



# PROCEEDINGS OF THE GIBRALTAR PARLIAMENT

**CEREMONIAL OPENING: 11.00 a.m. – 12.39 p.m.**

**Gibraltar, Wednesday, 14th November 2019**

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# The Gibraltar Parliament

*The Parliament met at 11.00 a.m.*

[PRESIDING MEMBER: Hon. Sir J J Bossano *in the Chair, presiding over the resolution*]

[MR SPEAKER: Hon. M L Farrell BEM GMD RD JP *in the Chair*]

[CHIEF JUSTICE: Hon. Mr Justice A E Dudley *in attendance*]

[CLERK TO THE PARLIAMENT: P E Martinez Esq *in attendance*]

## ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO ELECTED MEMBERS

**Clerk:** Oaths of Allegiance of hon. Members.

*The Chief Justice administered the Oath of Allegiance to the Hon. F R Picardo, the Hon. Dr J J Garcia, the Hon. Prof. J E Cortes, the Hon. A J Isola, the Hon. J J Bossano the Hon. G H Licudi, the Hon. P J Balban, the Hon. S E Linares, the Hon. Miss S J Sacramento, the Hon. V Daryanani, the Hon. K Azopardi, the Hon. Ms M D E Hassan Nahon, the Hon D J Bossino, the Hon D A Feetham, the Hon. R M Clinton, the Hon E J Phillips, and the Hon. E J Reyes.*

## MOTION ON THE APPOINTMENT OF THE SPEAKER OF THE PARLIAMENT

**Clerk:** Motion on the appointment of the Speaker of the Parliament – the Hon. the Chief Minister.

5 **Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Mr Presiding Member, I have the honour to move:

*That Mr Melvyn Farrell BEM GMD RD JP be appointed Speaker of the Gibraltar Parliament.*

Mr Presiding Member, before I start my address on the appointment of the Speaker, I want to quickly make a short observation of the characteristics that bring *you* to the Chair this morning.

10 It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to address you in your capacity as Father of the House. That is the capacity you hold here in this Chamber, whichever one of the two definitions of that sort of parentage we might decide to adopt. You see, in some legislative chambers the term 'Father of the House' is applied to the longest-serving member of the parliament. In other chambers in the Commonwealth, it is applied to the oldest member of the parliament in age. But you qualify by either measure, something of which we, at least on this side of the House, are  
15 extraordinarily proud. Indeed, in the time since you last took the Chair in this place, at the last Ceremonial Opening of this Parliament, Her Majesty the Queen has rightly seen fit to appoint you a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George. You are therefore now taking the Chair not just in your capacity as the Father of the House, but also as the only Knight of the Realm sitting in this place.

20 Mr Presiding Member, it is remarkable to note that if this Parliament runs its four year  
course, you will have served as a Member of it for over 50 years. That is a, frankly, truly  
remarkable contribution to the political and public life of our nation and one for which you must  
be congratulated, no doubt by all Members; a most extraordinary contribution to the public life  
of Gibraltar. You will have served for half a century, and of those 50 years, to date at least, you  
25 have enjoyed 16 years in ministerial office, eight of them as Chief Minister, and you will have  
served 20 years as Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Presiding Member, you are undoubtedly a national treasure, although I have no doubt  
that you would much rather be the national treasury! (*Laughter*)

30 Mr Presiding Member, in order to spare your blushes any further, and the retribution that I  
will get later for having delivered that part of the speech, I will move on now to the substantive  
motion that we are considering for the appointment of a new Speaker this morning.

I want to start my address in this respect by highlighting the excellent work undertaken by  
the Hon. Adolfo Canepa in the time that he has held the office of Speaker. Mr Canepa held the  
office of Speaker between 2012 and this year, 2019. The role of Speaker was, in fact, the last of  
35 what one might call the Great Offices of State in Gibraltar which he had not held. He had been a  
Minister from 1972, the first full-time Minister; he had been Mayor twice; he had been Chief  
Minister; he had been Leader of the Opposition; and perhaps most remarkably, he had also been  
Acting Governor of Gibraltar on more than one occasion. Speaker was really all that was left.  
And in keeping with his strong principles as a family man first and foremost, Adolfo Canepa  
40 turned down the role when it was first offered to him, because of family illness at the time.  
When the time came for Adolfo to be Speaker upon a second invitation, he was to make the role  
very much his own.

I want to express my gratitude, on behalf, no doubt, of all hon. Members of the House, for  
the work done by Mr Canepa in the Speaker's Chair. The few times that I might not have agreed  
45 entirely with his rulings, I have always felt sufficient respect for Speaker Canepa's views that I  
knew it was right to defer to his judgement on the Rules.

Mr Presiding Member, in order to reflect the enormous contribution to the public and  
political life of Gibraltar by Mr Canepa, culminating in his magnificent service in the Office of  
Speaker, the Government will move a motion in the early New Year for a resolution that the  
50 House should bestow the Freedom of the City on Mr Canepa. I already discussed this matter  
with the Leader of the Opposition, who has agreed to support the Government motion. I expect  
that we will be able to hold the ceremony of bestowment of the Freedom at a later date in the  
spring next year, in Mackintosh Square.

Mr Canepa leaves a big gap to fill. I can think of no one better to fill that gap than a former  
55 and very highly regarded Clerk of the House, Melvyn Farrell. Melvyn was Clerk from 2006 to  
2014. He was, therefore, the first Clerk of this Parliament. His time ushered in the new  
procedures applicable under the then new Constitution of 2006 that restyled this House as the  
Gibraltar Parliament.

