoming changes to the law to allow sustainable fishing practices with sustainable fishing methods involving a registry of such vessels.

The Chief Minister is away on annual leave until next week. In his absence, the Deputy Chief Minister, Joseph Garcia, chaired today's meeting of Cabinet and will be acting Chief Minister.