



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 23rd October 2017

Chief Minister's Address - Gibraltar Day Reception 2017

The Gherkin, London

Ministers, Members of Parliament, Peers, Ambassadors, Governors, Friends all,

Welcome.

Welcome to this annual celebration of Gibraltar's partnership with the United Kingdom.

Up here, surrounded by friends, we are entitled to feel on top of the world.

Surrounded by stunning views of the most wonderful city in the world.

Surrounded by the place the Foreign Secretary memorably and rightly called the most "funkopolitan" metropolis on the planet.

It was not ever thus for the people of Gibraltar in London.

75 years ago, we were amongst you here in London too.

Evacuated here, and elsewhere.

Here the bombs fell on Gibraltarians, as they fell on other Britons in The Blitz.

The Gibraltarians returned home and rallied.

We grew and prospered.

And 50 years ago, in partnership with Britain, we voted in a referendum to remain British.

That is what we celebrate this year.

And celebrating it here, with you, with the London of The Blitz resurgent as ever is particularly poignant.

For Gibraltar is resurgent also.



Since last year, I can honestly say our feet have hardly touched the ground.

Is it only 17 months since the referendum?

Is it only 7 months since the Article 50 notice was given?

Well, it is true that 12 months ago the way ahead for all of us looked a little challenging in places.

But I am very glad to say that a great deal of real team work has more than paid off.

Many anxieties that were rehearsed in newspapers, TV debates, over coffee tables and in our boardrooms.

But together with our colleagues and friends in the whole Parliament, in DeExEU and in the FCO, we have looked at the bigger picture.

We have grasped the pragmatism which the moment required.

We have energetically and enthusiastically ran with the Brexit ball.

And the news is clear.

The headline is simple: Gibraltar has enjoyed a fantastic year.

Investment is up.

Hundreds of millions are being invested by the private sector into Gibraltar.

Demonstrating confidence in our fundamentals and in our future.

Government revenue is up seventy five per cent since we took office.

GDO has grown on average ten percent in the period.

Our GDP per capita ratio remains fourth in the world.

Jobs have grown.

The number of jobs in our economy is up over 20% in the time we have been in office.

Unemployment for the quarter was down to a record low of 85 people.

(Yes, in Gibraltar we measure unemployment per head).

And entrepreneurs have opened their eyes wide to the opportunities that exist to distil new streams of business and growth.



In fact, the result of June 2016 Referendum reminded Gibraltar that we cannot stand still.

We cannot take what we have for granted.

Our particular brand of the 'Dunkirk Spirit' kicked in.

The spirit of the Evacuation Generation - who would not be kept away from their Rock.

The spirit of the Referendum Generation - who would not be bullied into surrendering their love of Britain.

The spirit that led us all to work harder and up our game.

Commerce and government in Gibraltar have been working relentlessly these past 12 months in that spirit.

And that has done us all proud.

Between us, my Deputy Dr Joseph Garcia, the Attorney General Michael Llamas and our teams have been out in London almost fortnightly.

And in doing this work, we have strengthened the bonds of trust and confidence between Her Majesty's respective Governments in London and Gibraltar.

Trust and confidence bolstered by a commitment to common regulatory standards between us.

Trust and confidence not limited to matters of sovereignty.

But also extending to the commercial relationship between both Governments.

We have developed an unprecedentedly close and productive working relationship with the Foreign Office Gibraltar team and its DExEU equivalent.

We have worked hard and productively with the Treasury.

We have demonstrated a mutual, single ambition of ensuring that we consolidate our long-standing political and economic bonds.

In doing so we have built on that partnership of trust that will protect the core interests of all of us in the British family of nations.

And as we reposition ourselves as a gateway to global commerce; as we reposition ourselves into a new relationship with the European Union and its nations, there are perhaps even greater challenges for us all to contend with than just the thorny issue of trade.

Security is at the forefront of our concerns.



In this Gibraltar, as ever, will not be found wanting.

Whether it be in relation to the safety and security of the British people.

Or the people of the global family of peace loving, democratic nations allied to the United Kingdom.

Or in taking very seriously our international obligations to fight terrorism and organised crime.

Gibraltar will be there.

Transparent.

Modern.

Progressive.

A willing trading partner to the nations of the world.