If there is one word to define his attitude to Members in the time that he was Clerk, it would,  
60 in my view, be 'generous'. I say that as someone who had the pleasure of enjoying Melvyn's  
advice, both as a Member of the Opposition, then as Leader of the Opposition, and then as  
Leader of the House and Chief Minister. He was always, as Clerk, generous and kind in his  
approach to all Members, and to this Member, whichever rank I might have held in the House.  
He was always, as Clerk, approachable and positive in his views. He was always keen to assist  
65 Members to ensure that whatever side of the House or whatever side of the argument one was  
on, you were able to present your views in the most appropriate manner. That generous, kindly  
and approachable manner was laced with elegance in his own presentation of the work of the  
House. Much like his predecessor – and, if I may say so, his successor – he made the work of the  
Clerk flow flawlessly as he ushered the proceedings of the House onwards, despite Members'  
70 either lack of familiarity with the Rules, or, on some occasions, Members' attempts to get in the  
way of the established Rules. And, of course, Mr Farrell is also well known for being impeccably

polite, impartial and unflappable in any situation. He will be a great ambassador for Gibraltar also at Commonwealth Parliamentary Association functions, a circuit he knows well from the time as Clerk, where he was Secretary of the Gibraltar Branch.

75 Mr Presiding Member, your own predecessor as Chief Minister, you yourself, your successor as Chief Minister, and I, as the current incumbent of the post, have all had the benefit of working with Melvyn whilst he was in the Civil Service. All of us have had cause to be impressed by his diligence and his ability in equal measure. It was no surprise, therefore, that when Melvyn came to retire as Clerk he was to elicit fulsome praise and recognition from both sides of the House for  
80 his work in Parliament and his earlier work in the Civil Service.

Mr Farrell loyally served this House, and he has loyally served Gibraltar as a civil servant before he arrived in this House as Clerk. Now he returns, with what I believe will be support from both sides of the House, to serve the Parliament and his beloved Gibraltar again, this time from the umpire's viewpoint. As the only civil servant in post at the time of our original election  
85 wily enough to have kept his Widows' and Orphans' Pension Scheme (WOPS) pension whilst all others were trading theirs in – no doubt acting in keeping with your advice at the time in this respect – we drag him out of retirement to once again be pressed into the service of our nation.

No doubt now the work of the Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform will benefit from Mr Farrell's great experience as Clerk. He was Clerk also at the time of the preparation of the  
90 report on reform chaired by Mr Canepa. The Select Committee on Reform has a lot of work to do and we are committed to it. We will be convening it soon, and there will be an early meeting of that Committee. Democracy is changing, like everything else in our community is changing. We need to modernise and we need to adapt, and in that work Mr Farrell's experience will no doubt be an enormously useful guide to all Members.

95 Mr Presiding Member, when Mr Farrell retired from this place I was sure he would be recognised for the excellent service he had rendered this community: he was, with the bestowment upon him by Her Majesty of the British Empire Medal. Indeed, this Parliament also recognised his service in granting him the Gibraltar Medallion of Distinction. I also predicted then that I was sure that Melvyn's service to the community was not over. Indeed, he went on to  
100 become a Justice of the Peace, and I am delighted to see that today, with the support of this House, he starts another period of service in a role I am confident he will be able to discharge with his usual tact and good humour and his distinctive diligence, elegance and flair.

Mr Presiding Member, I commend the motion to the House. (*Banging on desks*)

105 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**Hon. K Azopardi:** Mr Presiding Member, we are delighted to support the motion appointing Melvyn Farrell as the new Speaker of Parliament.

110 Melvyn Farrell has been a distinguished civil servant, with a long career in significant administrative posts, not least working with yourself as former Chief Minister and as Clerk to this House for eight years. The interpersonal skills he showed in the discharge of those roles required an ability to manage complex issues, and people, in difficult situations. We believe that he will bring those skills to bear in the sometimes emotionally and politically charged environment of this House, in a way that will help us navigate the parliamentary business in an efficient way.  
115 From this side of the House we support his appointment and will work with him to try to assist in making his task easier.

I also want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contribution to the affairs of this House, and indeed to public life, of the outgoing Speaker, Adolfo Canepa. Mr Canepa has held Gibraltar's highest elected offices of Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition. He was in  
120 Government for 16 years and in this House as an elected Member for 20. He also served as Mayor, and latterly, over the last seven years, as Speaker. He has given distinguished service to Gibraltar over 30 years.

125 In many ways, the majority of those years, 1972 to 1988, in Government, would have been very tough as a Minister in charge of the public administration of Gibraltar, with the Frontier closed and without the unlocked economic potential of subsequent decades. It is a testimony to the work of Governments in those years, within which Adolfo loyally served, that we were able to weather the storm of that political siege.

130 We thank Adolfo for his service, not just to this House latterly as Speaker but throughout his tenure holding the most important offices in Gibraltar. *(Banging on desks)*

**Hon. Sir J J Bossano:** I now put the question, which is that Mr Melvyn Farrell BEM GMD RD JP be appointed as Speaker of the Parliament. Those in favour? **(Members: Aye.)** Those against? None. Passed. *(Banging on desks)*

*On the appointment of Mr Speaker, the Presiding Member took his place on the Government benches.*

#### ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF ALLEGIANCE TO MR SPEAKER

*The Chief Justice administered the Oath of Allegiance to Mr Melvyn Leslie Farrell BEM GMD RD JP.*

135 **Mr Speaker:** When I retired as Clerk to this Parliament, I could never have imagined that I would return as its Speaker five and a half years later. I wish to thank all hon. Members for voting in favour of the motion. I am most grateful to the Chief Minister for placing his confidence in me, and to the Leader of the Opposition for supporting my appointment. I also extend my grateful thanks to the hon. Lady. I am both honoured and humbled.

140 In my tenure in office I will be independent, impartial and fair minded. Errors of judgement on my part which may arise will be acknowledged and rectified. I therefore ask for the forbearance of all hon. Members in this regard.

145 Parliament has, in the past, attracted public criticism in terms of how its Members go about their legitimate parliamentary business. With this in mind, I would ask all hon. Members to try to temper their language and to conduct their business in a more dignified and respectful manner. Such respect should also be extended to the Speaker. His decisions and rulings may not always find favour with hon. Members, but must be accepted.

150 As we continue to navigate through difficult and uncertain waters, I would respectfully suggest that all hon. Members try to set aside, where possible, their political differences and to work together in this Parliament in a spirit of conviviality, in the interest of Gibraltar and its people, the Gibraltar we so dearly love.

