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**PRESS RELEASE**

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Attached is a Statement by the Chief Minister, Peter Caruana.

The full video recording of the Chief Minister's Speech, and question and answer session at the Forum Europa in Seville on 25<sup>th</sup> November will be placed on the Government's website as from tomorrow at 5pm, so that everyone can see and hear it for themselves.

Attached also to this Press Release is a translation into English of the question and full answer in which the Chief Minister made reference to Andorra

## **STATEMENT BY THE CHIEF MINISTER PETER CARUANA**

Despite any disagreements that I may have with him on this and other issues, Maurice Xiberras is a person for whom I have considerable personal and political respect. Accordingly (even though on this occasion he appears to have fallen short of his usual high standards of political analysis), as he has asked for a public explanation of my recent comments at a public event in Seville I am very happy to provide it. Indeed I am always happy, as I am duty bound to explain all my political comments to the people of Gibraltar.

I reject outright Maurice's analysis of my statements and views and thus the conclusions that he wrongly draws from them as to their meaning and implications, which appear to be based, in equal measure, on ignorance of what I said and of the modern Andorran Constitution. Nor is it the first time that I have said what I said in Seville, publicly in Spain and in Gibraltar and indeed in the United Kingdom. I have said the same thing several times.

The fundamental point is that modern Andorra is NOT a case of joint sovereignty between Spain and France. It is not a case of shared sovereignty between them. Neither France nor Spain have or exercise sovereignty in or over Andorra. Accordingly, the application of the Andorra Model to Gibraltar would not involve Spain having any sovereignty of Gibraltar.

Maurice's analysis and conclusions, and the political commentary that he makes as a result, are therefore based on a totally false premise and false grounds.

Accordingly there is absolutely no "dishonouring of the expressed will of the people", breach of "the red line approved by the electorate", risk to future dealings with Spain, "sharing of sovereignty", "weakening of Gibraltar's position", "breach of undertaking given to the people", "hubristic shooting from the hip" or "departure from stated objectives" as he alleges.

Despite the fact that all these assessments by Maurice are based on his own misconception, he has the considerable temerity to go on to speculate that the supposed concession to Spain is due to some economic reason or a political bribe to Spain. And all of this without even seeking from me clarification of what I had actually said or meant.

It is absurd to imagine that, having spent the last 10 years defending Gibraltar from joint sovereignty (including right now in relation to territorial waters), I might now find it acceptable. No degree of Spanish Sovereignty of any part of Gibraltar is acceptable.

As I have also said before, I reject the idea that Gibraltar's political leader does not have the obligation to try and solve the Gibraltar issue if it can be done in a way that respects our rights and aspirations as a people, thereby relieving our future generations of it. I cannot understand why anyone should think that it is bad or wrong for any proposal to be put to the people of Gibraltar in referendum for them to freely accept or reject in exercise of our right to self determination. It is as if some people do not trust the collective decision of the people of Gibraltar and therefore want to avoid them

expressing their opinion on proposals that might be acceptable to them – in case they are acceptable to them! I reject that.

Accordingly, I retract nothing and ratify every word of my statement in Seville, which I am very happy to defend politically and electorally in Gibraltar, and which was as follows:

“QUESTION (PUT BY MODERATOR):

¿Eduardo del Campo del Mundo del Diario El Mundo pregunta cuál sería el mejor status final para Gibraltar mantener el estatus quo actual no?

ANSWER (THE CHIEF MINISTER):

El estatus quo actual no nos disgusta, nos complace, pero es el estatus quo final Gibraltar? Yo personalmente creo que no. La respuesta a la pregunta es sencillamente esta. Mi obligación como dirigente político de Gibraltar no es inculcar a los Gibraltareños de lo que tienen que pensar y lo que no tienen que pensar sobre una futura posible solución al contencioso. Esa no es mi obligación. Mi obligación es proteger su derecho a elegir y a no ser víctima de imposición, que es lo que hago.

