



PRESS RELEASE

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Minister Bossano wins Equal Rights for Gibraltar in Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation

An important breakthrough in recognising the rights of territories linked to Commonwealth Countries has been achieved thanks to the efforts of Minister Bossano.

Minister Bossano was first invited to attend the Commonwealth ICT Minister's forum in 2016 and discovered that the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation, which has a hundred-year old history, catered only for Commonwealth States as full members. Other territories linked to Commonwealth states could join as ICT members, which also included entities such as telecom companies, foreign countries and regulatory institutions.

Gibraltar applied to join under the existing structure, but challenged the fact that we were not recognised as a government on par with Commonwealth States. At the full council meeting held in Fiji Minister Bossano was invited as an observer with speaking rights and made the case for Gibraltar's equal right to participate, which was accepted in principle.

Last week a Constitutional Amendment Committee meeting of the Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation was convened in London to draw up a new constitution and other documents, and Minister Bossano was invited to take part in the 3-day exercise.

The resulting draft constitution recommended by the Committee has now gone to the Executive Committee of the CTO, which will approve it and submit it for final approval to the full CTO Council. This is the supreme decision-making body and will be meeting in September in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, where Minister Bossano has also been invited to attend and speak.

The new constitution creates a membership class: Member States of the Commonwealth who are automatically CTO members for as long as they remain in the Commonwealth. Of these, countries who take up paid membership are a separate category class known as Full Member Countries. These are the members that can vote and take up positions in the various organs of the organisation.



The new constitution provides for a new class of Full Member which is now created and enjoys equal rights to join. On becoming a paid up member they are classified as Associates Members with full speaking, voting and participation rights in all the constitutional bodies of CTO on a par with a Full Member Country.

The rights of Overseas Territories linked to a Commonwealth country are protected, even if the country to which they are linked leaves the Commonwealth.

In addition, the Executive Committee currently composed of 8 members will be increased to 9, and this ninth post is reserved for one of the new Associate Members. The election of the Associate Member to the International Executive Committee will take place at the full Council meeting, but only other Associate Members can nominate and vote for the candidate to take up this position.

Until now it was only in the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association that Gibraltar and other British Overseas Territories were able to play a full part. The CTO, however, is not an organisation of Parliaments but of governments, and therefore it is the governments that nominate representatives. Although CTO is a technical entity and has always been, there is a political dimension in that it limits full membership rights to countries that belong to the Commonwealth. Although non-Commonwealth countries can continue to belong as part of the ICT section, which until now had also been the case for British Overseas Territories.