Finally, I should like to pay tribute to my predecessor and good friend Adolfo Canepa for his lifelong and dedicated service to Gibraltar and to Parliament. I also wish Adolfo and his wife Julie good health and happiness in the future.

Thank you. *(Banging on desks)*

**ADMINISTRATION OF OATH OF OFFICE  
OF THE MINISTER WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR JUSTICE**

*The Speaker administered the Oath of Office of the Minister with responsibility for Justice to the Hon. Miss Samantha Jane Sacramento.*

**Mr Speaker:** The Clerk and I will now disappear to go downstairs to wait for the arrival of His Excellency the Governor.

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR  
LIEUTENANT GENERAL EDWARD DAVIS CB, CBE, KSTJ**

155 **His Excellency the Governor:** Mr Speaker, may I first congratulate you on your appointment as the Speaker of the House, a most distinguished and most important appointment for the execution and also the reputation of Gibraltar's parliamentary democracy. I congratulate you on that.

160 Mr Speaker, Hon. Members, I am honoured and delighted to have the privilege of announcing the formal Opening of the 14th Parliament.

I give my warmest congratulations to all the hon. Members of Parliament who were elected to represent the people of Gibraltar. I know you will all prove worthy of the heavy responsibility that has been entrusted to you. There is no greater duty than giving effect to the will of the people. I have no doubt that the manifest range of experience that you are able to bring to bear in exercising this duty will be decisive in ensuring Gibraltar's future success.

165 I also have no doubt that both Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and the Loyal Opposition will, throughout the tenure of this Parliament, do everything within their collective resolution and capacity to continue to protect, progress and promote the Rock's vital advantages, its people and its environment. Gibraltar will continue to be the best it can be as it steps out ambitiously, boldly and confidently into the world.

170 I must also, just as the Chief Minister has done before, highlight the historic and remarkable contribution of the Father of the House, the Hon. Sir Joe Bossano, who, since the last Ceremonial Opening, has been appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George. His incredible 47 years of membership of this Parliament and the former House of Assembly is a most commendable example to all other Members and all aspiring future Members of Parliament.

175 I would next like to take this opportunity to praise the unsung heroes of the election, those people whose tireless work behind the scenes ensured that the election ran legitimately, proficiently and smoothly. In particular, the Returning Officer, Paul Martinez, and the other 300 civil servant election officials deserve our immense praise and admiration for their unstinting and sure-footed efforts. So too do the Royal Gibraltar Police, the Gibraltar Post Office and the Rock's media, who all played an important part in making the election process such a credit to Gibraltar.

180 As Governor and Representative of Her Majesty the Queen, it has been an inspiring and proud distinction for me to witness at first hand a Gibraltarian General Election. The experience has underscored my understanding of just how much politics matters to the people of Gibraltar, a sure sign of a free, trusted, inclusive and accessible democracy in action that many aspire to but Gibraltar delivers.

185 Manifestly sitting at the heart of every Gibraltarian's identity is a passionate commitment to and, further, for their profound and hard-earned right to decide Gibraltar's destiny peacefully through the ballot box. The nature and spirit of the political debate during the General Election was also a credit to all the candidates, despite the obviously strongly and keenly held views on

all sides of the five-week election discourse. Gibraltar can be proud of the 71% percent voter turnout, proud of its General Election and proud of its inclusive, progressive and resilient democracy.

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The bedrock of this democracy is Gibraltar's 2006 Constitution, which came into force in 2007 following approval by referendum. This Constitution anchors the modern, mature relationship which exists between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. Underpinning this relationship is the United Kingdom's longstanding commitment to the people of Gibraltar that it will never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another state against their freely and democratically expressed wishes. Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom also remains committed that it will never enter a process of negotiation with Spain about the sovereignty of the Rock without the Gibraltar Government's consent. It is this constitutional framework that guarantees the United Kingdom's assurances on Gibraltar's British sovereignty, underpinned by the Gibraltar people's inalienable right to self-determination.

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Gibraltar has emerged from its latest General Election round having chosen the national vision and parliamentary programme presented to the people of Gibraltar in the election manifesto of the political alliance made up by the Gibraltar Socialist Labour Party and the Gibraltar Liberal Party. I congratulate the GSLP-Liberal Alliance on its re-election to Government for a historic third successive term. Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom and I look forward to working with Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar during this coming Parliament.

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In this House, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will continue to prioritise its environmental commitments to improve the Gibraltarian quality of life in the long term. The next four years will see not only the consolidation of current initiatives but also a new innovative and achievable programme to better protect, enhance and manage all aspects of our environment. It will make Green Gibraltar a child-friendly city, with the well-being of children at its centre. The Government will also introduce a Sustainable Development for Future Generations Act and set up an Independent Environmental Tribunal. The Government will keep environmental legislation up to date with the European Union, even after Brexit, and will adopt European Union targets and standards as the minimum for Gibraltar. It will abide strictly by the requirements of the Climate Change Act, establish a Climate Action Fund, and encourage and increase the breadth and efficiency of recycling. The Government will also set up an Air Quality Commission to monitor and advise the Government on all matters related to air quality.

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Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is committed to strengthening and growing the economic sustainability of the jurisdiction with the inception of a post-Brexit economic plan that has a 10-year global horizon. It will simplify business regulations and increase support for start-up businesses, as well as introduce a new Gaming Bill to Parliament within the first six months of 2020.

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Following the negotiation of a Tax Treaty with Spain and a Double Taxation Agreement (DTA) with the United Kingdom, the Government will work to build a tax treaty network with other countries, ensuring that these too are compliant with the base erosion of profit shifting principles of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a framework that Gibraltar has now joined.

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It will continue to modernise all aspects of the public sector, with improved succession planning, a review of senior public sector salaries and relativities, and greater provision of e-services.

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It will also re-establish the Select Committee on Parliamentary Reform. Moreover, a Ministerial Code and a Code for Members of the Parliament will be tabled before this Parliament.

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The Government will re-establish the Select Committee on the Constitution, with the objective of examining the 2006 Constitution and determining whether and what future changes are necessary and appropriate. This review will be all the more relevant in the light of departure

of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar from the European Union. There will be ample opportunity  
245 for the public to put forward their views on this fundamental matter.

