



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 247/2019

Date: 3rd April 2019

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### **Use of “colony” language in visa regulation is disgraceful**

The decision this morning by the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament to reverse its position and bow down to pressure from the European Council epitomises much of what is wrong with the European Union. In this case it is obvious that extreme pressure exerted by Spain and the bullying tactics of Spanish MEPs, on purely nationalistic grounds, has led to the acceptance of the “colony” language in relation to Gibraltar. This is a disgraceful state of affairs.

The possibility of a no deal Brexit on 12 April has not helped. This meant that many MEPs, who would otherwise have been supportive, also wanted the legislation in place in time for that deadline.

The measure in question provides for British Citizens to be able to enter the European Union visa-free and stay for 90 days in a 180 day period and it applies only in the event of a no deal Brexit. In other words, if the Withdrawal Agreement is approved by the UK Parliament, then this measure will not see the light of day. The inclusion of the footnote has no practical consequence in the sense that visa free travel will apply to British Citizens from Gibraltar. The only object of the exercise appears to be to use offensive and pejorative language in an attempt to irritate both Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. The official term for the status of Gibraltar in international law and under the Charter of the United Nations is that of “Non Self Governing Territory”.

The irony is that all the other UK Non Self Governing Territories, which are also listed in the same Regulation, gladly do not have to suffer the indignity of being referred to in the same insulting manner. Gibraltar has been singled out.

The Government understands that the meeting of the LIBE Committee this morning was flooded with Spanish MEPs and officials, many of whom were not even Members of the Committee itself. There was a visible, concerted attempt to reach the maximum number of votes allocated to each group by moving people around from one to the other. This behaviour shocked Members of the European Parliament of other nationalities who were heard to complain that the matter had been handled very badly and even declared that PP MEPs should be ashamed of themselves.

The Government would like to pay tribute to UK Labour MEP Claude Moraes who held out for the position that his Committee had unanimously agreed, without the offensive language, until he was removed because of his nationality. Mr Moraes has behaved in a professional and in an impeccable manner throughout in standing up for the European Parliament position against the European Council and the move orchestrated by Spain.