Because HM Treasury knows that we will approach our continued right to access the United Kingdom market in financial services with a deep sense of responsibility towards consumers in particular.

And as the work of the United Kingdom's Department for Trade opens up to us access to new markets around the world, we will export that responsibility wherever our companies trade.

We will regard our right to find customers in those new markets with a deep sense of focus on safeguarding consumers.

Committed to transparency.

Customer focused.

And consumer assuring.

World class, robust regulation.

Whether in the virtual world of crypto currencies.

Or in the real world of pounds, shillings and pence.

That is who we are.

That is what we stand for.

That is what we will represent to the City.



To British consumers.

And to the international business community.

They will see us always alongside Britain.

As we were two months ago, provisioning HMS Ocean to cross the Atlantic.

Doing our bit for our British kin in the Caribbean Overseas Territories.

As we were 35 years ago, converting the Uganda into a Hospital Ship for her Atlantic crossing in the Falklands campaign.

As were over two hundred years ago this week when Nelson sailed HMS Victory to battle at Trafalgar.

Always alongside Britain in partnership.

In times of hardship as well as in times of plenty.

And the most recent emanation of that partnership is the relationship between our two Governments.

I spoke earlier of the good rapport we have established between HMG and HMGoG.

I am delighted therefore that Robin Walker who leads on Gibraltar at DExEU is here tonight and will be responding in just a few moments.

From the very first moment we met in the long hot summer of 2016, Robin has been truly supportive.

I am delighted to say that we have had identical support from Sir Alan Duncan at the Foreign Office and with their teams they have opened new doors in Whitehall, to the Treasury and other departments.

That has given Gibraltar the confidence to move forward without looking back.

Gibraltar has never felt closer and more intimately tied into the British family than it does today.

The support of the British people and across parliament has been palpable not just to us but beyond your shores and ours also.

[Thank you Emily Thornberry for being here also with Labour colleagues.

Alongside Tom Brake and Liberal colleagues.]



And in particular, a deep and warm thank you to Bob Neil and the All Party Gibraltar Group in Parliament.

The support of the whole of the House of Commons is important in making others realise that Gibraltar will not be a victim in the process of leaving the EU.

We will continue to be a commercial, social and economic success story.

A Mediterranean power house of trade and growth.

And in that respect, our geopolitical reality can be an advantage for us and for our neighbours and not a hinderance.

I therefore warmly welcome the improved tone that has emanated from Spanish Foreign Minister Alfonso Dastis.

But even in music, tone is not everything.

Because whilst the mood music may have changed, we will not change our choice of dancing partner.

Nothing will change our unshakeable desire and passion to remain British.

But there is a lot to be done without crossing red lines on sovereignty, jurisdiction or control.

Our respective positions should not stop us from taking steps forward in cooperation for the mutual socio-economic benefit of Gibraltar and its neighbouring region.

Along with cross border commercial associations, trades unions and officials of the towns neighbouring Gibraltar, I am convinced we can building on the foundations of our existing, fluid, economic co-operation.

We stand ready to enhance the benefits that flow in both directions across our frontier.

With passion and imagination we can use this moment to nurture and not extinguish or strain the existing virtuous circle that sees our commercial entities flourish thanks to labour and professional services from the Spanish region around us.

We can work together to continue Gibraltar's mutually beneficial economic growth AND to play a leading role in our neighbouring town's right and proper ambition to build a better economic model for itself.

But we should do that in a manner that is complimentary and not with our backs to each other.

That is our aim.



How poignant then to be reminded this week that Nelson's prayer before the battle at Trafalgar was for "a great and glorious victory", not just for the United Kingdom, but for the benefit of Europe in general.

No one should doubt that such a result is as much in everyone's interest today in Brussels as it was then, 212 years ago this week, off Cape Trafalgar.

But of one thing, I know you will have no doubt.

Whether here in London, the scene of the blitz that our Evacuation Generation endured.

Or in Gibraltar where our Referendum Generation stood firm.

All around us.

We hear the whisper of the Gibraltarian women of those generations.

We hear the murmur of the Gibraltarian men of those times.

And we are the echo of their passion that lives on in us.

What they felt, we feel.

And as they said, we say.

British We Are.

British We Stay.

British FOREVER!