Bien. Que hay propuestas ? Cualquiera sería buena siempre y cuando sea libremente aceptada por el pueblo de Gibraltar. Por ejemplo, yo he dicho muchas veces que una propuesta, que yo creo que España no está en condición, no tiene ánimo de hacer en estos momentos o quizás nunca, una propuesta para una posible solución del tema de Gibraltar, que es problema para todos en cierta medida, sería, por ejemplo, un estatus como el de Andorra que es una situación en donde, bueno, ustedes la conocen la Andorra posterior a su nueva constitución del 1993, no anterior por supuesto.

Bien pues si eso fuera viable yo diría, bueno, pongámoselo al público de Gibraltar en Referendum. Yo incluso no vería imposible recomendarlo al pueblo de Gibraltar pero al final el que va a decidir el futuro del pueblo de Gibraltar no es ni Caruana ni el sucesor de Caruana, es el pueblo de Gibraltar que es el que tiene el derecho a decidir su futuro y a no ser víctima de imposición.

A ver, porque cuando se dice que el pueblo de Gibraltar no tiene derecho a la autodeterminación, una frase que se dice tantas veces que ya sale casi con naturaleza de la boca, pero vamos a entenderla: el decir que Gibraltar no tenga derecho a la autodeterminación, quiere decir en otras palabras que en el siglo XXI en la Europa de la Unión Europea es admisible que a 30,000 personas que viven en un territorio comunitario se le impongan por negociación bilateral entre dos partes, otras, un futuro soberanista sin tener en cuenta su voluntad y a sabiendas de que es en contra de su voluntad.

Eso es lo que quiere decir alegar que el pueblo de Gibraltar no tiene derecho a la autodeterminación y yo creo, por mucho que defiendan en este salón todos ustedes la tesis Española con relación a Gibraltar, a mí me cuesta pensar que en este Salón hay más de cinco personas o ninguna, que pueda pensar que esto es viable o aceptable para España. Olvidense ustedes para Gibraltar.”

## **English Translation**

Question (put by moderator):

Eduardo del Campo of the daily El Mundo, asks what would be the best final status for Gibraltar, to maintain the current status quo, no?

Answer (the Chief Minister):

The current status quo does not displease us, it pleases us, but is it the final status for Gibraltar? I personally think that it is not. The answer to the question is simply this. My obligation as Gibraltar's political leader is not to indoctrinate Gibraltarians as to what they should think and not think about a possible future solution to the problem. This is not my obligation. My obligation is to protect their right to choose, and not to be victims of imposition, which is what I do.

So, what if there should be proposals? Any would be good, provided that they are freely accepted by the people of Gibraltar. For example, I have said many times that a proposal, which I do not think Spain would make, is not minded to make, now, or perhaps ever, a proposal for a possible solution to the Gibraltar issue, which to a certain extent is problematic for everyone, would be, for example, a status like Andorra which is a situation in which, well, you all know the Andorra post its new Constitution of 1993, obviously not the one before.

Well, if that were viable, I would say, well, let's put it to the people of Gibraltar in Referendum. I would even not see it as impossible that I might recommend it to the people of Gibraltar, but in the end the one who is going to decide the future of the people of Gibraltar is not Caruana or Caruana's successor, it is the people of Gibraltar who are the ones who have the right to decide their future and to not be victims of imposition.

Let's see, because when it is said that the people of Gibraltar do not have the right to self determination, a phrase which is said so often that it now comes naturally from the lips, but let's understand it: to say that Gibraltar does not have their right to self determination is to say in other words that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, in the Europe of the European Union it is admissible that there should be imposed on 30000 inhabitants of community territory by bilateral negotiations between two other parties, a future sovereignty without having regard to their wishes, and in the knowledge that it is contrary to their wishes.

That is what alleging that Gibraltar does not have the right to self determination means, and I think, however much you all in this hall may defend the Spanish position, it is difficult to believe that in this hall there are more than 5 people, or anyone, who can think that this is viable or acceptable for Spain, let alone for Gibraltar.