



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's Statement to Parliament on the Result of the General Election in the United Kingdom

Mr Speaker.

As all Honourable Members are aware, the result of the General Election last week in the United Kingdom has returned a Conservative Government led Prime Minister Johnson with an overall majority.

I was in touch with Prime Minister Johnson last week when I extended the congratulations of the People of Gibraltar to him and his Government.

In response, the Prime Minister reiterated directly to me his continued and entirely fulsome support for Gibraltar.

As a result of the election, it appears that the stated intention of Prime Minister Johnson will be to present the Withdrawal Agreement Bill before Christmas at Westminster in order for the United Kingdom to leave legal membership of the European Union by the 31st January next year.

The State Opening of Parliament and Her Majesty the Queen's speech thereon is expected later this week.

Although it was not our choice, and we continue to see the challenges it presents, we will leave the EU with the United Kingdom.

And as a result of the work that we have done since the result of the Referendum was announced, Mr Speaker, we will leave also with the benefit of the application of the Withdrawal Agreement to Gibraltar.

This means that we will enjoy the benefit of the transitional arrangements applying to Gibraltar also.

Honourable Members may wish to recall that it was initially suggested that Gibraltar would not form part of that Agreement and that we would not enjoy the benefit of the transition.



Neither of those eventualities has come to pass, and I am very proud of the work we have done to avoid that potentially very difficult situation.

In the circumstances, we will also be publishing a Bill for the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement in Gibraltar.

In order to do so in the most effective manner, Mr Speaker, we will be presenting the Bill once the UK Bill has passed its Committee Stage.

This is because our Bill will have to be a fair reflection of the Bill that is passed in the Commons and it makes sense, in the Government's view, therefore, to have a more final view of the UK Bill before we start the legislative process in this House.

We have to be clear though, Mr Speaker, that our Bill will have to pass through its stages in a shorter period than is usually the case.

And as from midnight on the 1st of February, although nothing will initially change, we will no longer be members of the European Union.

As we look beyond our membership of the EU and the negotiation of the future relationship with the EU, I ask all members of the community to understand that we will need to consider carefully what part of any future UK - EU Free Trade Agreement we will want to see apply to Gibraltar.

A lot remains to be negotiated.

Depending on what progress has been made in those negotiations, there is an option for an extension of the transitional period beyond the end of December 2020.

But Mr Speaker, the speculation as to what will or will not be included in the negotiations is already rife.

We must not fall into the trap, and I counsel Members of this House in particular not to fall into the trap, of thinking that we must be a part of the FTA to be negotiated between the UK and the EU.

That new trading relationship may not include anything of interest to us on the benefit side of the equation and many obligations on the liability side of the equation.

Such a trading relationship may cover services, or it may not.

If it does include services, it may include matters related to financial services, or it may not.

So we must be clear in understanding that we will need to be involved from the beginning but ready to walk away in the end if the balance of rights and obligations is bad for Gibraltar businesses and bad for the people of Gibraltar.

We must hold our nerve and be ready to do a great deal for Gibraltar.



We must hold our nerve and be ready to walk away from a bad deal for Gibraltar.

In this instance, more than in relation to the withdrawal arrangements, Mr Speaker, no deal with the EU may be better than a bad deal.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, there are many beyond our shores who are foolishly wringing their hands with glee at talk of vetoes and such like.

We will not foolishly fall into the trap of raising the rhetoric or believing the rhetoric of others.

I think we all know and understand that EU member states generally have a veto over the international agreements that the EU enters into with third countries.

This has not been an achievement of any particular state in relation to Gibraltar.

This is just a reality of the provisions of the EU treaties.

And so, Mr Speaker, we have to be clear in our thinking and united in our approach as a people.

We have to ensure we are not reactive to what is coming and the many provocations that we will hear over the airwaves.

And we have to be clear: We will always want to have strong relations with the EU, our closest neighbour.

But everyone beyond Gibraltar needs to understand that we are never going to compromise on matters of sovereignty, with the EU or any one of its Member States, in exchange for any trade arrangements or benefits.

We are never going to sell our birthright for a commercial advantage.

I think most people already understand that.

We have already secured excellent terms to continue our trade in services with the United Kingdom post Brexit.

That is our most important market.

We will continue to consolidate even further our access to the UK market in different ways.

We will also continue to work on the application to Gibraltar of relevant parts of future trade deals the UK is doing with third countries beyond the EU.

We have additionally also worked on the inclusion of Gibraltar in the renewal of the trade arrangements with other states as we leave the EU.



Most of these – but not all – are already reflected in the Schedule of the European Union Withdrawal (Application of International Agreements) Act 2019.

Mr Speaker, so much of the work undertaken by the Government to date will now, perhaps unfortunately, start to bear fruit.

Despite the fact that Brexit was not our choice, we are clear that we will make a success of it.

Anyone who thinks otherwise is on course to be severely disappointed.

ENDS