The Government will hold a referendum on Thursday, 19th March 2020, to determine whether the Abortion Act will come into effect. The Government will fund both pro-life and pro-choice campaigns equally, to ensure the referendum contest is fair and comprehensive.

250 In healthcare, the Government will shift focus to making the new and existing services more effective, particularly care provision in the community. It will introduce a Health Improvement Strategy and a public health impact assessment to assist in developing policies and advising both associated public and private bodies. It will also establish a new National Drugs Strategy.

255 To tackle the growing pressures on Gibraltar's road network, the Government will create a new, centralised Road Traffic Safety and Planning Office to centrally oversee and manage traffic planning and delivery matters in the community. It will introduce a mechanism for smart parking, and is committed to making a minimum investment of £10 per capita in cycling. This will commit Gibraltar to a fit-for-purpose, sustainable and healthy future transport system. The railway tunnel remains on course to be opened by mid-2020 and the Government will discuss with the Ministry of Defence keeping the runway open for pedestrians, at least at peak times.

260 In partnership with the Ministry of Defence, the Government will introduce a Royal Gibraltar Regiment Bill to Parliament within the first six months of 2020, in step with establishing an Armed Forces Covenant for Gibraltar following the appointment of a Minister for Veterans' Affairs. It will continue to work with the Ministry of Defence to obtain appropriate equality of status and conditions with Her Majesty's Armed Forces in the United Kingdom for the Royal  
265 Gibraltar Regiment. This will include seeking to ensure equitable housing, pension and allowance provision.

In continuing the ground-breaking work to tackle equality and civil rights issues, the Government will introduce an equal opportunities policy for the public sector and provide guidance to the private sector. It will introduce legislation to outlaw any confidentiality clauses  
270 in harassment cases, introduce statutory parental paternity leave and consult with all stakeholder groups on equalisation of the pension age between men and women. The Government will also repeal the legislation that enables registrars to refuse to marry same-sex couples.

275 Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will continue to work with Her Majesty's Government of the United Kingdom to seek to continue to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Government of the Kingdom of Spain on all matters which benefit the people who live on both sides of the Frontier. It will remain the keen determination of Her Majesty's Governments of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar to make Gibraltar's relationship with Spain as mutually respectful and beneficial as it could and should be.

280 Finally, I wish to note that Gibraltar's recent General Election could hardly have taken place in a more dynamic and evolving political era. Looking forward together, the United Kingdom and Gibraltar face the challenges of building a new relationship with the European Union while seizing the myriad opportunities of forging a new place and enduring relevance in the wider world, especially with the Commonwealth of Nations. I cannot emphasise more strongly the  
285 United Kingdom Government's passionate belief in these opportunities for global Britain and global Gibraltar. To make the most of these opportunities, we will need ambition, energy, resolve and imagination, qualities which time and again Gibraltarians have demonstrated to have in abundance.

290 I can assure the people of Gibraltar that the United Kingdom will remain steadfast in its support for Gibraltar and will defend Gibraltar's interests as we leave the European Union. Gibraltar is and will remain a beloved and esteemed part of the United Kingdom family. I have absolute confidence that Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar and this House will successfully protect, progress and promote Gibraltar's vital advantages, its people and its environment.



295 Mr Speaker, I conclude by offering my very best wishes to all Members of this House, in Government and in Opposition, in overcoming the challenges and seizing the opportunities ahead.

I have great pleasure in declaring the first meeting of the new Parliament open. (*Banging on desks*)

300 **Clerk:** The Hon. the Chief Minister.

**Chief Minister (Hon. F R Picardo):** Your Excellency, it is always pleasing, satisfying and a great comfort to hear you restate the double-lock commitments of the United Kingdom to the Gibraltarians' right to determine the sovereignty of Gibraltar and even any engagement on the negotiation of it. Thank you, for once again making that explicit; it is worth repeating, not just for us but also for any who may be listening or watching from beyond our shores.

305 As we established as soon as we were elected for the first time eight years ago, the speech that Your Excellency has kindly delivered a moment ago is now in the nature of a Queen's Speech at Westminster. We established that it is now a statement drafted in the closest consultation with the Chief Minister of the day, in a manner designed to reflect those parts of the manifesto of the party returned to Government that will be the legislative agenda of the incoming administration in this Parliament.

310 But what is more important than what your speech here is today, Your Excellency, is actually what your speech here is not. Your speech here now is not in the nature of the speech of the representative of an administering power instructing Members on what we are to do, what the defined domestic matters we are able to manage are, or the finances which we have available to run Gibraltar – and that is the surest sign of the maturity of our relationship and our continued constitutional development. These are exactly the things we must reflect on in the work of the Constitutional Reform Select Committee, which we will be re-establishing to consider how our foundational document should continue to develop our further political emancipation. For these are exactly the constitutional conventions we should have established in the first part of the 21st century for the commencement of a parliamentary session in the territory which the United Kingdom itself tells the United Nations should be removed from the list of non-self-governing territories maintained by the Committee of 24 in New York. It is exactly what the representative of a constitutional monarchy should be doing in a democracy where the Parliament is the instrument of the will of the people, as determined in a free and fair General Election.

325 As the result of that free and fair election produced a Government led by the GSLP-Liberals, it is today an honour for me to join the cast of only two other Chief Ministers in our history to address our Chamber of elected Members on three successive occasions. Since the first moment we were returned to Government eight years ago and I was elected as Chief Minister, we have ensured that the Government we represent is styled as Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar, which is exactly what it is. And indeed, Your Excellency, given that we are Her Majesty's Government, it would be churlish not to record today, on this auspicious occasion in Gibraltar, our best wishes, on his birthday, to the heir to the throne of the United Kingdom and Gibraltar, the Prince of Wales, an undoubted friend of Gibraltar, a special friend, the heir apparent, amongst many friends that Gibraltar enjoys throughout the United Kingdom and beyond.

