



PRESS RELEASE

No: 220/2017

Date: 5th April 2017

GSD PETITIONS OVERTAKEN BY EVENTS & SHOULD BE WITHDRAWN

Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar welcomes that the official Opposition may want to become involved on the non-sensitive aspects of dealing with the insertion by the Government of Spain of the now infamous Clause 22 of the European Council's Draft Negotiating Guidelines.

The Government also welcome the involvement of Independent Member Hon Marlene Hassan Nahon MP in the defence of Gibraltar's position in the international media. Ms Hassan Nahon has been careful to advise the Government of her interventions so it was possible to ensure that her statements showed a united front on Clause 22 in the national interest of Gibraltar.

In respect of the petitions which the GSD is currently promoting, the Government is disappointed to have to inform the public that the Deputy Leader of the GSD, Hon Roy Clinton MP, rang the Deputy Chief Minister, the Hon Dr Joseph Garcia, late this morning and then only after the GSD had announced their petitions to the media in a press conference at their party headquarters.

Mr Clinton then sent the petitions to the Deputy Chief Minister by email.

For his part, the Chief Minister, Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, who has been leading the defence of Gibraltar in the international media and in contacts with senior politicians around Europe, found out on GBC Radio and the website YGTV about the GSD petitions before DCM could brief him of his conversations a few minutes earlier with Mr Clinton.

The first proposal from the Opposition related to a petition to the European Parliament to reject the reference in the EU Council guidelines to Gibraltar. However, the European Parliament has this morning **already** endorsed its negotiating guidelines and has voted to exclude a reference to Gibraltar. The proverbial 'horse has bolted' in respect of the petition to the EU Parliament.

The second proposal from the Opposition related to a petition to the UK Parliament to pressure the UK Government not to agree a UK/EU deal which excludes Gibraltar. This petition, as published and opened for signature, 'urges the UK Government not to agree to the exclusion of Gibraltar from any agreement entered into by the EU and UK on leaving the EU, and to reject outright the attempts of the Kingdom of Spain to exclude Gibraltar from any such agreement.' In fact, it is clear that Gibraltar will be part of 'any agreement entered into by the EU and UK on leaving the EU' (the exit agreement). The matters in respect of which clause 22 applies, relate to the application to Gibraltar



of any agreement between the EU and the United Kingdom entered into AFTER the UK has left the EU, ie not 'any agreement entered into by the EU and UK on leaving the EU'.

The Government has also issued a statement in respect of the assurances received from the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union.

In the circumstances, it would be a wasted effort to continue with the petitions as currently drafted and the Government urges the GSD to withdraw these petitions and agree with the Government what petitions or other measures Parliamentarians should seek the support of citizens for as part of the ongoing Brexit process.

The Chief Minister said: "It was very unfair in my view that I should find out about the GSD's petitions in the media. I think that there will be an important role for citizen action in respect of the Brexit process. Petitions and peaceful demonstrations may be an important part of that. But we have to be careful what we ask people to sign. A petition to the European Parliament in respect of the European Council's guidelines is irrelevant. The European Parliament sets its guidelines and the Council sets its guidelines. The European Parliament has today set its guidelines and we have been doing a lot of work to try to introduce pro-Gibraltar amendments which have got the support of 209 Members of the European Parliament, not enough to change the parameters agreed. Those negotiating guidelines are now firm, have been delivered to Mr Barnier and cannot be changed. The Council's guidelines are still in draft and we are working closely with the United Kingdom on those. In respect of the UK Parliament, the GSD petition seeks assurances in respect of the part the Brexit process, the deal on "EXIT" from the EU, that already applies to Gibraltar. It is therefore a wasted effort as presently drafted. The Government would nonetheless have been happy to have discussed these or other measures with the Opposition before they chose to go public on the matter, but we were only informed after the announcement was made and I found out on GBC Radio and on YGTV. Government therefore regrets the timing of a call by the Opposition for these two petitions to be organised because the underlying request in both of these has now been overtaken by events or is not appropriately geared. These petitions are therefore not necessary at this stage, at least as drafted, and I call on the GSD to withdraw them and work with us to draw up more appropriate petitions and/or organise peaceful demonstrations in the manner we agree may be necessary, in real partnership and in the defence of the interests of the people of the Gibraltar, as we move forward with this challenging process."

ENDS