



PRESS RELEASE

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Oral Evidence of Rt Hon David Davis: Commons Brexit Select Committee

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has released the text of all the references to Gibraltar in the evidence of The Rt Hon David Davis MP yesterday before the House of Commons Select Committee on Exiting the European Union. The oral evidence session was on the subject of 'the UK's negotiating objectives for its withdrawal from the EU'.

In the course of his evidence the Secretary of State was asked three questions about Gibraltar. The full text of the questions and his replies is as follows:

"Q442 Mr Carmichael: On a similar but different topic, there is the question of the Government of Gibraltar, who have made known their concerns. What engagement have you had with the Government of Gibraltar on this?

Mr Davis: The Chief Minister came to see me some time ago and my junior Ministers have been in touch on several occasions. The primary issue with Gibraltar—not the only issue, but the primary issue—is sovereignty and the argument with Spain over sovereignty. We have made it very plain that we will always respect the wishes of the people of Gibraltar. I used to be Gibraltar Minister; it is written into my blood.

Q455 Joanna Cherry: We have talked about Northern Ireland in particular, and its desire not to have a hard border, and Mr Carmichael has raised some of the Government of Gibraltar's concerns. Is it possible to conceive of a settlement that doesn't differentiate in some way in relation to the particular cases of Gibraltar and Northern Ireland—for them to have a slightly different deal from the rest of the United Kingdom because of their particular circumstances?

Mr Davis: I would be loath to go down that route. It is very important for the people of Northern Ireland to see themselves as part of the United Kingdom, until they choose otherwise. Similarly, the Gibraltarians see themselves in those terms, and they expressed that very forcibly in a referendum—not the one on the European Union, but the one on their own sovereignty—some years ago, with 90-something per cent. It was a positively Soviet result. So I don't think it would be a good idea to go down that route. Look, we are looking at all options that we can conceive of that should look to have any practical application. We are not ruling anything out. Sorry to say I am not ruling anything out again—for using that phrase—but we are looking at all options. The more difficult the problem, the more options we'll look at, but at the moment I don't see one that meets what you have described.



Q456 Chair: On that last point, can you confirm that Gibraltar already has a differentiated status because it is not part of the customs union?

Mr Davis: Yes, as do, in other ways, places like the Isle of Man and Jersey, so there are distinctions."

The Chief Minister of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "I was delighted, as all of Gibraltar will have been, to read the statements from Secretary of State Davis which are entirely in keeping with the views put by the Government of Gibraltar to the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Department for Exiting the European Union. In particular, Mr Davis was clear in recognising the distinctive status of Gibraltar within the EU and not ruling out the potential for a differentiated status for Gibraltar if necessary. For that reason, Mr Davis' evidence before this Commons Committee and mine before the House of Lords' Select Committee has put the same material and ideas in substance before two of the most relevant arms of the Westminster Parliament at this important time in our history and in the decision making before the commencement of the Brexit negotiations and the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty. Of particular importance was the statement from Mr Davis to the effect that the continued British Sovereignty of Gibraltar is "written in [his] blood". That is as clear and unequivocal a statement of support as we have ever heard from a UK Minister and its explicit nature is particularly welcome at this time and in this context and should serve to dissuade any third parties from thinking that there might be any prospect of a change of view or any "wobble" in London in respect of full, undiluted and enduring British Sovereignty over Gibraltar."