330 With the support of our friends throughout the world and the United Kingdom, we have been able to prosper and grow even in the face of some of the worst political aggression our nation and our people have suffered in our recent political history. As ever, we have not just survived, we have thrived, because our cause is a just one and our path a righteous one derived from doing the right thing, acting entirely properly and protecting our nation. That is what we have been seeing as the touchstone of the Gibraltarians through the ages. In particular, it has been the touchstone by which our forefathers faced up to the challenges of the age of the evacuation, the touchstone that guided the generation that selected the toughest of the choices presented to them in the ballot paper in the first Referendum, the principles that guided the closed

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Frontier generation to stay the course, to do the right thing and to hold their nerve for the benefit of those that came after them. They thought about the future, they thought about the next generation, they thought about us instead of just thinking about themselves, and that is how their quest was won. That is how they built this city on rock and toil.

350 We have much to learn from that attitude and we will not allow the honest labour, the genuine hard work and the sacrifice of past and present Gibraltarians to be traduced, mischaracterised or misrepresented. We will not allow our people to be libelled or defamed by those whose politics today are derived from the politics of those who inflicted so much pain in the past on people on both sides of the Frontier, because it is clear that even as we celebrate a  
355 hundred years since the end of the First World War, 75 years next year since Victory in Europe and 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the hard right is alive and kicking in Europe. We will work in every available forum to ensure that we take on anyone who seeks to use innuendo or lies to misrepresent our people, our journey and our reality, because we are a Government that was elected to deliver social justice, and we have. That pursuit for national social justice must be  
360 matched by a crusade for international justice for our people. We will not hesitate to seek out such justice for our nation in every forum within our grasp, because it is a truth etched in the arteries of time by Dr Martin Luther King that the arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice, and the memory of the people of Gibraltar is long, our stamina is inexhaustible and our case unanswerable.

365 And so, I say to all who would slander or smear our people, our motives or our identity: you stand in the way of the truth and legitimacy of the people of Gibraltar at your peril. We are fierce friends to those who want to work with us, but we will be fearless foes for those who seek to denigrate us, for we will never give up our rights to our land, we will not let down our ancestors who are buried here in our sacred ground, we will not surrender the land of our  
370 children and our children's children, we will not be cowed by the cheap and empty rhetoric that insults us. And if you stand in our way, history will sweep you away like any other one of the many hurdles we have already surmounted, a footnote to the history of our common success as a people.

Our commitment to social justice, Your Excellency, has been felt not just in our performance  
375 in the international dimension by our battle for emancipation; it has been felt also in positive progress for many at a national level. This is an area on which we have led from the front on equality, in every respect, whether on the civil partnerships for all sexual orientations, including heterosexuals, or on equal marriage, or matters of nationality, which also go to the equality agenda. On each one, we are the ones who have unblocked generations of social intransigence  
380 and we will continue to do so, not by being over radical in an attempt to grab a headline, but by being conscientious, by bringing people and society with us and by acting properly and in keeping with people's modern rights.

I emphasise, Your Excellency, that we have unblocked applications for British nationality which had been allowed to fester since the early 1980s. We have made huge progress in  
385 particular in relation to our Moroccan and Indian communities, and we are now looking only at small numbers of pending applications for nationality, because equality is but is not just about matters relating to elimination of discrimination in respect of gender and sexual orientations; equality is about social justice, as much as fair wages, a fair housing policy and fair taxation are about social justice.

390 On each of these areas our arguments and our Programme for Government have been preferred now for the third successive time to those whose arguments have been more negative than constructive, because our people do not think politics or elections should be uninspiring arguments about balance sheets. Our people have shown repeatedly that they are not going to swallow successive iterations of our opponents' versions of Project Fear. Our people will not  
395 have their electoral choices tainted by repeated and imaginative arguments about stretched finances, impending bankruptcy or opacity, when the reality around them tells our people a palpably different truth.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, we will soon be tabling – in fact, I think you have already received it – a new facility agreement entered into with NatWest for £75 million to replace the borrowings in place for £100 million with Barclays Bank which matured in October, a demonstration of our continued work to secure always better borrowing terms for our community than those we inherited from the former administration that most hon. Members opposite represent. All of this will be dealt with in detail at the first meeting of the Parliament, which today I can tell the House I intend to convene for December.

For three successive General Election wins, on three successive occasions, our people have preferred our vision for the future of our nation and our prudent management of the public finances. Our views and those of the former administration on the corporate financing on capital projects have prevailed and have been preferred repeatedly, despite being the linchpin of the arguments against us. Three times, people have rejected the personalised attacks that some have deployed, masquerading as legitimate opposition. Three times, the scaremongering has not worked on debt, the public finances generally, or even, dare I remind the House, LNG – because an election is a moment of political catharsis where the general body of electors clears itself of the unwanted and rings in the new. Those who have lived by the sword of unwarranted allegations have fallen by the sword of the electorate's rejection.

Your Excellency, I will not be foolish enough to give my opponents advice on what they should do to defeat us, but it should certainly be clear to them that the tactics used to date have not advanced their cause. Our commitment to the publication of Government company accounts is unprecedented and will deliver a transparency unheard of in our democracy. Our publication of statistics online is also without precedent. The public have access now to more than ever before. It ill behoves those who published less data to complain that we do not publish enough data.

We will, nonetheless, be reaching out to work with Opposition colleagues in this Parliament, but it must be clear that in doing so we will be seeking their views, their involvement and their assistance, where appropriate, in the context of none of the groupings opposite us representing more than a quarter of the electorate. And so, as we will consider humility our watchword as we govern for all our people, it will be important that the Opposition should meet our humility with a similar sentiment, because this is a Government which was clearly elected by more than double the votes of our nearest rivals.

This is a time for Government to act and deliver, and we will. Our opponents have to hold us to account and I ask them to do so with energy and enthusiasm, but they also have to construct an alternative vision for our people. That is an essential ingredient in our democracy. It is as essential as criticism. Holding to account is not a credible or legitimate political licence to criticise without constructing an alternative. For the sake of our nation's democracy, I hope that they will. The people of Gibraltar want and have chosen a strong and positive vision of where Gibraltar is heading. They want to know where the Government is going to take our nation. They do not want a dissertation on the proper accounting treatment of an asset, a liability or a disbursement – they know that our experts are expertly dealing with those issues – because that is not a vision for our future and for our nation. That is a myopic presentation of detail that raises no interest in those who want to secure our prosperity and who want to see a socially just agenda dominate the political life of our nation.

