



PRESS RELEASE

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STATEMENT BY THE CHIEF MINISTER OF GIBRALTAR ON THE EVE OF THE NOVEMBER SPECIAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL

My dear fellow Gibraltarians,

Ahead of the Special European Council in Brussels tomorrow, I have held an extraordinary session of the Gibraltar Cabinet this evening.

Tonight, I want to be clear with you all about what the current situation is.

A few moments ago I took a call from Prime Minister Theresa May.

The message I deliver to you tonight, in respect of the position of the United Kingdom, comes direct from my conversation with her.

The statement today by the Prime Minister of Spain, Pedro Sanchez, has confused a number of issues.

First of all, the only thing that the United Kingdom Government has agreed is an interpretation of Article 184 of the draft Withdrawal Agreement when read with Article 3 of it.

That interpretation does NOT exclude Gibraltar.

That interpretation does NOT prejudice Gibraltar.

In fact, the United Kingdom Government has specifically stated that its interpretation is without prejudice to the fact that the UK will negotiate future arrangements to include Gibraltar.

The full text of the letter and clarification has been published and can be read by everyone.

Every aspect of the response of the United Kingdom was agreed with the Government of Gibraltar.

We have worked seamlessly together in this as we have in all other aspects of this two year period of negotiation.

Most importantly, the legal text of the draft Withdrawal Agreement has not been changed.



That is what the Spanish Government has repeatedly sought.

But they have not achieved that.

The United Kingdom has not let us down.

Theresa May has not let us down.

She has stood firm.

We have stood firm.

Spain has had to accept a clarification which does not have the weight of legal value that it sought in respect of Articles 3 and 184 of the Withdrawal Agreement.

So in that respect, you should have no concerns whatsoever.

And the WITHDRAWAL AGREEMENT itself still constitutes a mechanism for a better and more orderly departure from the European Union than a cliff edge Brexit.

Indeed, I must emphasise that nothing that has happened today changes that the Withdrawal Agreement and its Transitional Period will apply to Gibraltar.

LET THAT BE CLEAR.

Separately, Pedro Sanchez also announced that he has agreed declarations with the other remaining 27 Member States of the European Union.

Let's be clear: those declarations are NOT agreed or shared by the United Kingdom.

Neither are they binding on the United Kingdom in any way.

In fact, Mr Sanchez announced those declarations before they had even been shown to any UK politician, official or diplomat.

They are no more than a political position adopted by the remaining 27 Member States.

Just like the clarification of Articles 3 and 184, these political statements are of no legal value whatsoever.

In fact, this is simply in keeping with the position the EU 27 adopted under clause 24 of the negotiating guidelines.

As many of you will have seen, in the end, clause 24 was of very little use to the Spanish Government when it came to negotiating the Withdrawal Agreement.



Theresa May made repeatedly clear despite clause 24 that she would negotiate to include us in the Withdrawal Agreement.

And today, true to her word, we are a part of the Withdrawal Agreement.

In respect of the future trade and other arrangements, the United Kingdom has entirely rejected the EU 27 declarations that Pedro Sanchez has referred to today.

We entirely reject them also.

As a result, Pedro Sanchez - and Spain - will be left with political declarations that mean nothing in the face of the legal texts and the resolute determination of the people and Government of Gibraltar and of the United Kingdom.

Pieces of paper that will have no legal effect and which will not in any way condition our future.

Pieces of paper that will not in any way condition the way the UK negotiates future trade and other arrangements for the whole UK family - including Gibraltar - with the EU.

Pieces of paper that will not in any way condition, damage or determine the future status of our Nation.

Because the UK has made clear that it is negotiating for the whole UK family - and whether Mr Sanchez likes it or not, that includes us.

That will be good for individuals and businesses not just in Gibraltar, but in the whole region.

We will not be cleaved out from the British family in these negotiations.

We will not be peeled away from our precious British sovereignty for access to a common market.

Our main market is the United Kingdom.

Our access to it is already guaranteed.

So let us be clear: Pedro Sanchez has achieved no guarantees whatsoever in respect of the future of Gibraltar.

But I can guarantee Pedro Sanchez one thing in respect of the future of Gibraltar.

It is an entirely British future that will suffer no dilution.

It will be a prosperous future in which businesses will have the market access they need to flourish.

And to you, my fellow Gibraltarians I say this:



These are testing times.

But we are navigating these testing times well.

And the Government of the United Kingdom has been completely firm in its resolve and in our support.

What you heard from the Spanish Prime Minister today was not a reflection of any new position, however much he tried to present it as such.

In fact, if anyone has a triple guarantee in respect of Gibraltar it is us, the People of Gibraltar.

We have a triple lock on our sovereignty

The First Lock : is the sacred Constitutional commitment that the UK will never transfer our sovereignty against our wishes.

The Second Lock : is that the UK will never even start a process of sovereignty discussions with which we are not content.

And The Third Lock : is the most cast iron of all.

We are the third lock.

The fact that we, the People of Gibraltar, will never consent to such a process being undertaken.

So in respect of the statement from Mr Sanchez that Spain will table the issue of joint sovereignty in talks about the future trading relationship between Gibraltar and the EU, I have one answer.

We do not need to wait until the start of the talks.

I can tell Spain now.

We are not interested in any dilution of our sovereignty,

We are not interested in allowing for even the remotest concession to Spanish sovereignty, jurisdiction or control.

As the Prime Minister has today herself reconfirmed, the sovereignty is Gibraltar is and will remain entirely British.

Finally, tonight, I have a message for Pedro Sanchez himself.

Like many people around the world, I welcome the fact that he is acting to move the bones of the fascist General Franco from Valle de los Caídos.



But I must tell him that whilst he pursues the sovereignty of Gibraltar in the manner that he has today, he is doing no more than pursuing the policy bidding of the Generalissimo himself.

I sincerely hope he changes course.

Because abandoning the politics of Franco in respect of the sovereignty of Gibraltar would be a more effective way of turning over a new leaf.

Better that than simply moving the bones of a dead man from one part of Madrid to another.

Now, as we leave the European Union, the People of Gibraltar will hold their nerve.

We know we've acted properly and honourably in negotiating our orderly withdrawal from the EU.

We will continue to act sensibly and in the interests of all those who cross the frontier every day as we look to the future.

We will preserve everything that we hold dear.

And, together with Britain, we will build a better, stronger and more prosperous British Gibraltar every day.

Rest assured that our position is safe and secure.

Thank you for listening.

Good night.