



PRESS RELEASE

No: 535/2016

Date: 6th October 2016

Opposition asked for Select Committee on Brexit as Best Mechanism to Cooperation

The Opposition have clearly have learnt nothing from their crushing defeat at the last general election because they continue to divide Gibraltar on almost every conceivable issue and at the slightest opportunity. It is quite incredible that they should have now decided to try to undermine Gibraltar on the question of "Brexit" as well.

It is almost as if Mr Feetham has not understood the difference between being in Government and being in Opposition.

There is wide consensus in Gibraltar that the Government has acted quickly in order to protect our position and put across the Gibraltar point of view to key players in the United Kingdom and negotiate the best way forward for Gibraltar. This is what Governments do and what the people of Gibraltar are entitled to expect from us. Therefore the notion that the Opposition have somehow been excluded from this process stems from a basic misunderstanding of their role. It is as if the Labour Opposition in UK were asking to be included with the Conservative Government in their own internal deliberations and in their discussions with the EU institutions and other countries!

Moreover, the Opposition behave as if they were piqued because they have not been included in the wide consultation exercise that the Government has conducted over the last couple of months. Given that the exercise was for Government departments and agencies and for the private sector, and that the Opposition are not a Government department or a private sector entity, they should really calm down, take a step back and analyse the complete nonsense than runs through their latest comments. There are many times in life when a prudent silence is the best course of action, particularly when careless talk could have negative consequences at a time when there is so much going on behind the scenes. That prudent silence is what Mr Feetham should be observing now.

Having said all that, the Government fully accepts that the Opposition has a role to play in the "Brexit" debate. It will be recalled that the Chief Minister has already given notice of the establishment of a Select Committee on the EU in order to provide the framework for cooperation with the Opposition on the impact on Gibraltar of a potential withdrawal from the European Union and Gibraltar's future relationship with it. Mr Feetham himself proposed the establishment of this Select Committee as the best mechanism for the Government to work with the Opposition. It was also the Government's own view and that is what is going to happen if Parliament approves the Chief Minister's motion to establish that Committee which will also, rightly, include the Independent MP Marlene Hassan Nahon. It is therefore inexplicable that the Opposition should seek to politicise the issue when the way forward has already been agreed in a manner which they themselves had requested and which the Government had previously determined internally was the



best course of action. Indeed, as already explained, the Select Committee on “Brexit” in the United Kingdom itself has yet to be formally established.

Therefore the Opposition have not been included in the evolution of internal Government business which is what happens anywhere else in the world. They are not an extension of the Government. There is not a Government of national unity in Gibraltar. There is a Government and an Opposition and Mr Feetham was put firmly in Opposition at the last election. They will be included in Parliamentary business through the Select Committee in a way which reflects their role as part of the Parliament of Gibraltar.

The Opposition cannot have it both ways. They cannot on the one hand accept that the Government has a right to lead on the issue and then complain when the Government exercises that very leadership.