In order to continue our commitment to delivering social justice and equality, the Government has republished the Bills that fell off the agenda at the time of dissolution, so that we can continue where we left off. We are committed to the wide legislative agenda you have already kindly set out highlighting our key commitments, because our creed is that we believe in the men and women of Gibraltar. That is why we are committed to dealing with the gender pay gap, with abortion and with any glass ceiling issues that may be raised with us. If any member of the public points us to a glass ceiling affecting any sector or any group, our calling is to shatter through it with legislation from this House, if necessary.

450 We believe in our young people. We have already proposed voting at the age of 16 and we  
will be putting this issue on the agenda for parliamentary reform and in respect of the coming  
referendum on abortion. We believe in the LGBTQ agenda and every single Member of this  
House must too, and we must all evangelise those equality issues. We must all evangelise real  
equality, and if anyone here is going to evangelise for any other agenda, for a traditional or non-  
secular agenda that retains discrimination in our laws, then let them be honest and say so, but  
455 they will have to take us on on these issues. They will have to take on me and my colleagues on  
these issues, because this is our creed, this is who we are, and this is who we advocate for. In  
doing so, we have advocated for minorities in our community as we have advocated for all of us,  
the Gibraltarians, in the process of our departure from the European Union with the United  
Kingdom.

460 Indeed, in the closest working relationship with colleagues in Her Majesty's Government of  
the United Kingdom, we have advanced greatly in preparations for all permutations of our  
departure, or non-departure, from the European Union. Hard Brexit, soft Brexit, no Brexit: we  
are ready for all of them, including a potential new referendum.

In respect of Brexit, it is clear that the lifetime of this last Parliament was dominated by the  
465 infamous 'B' word. At the last Ceremonial Opening, I spoke about the commitment of the then  
Prime Minister, David Cameron, to include Gibraltar in the franchise of the referendum to come.  
Since then, with the Deputy Chief Minister, all other Ministers, the Attorney General and the  
Financial Secretary, we have been immersed in every aspect of our potential departure and  
future relationship with the EU. It has literally been an assignment for every waking moment.

470 Our reward for that hard work and that commitment has not just been our return to  
Government and the confidence of our people, although it has undoubtedly been that also; our  
greatest reward has been to see our economy continue to grow and our nation continue to  
prosper, when so many considered that Brexit – or worse, the uncertainty that it created –  
should have led to our economic performance suffering considerably. In fact, the opposite  
475 happened. Our preparation at home, our collaboration with the United Kingdom and our  
relentless endeavour – that is what has delivered a dividend of enviable economic growth. It has  
enabled us to deliver an enviable agreement for continued access to the United Kingdom in  
services after we leave the European Union. This has been described in the notes of the Queen's  
Speech in Westminster last month as being an arrangement that is unique to Gibraltar amongst  
480 the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, a huge achievement delivered by working  
hand in glove with UK colleagues.

This has enabled us to deliver a Double Taxation Agreement between us and the United  
Kingdom, a prize that has eluded us for years. And our hard work has done more: it has enabled  
us to deliver an International Tax Agreement with Spain which clarifies the application of the  
485 existing laws of each of our jurisdictions to citizens with cross-border interests, a Treaty that  
three Chief Ministers agree contains no concessions on sovereignty to Spain. Sir Joe Bossano's  
analysis on the politics of the Treaty is clear, Sir Peter Caruana's analysis on the law of the Treaty  
is clear, and my own view on the politics and law of the Treaty, informed by the advice of both  
the former, is well known to the House. This Treaty, the Memorandum of Understanding and the  
490 Protocol to the EU Withdrawal Agreement have been negotiated trilaterally between the UK,  
Spain and Gibraltar, and bilaterally between Spain and Gibraltar. I cannot emphasise the latter  
enough, a truly remarkable achievement also.

This variable geometry of talks, also including discussions at times with the European  
Commission, is what has resulted in our being included in the Withdrawal Agreement between  
495 the UK and the EU in the event that Brexit were to occur with a deal. By any measure, Your  
Excellency, this is undoubtedly a success to be shared by UK British and Gibraltar British  
diplomacy and politics, a success that sets us up for many more years of growth, prosperity and  
success, based on the creation of a superhighway for business between Gibraltar and the United  
Kingdom and to the Commonwealth beyond; a new twin track for businesses to run on the tram  
500 lines established by the common law and the rule of law, which are the core principles we share

with the UK and the Commonwealth. And for this, the DTA between us and the UK will be the superconductor that drives our businesses safely, openly and transparently to new destinations. Some of these new destinations will undoubtedly be in the old Empire, and they are now within a moment's reach, literally at light speed, as we ride the modern fibre conduits that stretch  
505 around the world and land and reach out, from this Rock of ours, around the globe.

Some of our key destinations now will be the places from which we have received people who are today an integral part of our multicultural society. We continue to believe that we are presented with great opportunities to pursue the strong links of those of our fellow Gibraltarians whose ethnic origin enables them to easily navigate other cultures. We have great opportunities  
510 to pursue now in Morocco, where we have already augmented our activity and will do even more in coming months and years; and in India, where so many of our great entrepreneurs come from, not least the energetic new Member of the Government benches, Minister Daryanani.

As we continue our work to build bridges around the world, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar will always reach out a hand of friendship and co-operation to the Government of the Kingdom of Spain also. As I stated at the last Ceremonial Opening, we will continue to seek to establish non-sovereignty dialogue with the Government of Spain on matters of mutual interest which will improve the lives of people on both sides of the Frontier. That need not change because we will not be in the European Union, and will in fact probably be more important for our citizens if we are not. But to be meaningful and successful, such dialogue must be based on  
520 the principle of mutual respect, something which we believe was preserved under the mechanisms of the trilateral forum for dialogue and which was reinforced by the variable geometry that underpinned our negotiations in respect of the EU Withdrawal Agreement.

