



No: 100/2019

Date: 13th February 2019

Opposition comes round to Government thinking on UN and decolonisation

The Government notes that the Leader of the GSD, Keith Azopardi, has said that Gibraltarian leaders should continue going to the United Nations and to its various committees to pursue decolonisation. This represents a major U-turn from the policy that the GSD had defended when they were in office after the 2006 Constitution had been agreed.

While the U-turn on the part of the GSD Opposition is very welcome, it once again raises serious questions as to their consistency and their reliability when it comes to dealing with these important matters that affect the very future of Gibraltar.

It will be recalled that Sir Peter Caruana took the view that, in 2006, Gibraltar achieved “de facto decolonisation” and that this delivered “the maximum level of self-government consistent with continued British sovereignty and short of independence.” This caused the GSD Government to withdraw from the annual discussion of Gibraltar by the United Nations Committee of 24.

The view of the then GSLP/Liberal Opposition, now the Government, was that there was no such thing in international law as “de facto decolonisation”. We argued then, as we do now, that the maximum level of self-government was what the Select Committee of the House of Assembly reported in February 2002 and not what emerged from the negotiations with the United Kingdom Government in 2006. We also made it clear that decolonisation involved a change in the international legal status of Gibraltar, from being a non-self-governing to becoming something else, and removal from the United Nations list. The 2006 Constitution did not bring about such a change.

It is interesting to see that Mr Azopardi takes a different view from that of Sir Peter. The current leader has now contradicted traditional GSD policy on this matter, both by accepting the importance of attending the various UN Committees and by making clear that Gibraltar is yet to be decolonised. This is the policy that the GSLP Liberals have always defended whether in Government or in Opposition.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "I am very happy that the GSD have completely changed their position on something as fundamental as our constitutional future and attendance at the United Nations Committee of 24. Decolonisation and constitutional reform are the big issues that matter most in policy terms and having the GSD leadership entirely U-turn on this and pivot to our position is hugely welcome and hugely important. I sincerely welcome this. Once again, the GSLP Liberals have been shown to have been right on the big issues. When there are arguments in our politics, we have been the parties to get it historically right. Whether in relation to the Brussels Agreement in 1984, to the Airport Agreement in 1987, the Cordoba Agreements and the 'cherry pickings' argument of 2006/7 or the constitutional reform and



decolonisation issue now, we have seen how the sweep of history demonstrates that we are right on the key issues affecting our community. I therefore welcome this important U-Turn and look forward to Gibraltar having the benefit of the GSD now being aligned with us in the GSLP and Liberals going forward."