



Deputy Chief Minister

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Spain must respect will of the people Garcia tells Scottish conference**

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia has declared that it should be possible for different parts of the British family of nations to enjoy varying degrees of participation with the European Union in the future. Dr Garcia was speaking in Glasgow, in the presence of Scotland's Minister for Europe and International Development Dr Alasdair Allan MSP, during the party conference of the Scottish National Party. Dr Allan replied on behalf of those present.

The event at the conference was a first for Gibraltar. It was very well attended and included several members of the Scottish Government, like Cabinet Secretary for External Relations Fiona Hyslop MSP, Members of the Scottish Parliament, Westminster MPs and Councillors. Dr Garcia was introduced by Angus McNeil MP and Drew Hendry MP, both of whom have supported Gibraltar during National Day.

The Deputy Chief Minister recalled that the position at present is precisely one where different parts of the British family enjoy different relationships with the European Union. He explained that the participation which Scotland enjoys with the EU is different to Gibraltar's which in turn is different to the Channel Islands, the Falklands or Bermuda. He emphasised that it should be possible to find the political will to carry this multi-faceted relationship forward in a post-Brexit scenario.

The Deputy Chief Minister reminded delegates that Gibraltar had voted by 96% to remain in the European Union and that 62% of Scotland had also voted the same way. It was important to recognise the will of the people and to find solutions to the challenges that were going to come our way.

He traced the historic relationship between Gibraltar and Scotland, pointing out that it was a brave and resolute Scot, General Augustus Elliott, who had led the defence of the Rock during the Great Siege holding out against Spain for three years. The Royal Scots Regiment were also involved in that defence. Incredibly, a descendant of one of General Elliott's officers was actually in the audience. He produced a letter describing the Siege that his relative had written in 1795!



Dr Garcia went on to explain that the first Scottish Regiment that we have been able to trace in Gibraltar were the King's Own Scottish Borderers from 1727 to 1738. This tradition had continued over the years, for example, with the Royal Highlanders, or Black Watch, who were stationed in Gibraltar during the Second World War.

More recently, he said on a lighter note, Gibraltar had scored its first competitive goal precisely against Scotland and Lincoln Red Imps had beaten Celtic 1-0 in the first leg of the Champions League!

The Deputy Chief Minister made it clear that the issues for Gibraltar were access to the Single Market and Freedom of Movement of persons. He explained that, like Scotland, Gibraltar welcomed immigrant workers who made up about half our labour force. He outlined the position of over 10,000 frontier workers in the economy of Gibraltar and stated that "Brexit" posed a serious challenge for them too.

Gibraltar had the additional complication of a hostile neighbour to the north that was trying to take us over. He noted that Scotland had dealt with its once hostile neighbour to the south by taking it over in 1603 when James VI of Scotland became James I of England. "Sadly taking over Spain is not an option currently open to us", he said.

The Deputy Chief Minister went on to explain how Mr Margallo, the acting Spanish Foreign Minister was shamelessly taking advantage of "Brexit" in order to push for shared sovereignty over Gibraltar between the United Kingdom and Spain. Shared sovereignty had been rejected by the people of Gibraltar in 2002 and they continued to reject it to this day.

Spain has to learn to respect the will of the people, he concluded. That is what self-determination means and what democracy is all about.