



Date: 29th June 2016

Chief Minister's Statement to the Gibraltar Parliament on return to Gibraltar from London on Post Brexit Meetings

Mr Speaker,

Honourable Members will know that I have returned to Gibraltar this afternoon after a series of meetings in London yesterday.

As I rise Honourable Members will forgive me for having to keep the ringer of my phone on.

The Government issued a Press Statement yesterday evening which gave some details of the work I had been doing.

I was accompanied by the Deputy Chief Minister and assisted by the Attorney General and both Albert Poggio, who is retiring as London Representative, and Dominique Searle who will be taking over in that role.

Mr Speaker the House will wish to note that I had discussed with the Leader of the Opposition in one of our meetings early this month, when we planned how we were going to act in the event of a vote for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union, that I would be travelling for meetings with the Minister for Europe yesterday and that we were already preparing for our "Greenland" style arguments.

It was clear to us both that the Deputy Chief Minister and I should proceed with these meetings and that we will soon be able to finalise some mechanism to work closer together in respect of the future work that will need to be done as a result.

The Cabinet has not yet met to consider how we will propose to the Leader of the Opposition that we should best do this.

I understand in fact that the Leader of the Opposition has written to me on the subject of which mechanism we can best use for the purpose of acting in a unified manner going forward and giving confidence in Gibraltar.

I expect to see his letter when I return to my office later this evening and it will no doubt inform Cabinet's thinking in this respect.

Mr Speaker, the events of the last week continue to require careful handling.



This afternoon, on arrival and before stepping into the Chamber, I have met with and briefed the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition in greater detail in respect of the issues I have dealt with in London.

I have also similarly briefed Ms Hassan Nahon who sits independently in this House.

Mr Speaker, Honourable Members are aware that one of the many avenues we are exploring involves working with Scotland's Parliament in order to seek ways to give direct effect to the will of the people of Scotland and Gibraltar who overwhelmingly expressed a desire to remain within the European Union and the Single Market.

Honourable Members will have read reports of my very positive discussions yesterday with Ms Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, in this respect.

Ms Sturgeon and I have agreed that we have a common purpose in exploring possibilities which could achieve our common objectives.

The Scottish Parliament yesterday supported the First Minister's motion to explore and pursue these possibilities for Scotland after a debate in which the First Minister confirmed our discussions.

Our aim, Mr Speaker, will never be to thwart the will of the British people.

It will in fact be the opposite, that is to say: We will act to seek to give effect to the will of the British people of Gibraltar as much as to the British people of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

That may give rise to varying degrees of membership of or access to the European Union or the Single Market.

That which may seem anathema to seem or impossibly complicated is actually of course already the reality we have been operating under for the 44 years which have elapsed since we acceded to the EU with the United Kingdom in 1972.

A technical team from Gibraltar will be communicating with the team set up by the Scottish Parliament for the purposes of understanding what the possibilities are.

This will no doubt involve seeking fuller understanding of the precedent set by Greenland's departure from membership of the EEC or European Economic Community, which predates the Treaty of Lisbon and the provisions of Article 50 thereof.

There is no rule book which would prevent Gibraltar negotiating - with the support of the United Kingdom - remaining both 100% British and 100% in the EU or in the Single Market even if the United Kingdom or parts of it were to leave.

Mr Speaker can I just say at this stage remind Members, who no doubt don't need reminding, that Section 47(3) of the Gibraltar Constitution provides as follows;



“Without prejudice to the United Kingdom’s responsibility for Gibraltar’s compliance with European Union law, matters which under this Constitution are the responsibility of Ministers shall not cease to be so even though they arise in the context of the European Union.”

Mr Speaker, that will be an important clause to understand in coming months.

Mr Speaker we have also been in close contact with the team of the Mayor of London who is seeking also to ensure that he acts to protect the interests of the City of London and all Londoners who also voted to remain in the European Union.

I expect that we shall be doing some considerable work in the future also with the Mayor’s team going forward .

It is important in this respect to note that both Scotland and Gibraltar are separate legal jurisdictions to England and Wales.

Gibraltar is British but it is not part of the United Kingdom, which in legal terms could be as advantageous as it might be disadvantageous for the purposes of this analysis.

It is true, therefore, that there are political realities that might make difficult all aspects of our current considerations and some legal realities too.

But in the context of negotiations, it is clear that ours can be a position which would achieve many objectives and which cannot be discarded out of hand.

It would deal with business concerns about access to the single market.

It would deal with general concerns about freedom of movement.

And it would certainly deal with the concerns I am hearing expressed by Spanish Cross Frontier Workers, whose representatives I will be meeting in coming days.

I sincerely welcome that the regional government of Andalucia, the Junta de Andalucia, have set up a working group on Brexit to analyse the potential impact on the region as a result of the Referendum result and the creation of which is in part at least explicitly stated to relate to the issues which arise in our hinterland, the Campo de Gibraltar.

