



PRESS RELEASE

No: 729/2018

Date: 26th November 2018

Gibraltar rejects claim made by Spanish Foreign Minister

The Government rejects the view expressed by the Foreign Minister of Spain, Josep Borrell, that the United Kingdom has lost a measure of sovereign capacity over Gibraltar because it is no longer free to negotiate a future relationship with the European Union. This is certainly not the case.

In the first place, the Prime Minister has made it abundantly clear that the United Kingdom Government will be negotiating for the whole UK family of nations and that this includes Gibraltar.

Secondly, the document that Mr Borrell refers to is a political document of zero legal value.

Thirdly, in the negotiation that follows about the post-Brexit future, the truth is that all Member States of the European Union will not only have a veto over absolutely everything but, in addition to this, the different national and in some cases even regional Parliaments of the different Member States will be required to approve every aspect of the future relationship.

The talk of vetoes and exclusions is extremely unhelpful. It simply serves to generate uncertainty among the people in the neighbouring region of Spain. It is important to recall that over 14,000 people live in Spain and work in Gibraltar. Economic studies have shown that businesses in Gibraltar purchase some £ 400 million a year from businesses on the Spanish side of the border. Gibraltar residents spend £ 70 million a year in the hinterland. Indeed, Gibraltar accounts for 25% of the GDP on the Spanish side of the border. This is part of the shared prosperity that Gibraltar generates and which already exists.

The reality is that over the last year as we prepared to leave the European Union, the United Kingdom and Gibraltar have held discussions with different Member States, including Spain, as our nearest EU neighbour. This has led to a number of agreements across a number of given issues. It has also led to Gibraltar's inclusion in the Withdrawal Agreement and in the transition period which is now until the end of 2020. The basis of transition is that things will remain largely as they are for a fixed period while a future long-term relationship is negotiated and concluded.

That future is about the relationship that the United Kingdom family, including Gibraltar, and the EU will have as from 1 January 2021. Gibraltar has always been ready and willing to discuss that relationship, in a friendly and constructive manner, in the same way as we have discussed our terms of exit from the European Union. What we are not ready or willing to do is to give up any part of our sovereignty as the price to pay.