



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Government Happy to Defend its Excellent Handling of Brexit**

The Government is perfectly happy to defend its handling of the negotiations for our departure from the European Union, the most important challenge Gibraltar has faced in recent times. The determination to secure the absolute best outcome for Gibraltar in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum is something the Government is justly proud of. To achieve this, the Government has remained fully up to speed with every development over the last two years, moving to take advantage for Gibraltar where the opportunity has arisen - the measure of that is in Gibraltar's inclusion in the deal despite the alleged veto handed to Spain by the EU Commission and without paying any sovereignty, jurisdiction or control price for it. In fact, the position of the Government is that it has been able to secure Gibraltar's position now, whatever eventuality may develop in coming weeks and months. Whether there is a Withdrawal Agreement, a No Deal Brexit, a new referendum or - our preferred option - a rescission of the Article 50 Notice.

Conversely, history will not be particularly kind about the GSD's fractured, inconsistent and entirely cynical approach to the issue of Brexit. In fact, in trying to criticise the Government's consistent and well thought-out position on these negotiations, all that the 'new' GSD achieves is to confirm that they will always put party before country and that they are completely out of their depth on this issue. Rarely, if ever, has an Opposition party in Gibraltar been so badly led or so intellectually bankrupt on an issue of such vital importance to Gibraltar.

Indeed, the Government wonders, in fact, whether anyone in the GSD has even bothered to read Article 50 TEU, the basis of all negotiations so far and the provision establishing, in law, the process and steps to be followed in the event of a Member State wishing to leave the European Union. In essence, and for the benefit of Mr Azopardi, Article 50 requires agreement, setting out the arrangements for withdrawal. It then goes on to set out that agreements on a future relationship between the departing Member State and the Union will be conducted under the provisions of Article 218 TFEU. In other words, a withdrawal agreement under Article 50 TEU is required to effect the withdrawal of the Member State from the EU and then, only when that is concluded, do negotiations start between the parties on a future relationship under Article 218 TFEU, only now the former Member State is treated as a 'third country', a country which is not a Member State. Mr Azopardi should understand it now that it has been spelt it out for him.



The Chief Minister said: “The various instalments of nonsense and diatribe we have been subjected to by Mr Azopardi in the last couple of weeks in this context are an obvious and simple consequence of the failure of the GSD to do any real work whatsoever in this regard. They are scrambling to regurgitate arguments which are flawed in law in the hope of hiding the fact that they simply do not have a clue what they’re talking about. They have stooped to the level of counting the number of pages in the protocols. Is this really what they offer our community in exchange for their public salaries? Has Mr Azopardi even realised that a very substantial part of the Irish Protocol (over half of it) is a simple list of EU measures? Has he realised that the backstop is temporary and not permanent and that nobody wants it? Gibraltar certainly deserves better than the GSD. It is of course very easy for Mr Azopardi, from the comfort of his own sofa, outside Parliament and with no electoral mandate, to grandstand from the stalls as he watches on in glorious ignorance of some of the uncomfortable fundamental truths that arise in the Brexit context. It is nonetheless shocking that leader of the GSD should repeatedly make such fundamental errors of analysis. Can’t the leader of the Opposition come to his rescue? What is also unfortunately becoming apparent is that the GSD has, in its ranks, a number of fan boys of Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg who fail to see the benefits of avoiding a hard Brexit. Mr Azopardi seems to be inclining towards them and not toward some of the more sensible voices in his party.”