



Deputy Chief Minister

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‘Self-determination is the way forward’, Garcia tells UK Liberal Democrats

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has told delegates at the Liberal Democrat party conference in Brighton that the interests of Gibraltar must be fully protected during the negotiation of a new relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union.

In reply, the Foreign Affairs spokesman for the UK Liberal Democrats Tom Brake MP pledged his full support for Gibraltar, in front of MPs, Lords and other politicians.

The Deputy Chief Minister is accompanied in Brighton by the Minister for Business and Employment Neil Costa and the Minister for Heritage and Culture Steven Linares. They will split up in order to maintain a Gibraltar presence at a series of different events which have been organised.

Dr Garcia's address, during the traditional Gibraltar Government reception, centred on the consequences of the UK vote to leave the EU. He explained that the people of Gibraltar were pro-European, as reflected in the 96% vote to remain that was recorded there and added that people considered that the legal framework of the European Union provided a measure of protection against Spain.

The principle of freedom of movement was important to Gibraltar because about 12,000 people, half the workforce, came in from Spain to work every day. Brexit could potentially be negative for Spain itself given that Gibraltar was the second largest employer for the neighbouring region of Andalusia and accounted for 25% of the GDP of its immediate vicinity.

In that context, the Deputy Chief Minister then outlined the threats against Gibraltar that had been levelled by the Spanish Foreign Minister Mr Margallo over recent months. These threats had culminated in the attempt to bounce Gibraltar into shared-sovereignty with Spain as the price to pay if we wanted to remain in the European Union. "The people of Gibraltar overwhelmingly rejected joint-sovereignty in 2002 and we continue to do so to the day. Three hundred years of



British culture, traditions and way of life have taught us not to give in to bullies", Dr Garcia declared.

The forward is self-determination and not submission to blackmail.

A number of separate events connected to Brexit have been planned during the party conference including the main plenary debate on a Policy Motion on Europe. There will also be a separate panel discussion about the impact of Brexit from a European perspective, a business lunch, a number of one to one meetings and an opportunity to brief the international committee.