



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Partido Popular Policy on Gibraltar is Confrontational and Outdated**

It is clear to the Government that certain sectors of the Partido Popular continue with an unhealthy obsession with Gibraltar, an approach based on generating hatred through misinformation. They do not seem to understand that their policy of conflict and confrontation is in nobody's interests and that it should be confined to the dustbin of history where it belongs.

The attitude of the PP is reflected in the statements made in the Spanish Parliament by its new leader Mr Pablo Casado and in the press by former Foreign Minister Mr Garcia Margallo.

The PP have not yet come to terms with the fact that Spain lost Gibraltar in 1704 and ceded it in perpetuity by Treaty in 1713 over three hundred years ago. In those times, territories and regions were handed over from one monarch to another regardless of the wishes of their inhabitants. Times have changed. In this day and age, it is an established principle in international law as laid out in the Charter of the United Nations and in the jurisprudence of the International Court of Justice, that the principle of self-determination of peoples must be the paramount consideration in the decolonisation process.

The problem is that people like Mr Casado and Mr Margallo are stuck with an eighteenth century mentality in a world that has moved on. Their approach to Gibraltar bears more resemblance to that of General Franco and his Foreign Minister Castiella than to anything one might expect from a modern, democratic society in the twenty-first century. Under Mr Margallo's tenure in Madrid, threats were made that the border would be closed and that shared sovereignty would be a pre-condition for Gibraltar to have a relationship with the European Union.

The PP must understand that neither Gibraltar, nor indeed the United Kingdom without our consent, will ever enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with Spain. The people of Gibraltar voted overwhelmingly to remain British in a referendum held in 1967. In another referendum in 2002, 98% voted against the very principle of sharing sovereignty between the United Kingdom and Spain. The wishes of the people could not be clearer.

Gibraltar, nonetheless, wishes to have normalised, friendly relations with Spain as our next door neighbour and as the nearest part of the European Union once we have departed. This is also in the wider interests of Spain itself. There are sectors of the PP who also show a blatant disregard for the over 14,000 people who live in Spain and work in Gibraltar. This includes over 8,000 Spanish



nationals. This means that Gibraltar has a positive impact on the livelihood of tens of thousands of people when their families are taken into account. Businesses in Gibraltar purchase goods to the value of over 400 million euros a year from businesses on the Spanish side of the border. This generates economic wealth and additional indirect employment. In addition, Gibraltar residents spend some 96 million euros a year in leisure and other activities in Spain. Indeed, independent studies have shown that Gibraltar is the second largest employer for the whole of Andalusia, second only to its regional government.

The Government knows that the Partido Popular strategy of creating mischief and promoting trouble is not shared by other sectors in Spain. We have engaged widely with the Mayors of the Spanish towns across the border, with trade unions and chambers of commerce on the Spanish side, with other political parties of different persuasions. We also held a positive meeting with the regional Government of Andalusia earlier this year. The Partido Popular are the odd ones out in continuing to promote conflict instead of cooperation. In pursuing such an outdated and confrontational approach the risk is that they will undermine the close, positive economic links that exist between Gibraltar and the neighbouring region.

The Chief Minister of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, said: "The people of Gibraltar do not wish to share or transfer our sovereignty to Spain in whole or in part. The Partido Popular don't seem to care about our wishes. The policy of taking the Rock's sovereignty against the wishes of its people is one born from the racist regime of General Franco. It seems to be a policy that is alive and well in the PP, even now that it is led by a man who was born in democracy. Mr Casado has married the Margallo approach with that of Castilla. Well, I have news for him and for everyone else in the Partido Popular or any other party who think sovereignty is up for discussion or negotiation: it isn't going to happen. We said "no way Jose" to Snr Margallo in 2016 and it's a pity that neither he nor his colleagues have yet woken up to smell the coffee! They should know by now that neither their threats nor their sweeteners will shift us from our position. Anyone who tables sovereignty as an issue just doesn't want to engage in talks. Our position is crystal clear. The position of the United Kingdom has also been made clear: they will not even engage in a process of negotiation of sovereignty which we are not content with. In the circumstances, it would seem that Mr Casado is intent on taking the Partido Popular backwards. We therefore welcomed the position of the PP and Snr Dastis to talk about non-sovereignty issues in the context of Brexit. We also welcome that PSOE has continued this approach and that Prime Minister Sanchez has wanted to prioritise the interests of people in the region and to hold out a hand of friendship to the people of Gibraltar. That is a modern approach."