Nationally, as we face our third consecutive mandate, we will not fall into the trap of being isolated in an ivory tower or a gilded cage in office. We will not even allow the unleashed demons of Brexit to isolate us, as it necessarily did in the lifetime of the last Parliament. We will work even harder than in our first two terms to reach out to our people. We will work harder now, not less so, to nurture and maintain the trust and confidence of our people. That is why I was so pleased yesterday, Your Excellency, to have spent the morning meeting members of the public, as I have done since I was elected, but with the twist that yesterday I held those meetings  
530 at the Plater Youth Club at Tankerville. I will be holding further such meetings in other areas around Gibraltar, as well as continuing to meet members of the public at No. 6 Convent Place.

Additionally, today I can also announce that the Cabinet will meet outside of Convent Place once a month, in locations around Gibraltar, to enable us to also be available as a whole Government to members of the public. I will be making a more detailed announcement on the timings and locations for these meetings in coming months.  
535

As those meetings will roll into years and as this Parliament reaches maturity, I have been very clear on the election trail that nothing will ever be the same in Gibraltar. We are already planning to deliver our manifesto commitments which we see as our obligations to the public. We are planning timelines and finances to deliver in the 48-month timescale. If we judge our  
540 ability to deliver and change our nation based on our last 96 months in Government, there is every good reason to be confident that we will deliver that much-heralded Green Gibraltar in the time available. So, I want to be clear today, Your Excellency, that there will be radical change delivered by the Government I lead in coming months.

On climate change, on sustainability, on the protection of our natural environment, we are all out of time. Soundbites sound hollow to those of us who want to deliver real change, but Green Gibraltar is an omelette that we cannot make without breaking eggs, and break eggs we will for the greater and more important objective that is at stake. So much has changed already, so much more will change in coming months: in four years, we will live in a healthier, cleaner and more prosperous Gibraltar, in a Gibraltar where the provision of healthcare services will be  
550 linked to the prevention of ill health by the prevention of pollution, by the promotion of exercise through walking and cycling – already, yesterday, we have seen such initiatives starting to roll

out; a new social model that will succeed only when we, the citizens, understand that we need to enter into a new social contract with each other and with our institutions of Government.

From this place we will drive that brand new bargain, that green new bargain between us all. That is why in four years' time nothing will be the same, because things cannot stay the same, because everything has to be better. Our services have to be more efficient, our lifestyles have to be more sustainable, our personal lives have to be less selfish and our objectives more communal. That is why the age of entitlement is past. That is why the age of sustainability and responsibility is now ushered in and must be embraced by all across the partisan divide. Indeed, Your Excellency, I believe that we are now at a stage in our development as a people when we all have to ask ourselves a variation of the JFK question: how can each of us contribute more to the growth of the nation, and not how can the nation be milked, squeezed or abused further for our personal gain. Indeed, in coming months I believe all our people will understand that it will be politically unacceptable to pursue the cause of those who want to jump a queue, obtain an unfair advantage, or get something for nothing. It is also a time for our people to genuinely value what we have. The abundance we enjoy must be understood in the context of the Europe and the world in which we live today and not in the splendid isolation of what more everyone would like.

As we start that work, as a Parliament and as an executive, Your Excellency, I want to welcome the new hon. Member of this House, Mr Daryanani, and the returning Members of the House.

The faces on the opposite benches are all returning, none are new, although some return after a longer interval than others. The Leader of the Opposition is new to the Parliament, although he was a Member of its forerunner, the House of Assembly.

Knowing all the characters as I do, I believe that we can deliver a sharply more convivial atmosphere in coming months and years. I am sure we would all welcome a less barbed atmosphere, however robust our exchanges on the issues might rightly be. The first test of our ability to work together, even on issues on which we may hold different views, will come quickly as we seek to agree with the Opposition the question to be put in the Abortion Referendum, which will be held on 19th March next year. We have already passed the law that permits abortion in certain defined circumstances; the question will be about the commencement of an Act that we have already passed. In that respect, I also look forward to working towards the more effective functioning of the Gibraltar Consultative Council that can bring a new cross-party approach to resolving challenges facing our nation.

I must also lament that one former Member has chosen not to return to this Parliament, the Hon. Neil Costa, who was a magnificent Minister and parliamentarian for the past eight years. He will be, in parliamentary terms, much missed, although he continues to be a supportive part of our political extended family.

Your Excellency, to do its work effectively, this Parliament must meet often. We established, when others refused to, that there should be monthly meetings for questions, with the Chief Minister facing questions, where possible, the third Thursday of each month. We maintained that rhythm until the last 18 months, due to the weight of the work on Brexit negotiations. We intend now to revert to that rhythm that we had established, starting in December. I very much look forward to that work with colleagues across the floor of the House.

Your Excellency, this will be your first and last speech on the Ceremonial Opening. It is my third, and likely my last speech on such an occasion also, so long as this Parliament is able to run its 48-month life. Like any other person, my duty is to my family, to my country and to my party – in that order. I am clear that my family, my country and my party have given me everything that I have and have made me everything that I am. I will work as hard as I am able to, not to let any of those down. The first I have in mind, though, are my family, my children and my wife. I will not embarrass any of us further by straying into the emotion, as I did on the morning of the election, but that will be the key consideration for me in making personal political decisions in coming years. A lot will, however, also depend on how the Brexit

605 negotiating timetable moves. But politics at the top, in the age of 24/7 social media, is a worthwhile but unforgiving endeavour. It is right to mark at least a notional end point in one's journey. I have done so already and I will work to be able to depart this post at the end of the lifetime of this Parliament.

610 Finally, Your Excellency, since the last Ceremonial Opening we have lost colleagues along the way. One was a Member of this House, Juan Carlos Perez, who I want to mention today. I know that he was very highly regarded by Members on both sides of the House.

Today, 14th November, is Children's Day in India. What a fitting day to commence the lifetime of a Gibraltar Parliament – that boasts its first elected Member, and Minister, of Indian descent – that is made up of an executive committed to delivering a child friendly city.