I expect we will be able to work with the Junta also to understand the negative consequences that could arise from a bar to the free movement of people across our frontier with Spain and to prevent any such eventualities from arising, whatever the outcome of a potential United Kingdom notification to withdraw from the European Union.

As I have said before and I will say again, the Spanish and other nationals who are cross frontier workers are very welcome in Gibraltar.



Migration is not an issue in Gibraltar as it may have been elsewhere in the United Kingdom, Mr Speaker.

We welcome migration as a cornerstone of our success.

Cross frontier workers and those who have moved to Gibraltar from inside or outside the European Union are part of our success.

We wish to continue to see them working alongside us in our economy for many years.

And Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is committed to ensuring guaranteed and unhindered access to Gibraltar for them as well as for the businesses and clients of businesses who such workers serve.

And to achieve that, it is imperative in my view that we remain, as we always have, ready to work with all relevant parties in the United Kingdom and beyond in the context of Gibraltar's desire to secure its human and business need to retain physical and commercial access to Europe.

For that reason we have worked in the last 24 hours with friends and contacts in the United Kingdom and beyond.

In particular, we have been able to express the detailed concerns that are relevant to businesses in Gibraltar to the Minister for Europe in person directly

We have also communicated in writing to the Prime Minister directly and via colleagues in the Conservative party the things that we need to ensure are dealt with urgently.

We are also perhaps most importantly able to report to the House today that Gibraltar will NOT just be CONSULTED in the process of a potential negotiation to withdraw the United Kingdom from the European Union. We will actually be fully involved in the same way as the political leaders of the Home Nations of the United Kingdom.

The Minister for Europe confirmed to me yesterday that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will in fact be FULLY INVOLVED in any such process and that we will work IN PARTNERSHIP with the United Kingdom TO SEEK TO ENSURE GIBRALTAR'S INTERESTS ARE PROTECTED AND ADVANCED.

He has agreed to write to me to confirm that position as the settled position of Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom.

The work has also already started in the terms of some of the other technical and underlying issues that have long afflicted Gibraltar's ability to access the United Kingdom as a market for our services.

I am confident that we are progressing well with that work.



Last night was a propitious moment to celebrate the work that Albert Poggio has done for Gibraltar in London since 1988.

For over a quarter of a century he has worked the corridors of Parliament to keep the Gibraltar issue in the minds of the most influential people in politics in the United Kingdom.

As a result, on his retirement from the post of Director of Gibraltar House in London, the reception in the Speaker's House in the Westminster Parliament was attended by representatives of all parties and of all factions of all parties.

It was a final opportunity yesterday to ram home some of the things we had already communicated to decision makers during the day.

Albert Poggio will continue to work with us in relation to political lobbying in the United Kingdom.

That was always the agreed position; but I am sure that if it had not been, Albert would have nonetheless stepped up to the plate now in any event.

Last night, Mr Speaker, our message, was being very, very well received indeed.

But the House should be alive to the fact that politics of the current moment in the United Kingdom is as much in flux as the commercial aspects of the future relationship between the UK and the EU.

It is important therefore that when we stand up for Gibraltar's interests together and united as I know this whole House will do.

To end this intervention, Mr Speaker, I want to reiterate again some fundamentals, which the House will agree with me bear repetition:

Mr Speaker, in all of the options we are looking at;
In every alternative we consider;
In every future that we countenance;

Gibraltar will retain 100% of its British Sovereignty.

We have a Sovereign, Mr Speaker.
We love our Sovereign.
There are no vacancies for a new Sovereign for Gibraltar!

What we are going to do is act to ensure we properly contextualise for the whole world the situation in which Gibraltar finds itself.

We are going to act to ensure we are the ones shaping the future for our nation and our community.



We are going to act to fashion a reality that is in keeping with the expressed will of the people of Gibraltar.

Finally Mr Speaker, I will shortly be consulting the Leader of the Opposition and the Independent Member Ms Hassan Nahon on the text of a motion that I expect to move in coming days in this House to deal with the result of the Referendum and the response thereto.

I trust honourable members will now have a better understanding of the activity that has occupied the Deputy Chief Minister and me for the past 48 hours.

I will seek to keep the House and the whole nation as informed as possible in coming weeks and months as we progress the pursuit of the best interests of Gibraltar in these rapidly changing scenarios.

Can I also tell the House that I will not be present throughout this question time session and will perhaps have to absent myself at other times to travel, meet or speak to those who may be relevant as we pursue matters.

I obviously mean the House no disrespect if that occurs and I know all Members will fully understand.

One thing is clear Mr Speaker and I think Members of this House are now fully cognisant of this, and that is that the results of the Referendum on the United Kingdom's continued membership of the European Union has in fact ignited a chain of events the resolution of which will be more like a marathon than a sprint.

And not just for Gibraltar, Mr Speaker.

For the whole of the United Kingdom.

For the whole of the European Union.

And for the whole of the World.

I am sure we all in Gibraltar have the energy for it and none of us will be found wanting!