



**HM GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
PRESS OFFICE
No.6 Convent Place
Gibraltar
Tel:20070071; Fax: 20043057**

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Montegriffo Directly Contradicts Feetham

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar notes comments earlier in the week made in Spain by Peter Montegriffo, founder of the GSD, in which he has entirely agreed with the position of the Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo MP, in respect of the consultation on the status of Gibraltar within the European Union.

Speaking to Campo newspaper "La Verdad" Mr Montegriffo said the following when asked his opinion of the consultation kicked off by the Government:

"I think it is a very important debate which had to be initiated in Gibraltar as it is in the United Kingdom. There is a very lively debate about what the relationship between the UK and the European Union should be, and the Conservative Party has even promised a referendum if they win the next election. Its important that Gibraltar should also consider what is in its interests if there were changes and how it would affect us in the medium term."

When asked further by the newspaper what should be the relationship between Gibraltar and the EU, Mr Montegriffo further added:

"Gibraltar's membership of the EU was defined in 1973, many years ago and the world has changed a lot since then. It is reasonable that Gibraltar, like so many other EU territories, should ask itself again what type of relationship it is most appropriate to have with the EU. I think this is an open process and that participation of all local stakeholders will be very important and I think this coincides with what that process is delivering in the UK."

The statements from Mr Montegriffo are. In keeping with Government's own stated position and are directly contradictory to the statements from the current leader of the GSD, the self-described "nightwatchman", Mr Feetham who has been widely critical of the Government's decision to start this consultation.

The Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo MP, said: "The almost unanimous consensus of opinion in business in Gibraltar favours the position we have taken in relation to this consultation. In meetings with many and varied business representative organisations, we are being congratulated for our vision in undertaking this consultation at this point in time. The statements from Mr Montegriffo reflect what we are being told not just by businesses

and their representative organisations, but also by individuals in our Community. In the circumstances, I do trust that once this process commences, we can make it as non-partisan a process as possible."

Note to Editors:

A copy of the relevant page of "La Verdad" is attached for editors ease of reference.