



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister attends the inauguration of the UCA summer course “Spain: Foreign Action and Cross-border Cooperation with Gibraltar and Morocco” in San Roque

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC, attended the inauguration of the course “Spain: Foreign Action and Cross-border Cooperation with Gibraltar and Morocco” at San Roque’s Palacio de los Gobernadores. The course is part of the 35th edition of the Summer Courses offered by the University of Cadiz (UCA) in San Roque.

Mr Picardo addressed the participants, mostly young students, along with the Mayor of San Roque and the Senior Vice-President of the Regional Government of Cadiz, Juan Carlos Ruiz-Boix; the Coordinator of the course, Professor Jesús Verdú; and Professor Alejandro del Valle, one of the lecturers. The former President of the Regional Government of Cadiz, Rafael Román; former Senator José Carracao and former Mayor of La Línea Juan Carmona were also present.

The Chief Minister said he was “delighted” to visit San Roque for the opening of the Course and, that Gibraltar “is open to collaboration for mutual benefit” in the Campo de Gibraltar area. Moreover, he recalled that, according to a recently published study by the Gibraltar Chamber of Commerce, the Rock accounts for 25% of the region’s GDP, and one fourth of employment in the Campo de Gibraltar.

“This study is based on data from 2013, at the height of the recent conflict in the political relationship between Gibraltar and Spain. What would the figures look like if there had been cooperation? Gibraltar is willing to multiply the current opportunities. The key is to leave sovereignty aside and support cooperation. There is and will forever be a political disagreement over sovereignty, which, whilst not negligible, must not determine the relationship between Gibraltar and Spain”, said Mr Picardo, who added that both he and his Government uphold a message “of friendship and collaboration. That is the reason why I am here to support these courses”, he added.

The Chief Minister highlighted that, despite the political differences between Gibraltar and Spain and the phases of greater or lesser controversy, personal relationships between the inhabitants of both sides of the border have remained intact. “Family and friendship bonds remain strong and there are still many marriages across the frontier. That has not changed and it is very positive as it shows a healthy disregard by people of the disputes between politicians”, he said.



During question time, the Chief Minister, who accepted and responded to all the questions posed by attendees, lamented that, contrary to the line maintained by the Gibraltar Government, there has not been a single meeting with the Mancomunidad or Community of Municipalities of the Campo de Gibraltar over the past three and a half years. “It is a shame that the situation has been so because the Mancomunidad has shared the same political colour and ideology as the Spanish Government”, said Mr Picardo, who said his government maintains a good relationship with the Regional Government of Andalusia. “It doesn’t make the headlines because it is good. There are several agreements between both parts that work very well”, he explained.

Responding to other questions, he also lamented the lack of a Tax Information Exchange Agreement with Spain and of a response to his cooperation proposals from Spain’s Minister of Finance, Cristóbal Montoro. “Spain does not have to sign this kind of agreement if it doesn’t wish to, since there already are equivalent European Directives. Nevertheless, I have written to Snr Montoro on two separate occasions and have received no answer”, he declared.

Regarding the closure of the Cervantes Institute in Gibraltar, Mr Picardo pointed out that political agreements, referring to the Córdoba Agreements which set out the opening of this centre in Gibraltar, “must be fulfilled, even if they are not international treaties”, and described the work of Francisco Oda as Head of the institution in Gibraltar as “exemplary and excellent”.