



Date: 24th June 2016

**Statement by
The Chief Minister
to the
Gibraltar Parliament**

Mr Speaker,

It is the first time that this Parliament meets since the cruel murder last week of United Kingdom Member of Parliament, Jo Cox.

I propose that the House should hold a minute's silence before I commence my statement to honour her memory.

MINUTE SILENCE

Before I commence my address in respect of the Referendum, may I also congratulate Monsignor Carmelo Zammit on his appoint as Bishop Designate of Gibraltar.

He has long been a friend of Gibraltar and his appointment at this time will be most welcomed.

Mr Speaker,

The people of Gibraltar yesterday voted by 96% to 4% to remain within the European Union.

Members of this House will have noted the decision of the rest of the British people who were called upon to vote yesterday which was to leave the European Union by a margin of four percentage points.

In a franchise of 46.5m people with 72% voting, our contribution did not even move the needle.

This House was united in campaigning for a vote to Remain in the European Union.

Unprecedented unity swept our nation in support of that cause.

I want to thank the members of the House who were genuinely committed to dropping our differences and uniting in working for Gibraltar's greater interests.



I call on members to sustain the spirit of unity that they have shown over the coming months as we adjust to the reality of change across the UK, Europe and most significantly Gibraltar itself, that the decision to pull Britain out of the EU will bring.

This morning I have met with my Cabinet colleagues and later with the Honourable the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Mr Hammond and Mr Clinton.

For the good of Gibraltar, we have agreed to work together in order to face the challenges that the vote to exit the European Union will bring.

This is a time to put egos aside and work together as some of our predecessors here did for the benefit of our community as a whole.

I have no doubt members opposite will do so.

We have also agreed the outline of the substance of what needs to be done although this will no doubt require further work as events develop in coming weeks and months.

I intend to discuss with the Cabinet the mechanism and the formula through which this cooperation between Government and Opposition will take place.

Later I also spoke to the independent Member, the Honourable Ms Hassan Nahon.

I have no doubt we will also be able to count on her support as we deal with the issues that now arise.

All of them backed the Stronger In Campaign and the result it produced in Gibraltar.

And the Gibraltar results declared in the early hours of this morning have – in my view – served also to fully reinforce the unity with which we stood on this issue.

Indeed our clear and unequivocal statement as a people will now be a critical element in helping us to best shape the political and economic interests of Gibraltar in the months to come.

It is a mandate that I know that the British Government will not ignore.

This morning following the formal declaration of the outcome of the referendum, I spoke to the Minister for Europe, David Lidington.

I considered with him some of the many issues which will be thrown up by the result.

The British Government and the people of the United Kingdom have heard the clear message from the people of Gibraltar that we aspire to the continued freedom of movement of people, services and capital throughout the EU.

The British Government are deeply aware of that and of the fact that it falls on them to help us mitigate the negative impact of leaving Europe as we also focus on capitalising on the positives that will also emerge.

We have agreed that we will speak again later today.



After we spoke, the Minister for Europe made a statement to reiterate from London that the United Kingdom remains 100% behind Gibraltar.

The double-lock commitment on sovereignty has been specifically reiterated by him.

Mr Speaker, we are not alone in being affected by the referendum decision.

There are likely to be some tumultuous months ahead for Britain as it adjusts to the real impact of the decision it has taken.

Northern Ireland and, of course, Scotland are also affected as nations that voted to remain in the European Union.

Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man did not vote in the referendum but have access to the Single Market via the United Kingdom.

Theirs is a model of success based on different degrees of access to the EU to ours.

I have already scheduled calls with the leaders of each of these nations and Crown Dependencies.

In addition I have been in touch with other Overseas Territories' leaders with whom we will also work at this time.

The change which is heralded by this result will bring uncertainty - of that there is no doubt.

But of course there will be benefits as well as burdens and we are clear and determined to capitalise on those benefits.

Mr Speaker, the Government has not been idle in the run up to this decision which cannot be described as unexpected.

As we campaigned vigorously for a Remain vote we were also working on the preparations for what has now happened.

The top priority has been in working towards a sustainable alternative economic model and making best use of the time we have now to position Gibraltar's economy whilst the complex task of uncoupling the UK from the EU and building new trading and political relations take place.

But let me be absolutely clear.

Despite the noises that are bound to be made by our neighbour, and some have already been made as soon as this morning, this government is confident in the support from the British Government that there will be no talks or even talks about talks - the double lock - against the express wishes of the people of Gibraltar.

So let others make irrelevant noises about flying flags over our Rock if they want to waste their breath.

