



Deputy Chief Minister

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Wishes of the people must come first says Dr Garcia

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has declared that the United Nations must fulfil its mandate to the people of the Non Self Governing Territories and the wishes of the people of those Territories must come first. Dr Garcia made these comments at the formal opening of the seminar “Understanding self-determination in a Post-World War Europe” in the Garrison Library this morning. He added that it made a mockery of the United Nations process that it was so slow and that parts of it were lacking in transparency.

Dr Garcia told the audience that he was delighted to open the event both as a historian and as a member of a Government that has placed the promotion of self-determination at the centre of its political agenda throughout its time in office. This has included taking Gibraltar’s case to the United Nations 4th Committee, the Committee of 24 and a meeting with its Chairman. It is a policy which has also been reflected in the organisation of events of this kind inviting academics, jurists and politicians to debate the question in Gibraltar.

The Deputy Chief Minister said that while there was clearly a historical perspective to the principle of self-determination, there was also a living reality which is set in a modern day context. “This reality concerns, in particular, though I would venture to say not exclusively, the inhabitants of the Non Self Governing Territories that remain on the United Nations list”. Dr Garcia argued that self-determination has evolved from an abstract theoretical concept to an over-arching legal right.

Dr Garcia said that the Second World War marked “the beginning of the end of the British Empire”. He went over the impact of the War on Gibraltar and how the evacuation of the civilian population was the spur for the demands for greater political and constitutional reform which followed the War. “This was happening all over the Empire,” he explained, “the warship, the fighter bomber and the infantry battalion had given way to the rights of people.”

The Deputy Chief Minister concluded by saying that the exercise of self-determination must be the paramount consideration in the decolonisation of Gibraltar.