



Deputy Chief Minister

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Gibraltar receives staunch support in Northern Ireland

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has declared that any Brexit deal which excludes Gibraltar would be a bad Brexit deal for the United Kingdom as a whole. Dr Garcia was speaking at the conference of the Democratic Unionist Party in Belfast where his address was interspersed with applause and received a standing ovation at the end.

The Deputy Chief Minister flagged the question of a possible Spanish veto under Clause 24 of the Council's negotiating guidelines. He recalled the political storm that this news had caused in the United Kingdom and the cross-party expressions of sympathy and support for Gibraltar which had been received.

"You continue to be among the staunchest supporters of the right of the people of Gibraltar to determine our own future and among the most passionate defenders of our choice to remain British," he told the delegates to applause. These included Arlene Foster MLA, until recently First Minister and Nigel Dodds MP who leads the group of DUP MPs who hold the balance of power in Westminster.

The UK Government Chief Whip Julian Smith MP was also present.

Dr Garcia explained the background to the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum and how 99% of the people voted to remain British with only 44 voters choosing to join Spain. "We made it very clear that our birth-right was not for sale," he said. He then explained the historical connection between Gibraltar and Northern Ireland and the wartime evacuation there of Gibraltarians during the Second World War.

The Deputy Chief Minister told delegates that there was value in Gibraltar and Northern Ireland continuing to meet, to share information, to expand our mutual understanding and to discuss the way forward in the face of the challenges thrust upon us by the decision to leave the European Union. He went over the very relevant discussions surrounding the land borders which both Gibraltar and Northern Ireland will share with the EU post-Brexit.



Dr Garcia later hosted a lunch for the DUP leadership, including the party's MPs, MEP and other senior figures. He thanked those present for making the delegation from Gibraltar so welcome in Belfast and presented party leader Arlene Foster MLA with a cut-glass model of the Rock.