Such ideas will never prosper.

Gibraltar will never pay a Sovereignty price for access to a market.



Gibraltar will never be Spanish in whole, in part or at all.

So I ask all our citizens to ignore these noises.

Our work will be focused on the more pressing issues before us.

Redirecting and protecting our economy are what we must all focus on now.

Let me tell the public today that we know that we are able to deliver on our manifesto commitments on economic growth in the lifetime of this Parliament.

Of that we have no doubt.

It is true that doing so will be harder and that we will face new challenges.

Of course, we cannot diminish the significance and potential impact that the decision to leave the EU may have on our community.

But we are also entirely confident that the core elements of our economy and the government's public finances remain sounder than ever.

In fact, Gibraltar is better placed today than ever in our history to address a decision like that taken today by the British people.

Even if we face a perfect storm, to take a meteorological allusion, we are ready to weather it.

And we are ready to weather it well.

This means that those areas we have long identified as priorities for the community will not be affected as we move forward.

There will be many issues to address in the coming months which raise legal and even constitutional questions.

For obvious reasons, some of these will best be shared with the Leader of the Opposition in privacy.

The last thing we need to do is to inform those who do not wish us well of what we are doing to secure a good future in this new and game-changing scenario which Brexit brings to Gibraltar and its people.

I will also look to forming working groups and committees which will include members and others where these can help chart the way ahead in a new world outside the EU.

Mr Speaker can I, and I say this with the greatest respect, also call on the public at large, to resist knee jerk or rush reactions to what is undeniably a momentous decision?

As I stated earlier this morning, this is a time for reflection.

As the drama of this day recedes we will enter a period where diligence and calm thought, action and diplomacy will be required.



We know that, irrespective of their position on the referendum, the British people are hugely supportive of Gibraltar and its people.

The people of Britain will not let us down.

Our ties with our friends in the British Parliament are strong.

We have been working and will continue to work closely with UK government departments including the Foreign Office and the Treasury to ensure that the partnership will continue to flourish and be productive for the good of Gibraltar.

The strength of our inter-governmental relationships and our strong, objectively verified reputation, will greatly assist us as we move forward to protect and promote our economic interests.

Mr Speaker, in this respect, the government will over the coming weeks and months begin to unroll a series of measures and strategies designed to guide Gibraltar through the new reality before us.

It is important that we work in tandem with the UK and that we take one step at a time.

I can assure this House that the government is confident and ready to take all the steps necessary to take Gibraltar forward and we shall do so.

This afternoon I will be meeting with the Gibraltar Gaming & Betting Association and the Gibraltar Finance Centre Council.

I have been hugely encouraged by the support already expressed by a number of gaming companies who confirm that the result today does not change their commitment to remaining in Gibraltar.

The market that matters most to them is the United Kingdom.

So the establishment of a common market between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom has been the main issue we have long been working on with the UK.

We are confident that this is entirely achievable.

I will also meet today with the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce.

On Monday I expect to be able to meet with Unite the Union, with the GGCA and the Gibraltar Teachers Association.

I also expect to meet with the Grupo Transfronterizo which includes all of these groups and others from the Campo.

It should be clear to all that after the Prime Minister's statement today no Article 50 notice will be submitted by him next week.

It will fall to a new Prime Minister to do that in the Autumn.

On the ground, there will therefore be no immediate changes to speak of in respect of the application of rights and obligations between us and the rest of the EU.



Mr Speaker, the many cross frontier workers who come to Gibraltar each day are an important part of our success.

They will continue to be welcomed by us and I trust that their passage into Gibraltar – and that of the tourists and others who they work for and with – will not in future be impeded.

In this respect, I have today been in touch with both Juan Franco, the Mayor of La Linea, and Juan Carlos Ruis Boix of San Roque in this respect.

I expect to meet both of them in the coming days and weeks.

Mr Speaker, I have been humbled by the support of the people of Gibraltar this morning for my Government and for the leadership we will provide to our community in coming days.

All in our nation can rest assured that the Government has the energy, the ability, capability and the commitment and enthusiasm to steer a clear and steady course through the coming months and years.

Challenges there will be.

But then again, Mr Speaker, there always have been.

To an extent, for Gibraltarians this business as usual.

Another mountain to climb.

And I – as no doubt do all members of the House - have great faith in the resilience and the spirit of the Gibraltarian to overcome such challenges.

Together, we will overcome.

With hard work we will overcome.

We have done it in the past.

We will do it again.

Thank you Mr Speaker.