615 Your Excellency, I commend the opening of this Parliament to the House and trust that our work will now start in earnest, in a spirit of parliamentary solidarity and conviviality. (*Banging on desks*)

**Clerk:** The Hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

620 **Hon. K Azopardi:** First of all, Mr Speaker, I want to congratulate you on your appointment. You are already familiar with the workings of this House from another chair, as a former Clerk for eight years. You have, as I said during my remarks on the motion, deep experience of the inner workings of Government at very senior levels, and we look forward to working with you in that new role.

625 I understand Your Excellency is nearing the end of your tenure as Governor. On behalf of the Opposition, I want to wish you and your family all the best for the future in whatever challenges you move on to. You have proved a good friend of Gibraltar and understood our aspirations, which is the best compliment that one can give a Governor of this place.

630 I also want to acknowledge with thanks the appreciation of those on this side of the House to all civil servants who made the election a seamless affair, not least the Clerk of the House and Returning Officer. Equally, I want to thank all our candidates, especially those who were not elected, this time, and of course our friend and colleague Trevor Hammond, who put in endless hours of work, especially on the environment, and will be sorely missed in this House, at least by us.

635 It is good to be back in the House. The last time I was here was 16 years ago, on the opposite benches, next to Sir Peter Caruana. It has not been an easy return. There have been detours, highs and lows along the way, but I was hopeful of making a renewed contribution and I am grateful to GSD members, firstly, for having put their trust in me in 2017, and the electorate at large for having returned me to Parliament.

640 My father would have been 83 today. He would have enjoyed seeing me in this position; he probably would have enjoyed me more on the other side of the House, but there you go. The Gibraltarians of my parents' generation were the returning evacuees who struggled in the post-war decades and the years of Frontier closure. They laid the foundation stones of modern Gibraltar. They agitated for better working conditions, for equality of treatment, and against colonialism and discriminatory practices. They fought for self-Government. I cannot claim that  
645 my parents played any leading role in any of those events. The opposite is true. They did not come from leading or wealthy families. They were not well placed. My father left school at 15. My mother was a homemaker. They were ordinary working-class witnesses to all those events. But what they did do is to give me a clear set of values: a commitment to hard work, a sense of fairness, a belief in meritocracy, a sense of rebellion against discrimination, colonialism and  
650 unfairness, and an understanding of what it is to have very little. I saw and continue to see life from the perspective of working-class families. Those roots and that grounding influences everything I do in politics, what I have done and where the GSD will stand in the political spectrum while I am its leader.

655 I am indebted to the hard work of all my predecessors to make the GSD what it is today. Sir Peter Caruana was, of course, the towering figure among GSD ranks for so many years and I worked closely with him, in particular during my stint as deputy.

660 More recently, I am especially grateful to my colleague Daniel Feetham for his sterling work as Opposition Leader, for his resilience and commitment to the GSD and his personal support of me since I became leader in 2017. He has been and continues to be a constant source of sensible advice and guidance.

I also want to acknowledge the work of all GSD MPs in the last House and single out the contribution of Elliott Phillips, who took the role of Parliamentary Leader loyally, in unprecedented circumstances, when he did not have the liberty to direct the entire orchestra.

665 To a very large extent, and while I have been GSD leader for the last two years, I see my main role as starting now, as it is only now that I am on an equal footing with everyone else. It is only now that I am in this House and can properly voice my views and be heard with the opportunities this role now gives me; before now, it was a bit like driving a car from the back seat. My real work starts now.

670 As I take the baton of this role and I look across the House, I am reminded that I started in politics all those years ago, in 1991, with Fabian and Joseph and Damon, among others. We were then young people concerned about our future. That political generation matured and emerged. We are on opposite sides of the House. We may disagree on many issues, but I am also sure that there are plenty of issues that unite us, on which we can work together for the common interest of all our people.

675 A big shadow was cast over the last election we just celebrated, the dark shadow of Brexit uncertainty, which was played by the incumbent Government for all its worth during the campaign. Even though when we went round the estates or districts, people wanted to talk about their housing concerns, employment or health issues, it was also clear that for many people uncertainty preyed on their minds. This contributed to the result and indeed the way the campaign panned out.

680 There are lessons for all of us in this election. We entirely respect the result of the election. The GSLP-Liberals were re-elected, but they were re-elected without the enthusiasm that had accompanied some of their previous wins. This was a muted win which scarcely concealed the underlying disenchantment in many quarters of their style of government, their policies and their mistakes.

685 It is a lesson too for us in opposition. Many people wanted change. Despite the Government playing the Brexit fear card to its fullest extent, 46% of people voted for opposition parties, but of course a split in opposition votes only favoured the incumbent. So, it is for us to persuade the many people who already want change, and the others who will come round to that view during the next four years, to hold fast and not split their votes if they want change to be delivered. On the opposition benches it is our collective responsibility to all those people who wanted change to ensure that we present a solid alternative at the next election. To do that, we must capture the imagination once again and reflect on how we do opposition politics. The GSD will do that in coming years with a talented and diverse team of individuals inside and outside of this Parliament.

690 I have been on all sides of election results in the past, on winning and losing sides, and, like in general life, it is often how you behave and what you draw from a defeat that marks you as a person and helps you transition as a party. So, it is important to learn lessons in victory and in defeat, but in doing so it is important to resist the temptation of trashing everything we stand for or that we did during the campaign. We fought a positive and constructive campaign. I am not going to change the style of my politics, because I believe in it and I believe people want a different way of doing things. Shrill, negative politics or hollow populism are not for me because they accelerate a race to the bottom via extreme, thoughtless or unprincipled positions. They also distract from what really needs to be done. I believe people want real solutions to their real problems, so we will concentrate on presenting those. I want to restore political hope to people.



That belief in a positive way of doing politics should not be confused with a lack of robustness. We will be robust when we need to be, we will call out mistakes, and where we fundamentally disagree with the Government we will say so. We will not shirk from that role. I  
710 lay a marker here and now that we will relentlessly pursue the Government on issues of fairness and transparency and wastage of public moneys. They should not expect that we will tolerate silently their excesses, or failures to give answers or account to people. If they fail on housing, or jobs, or the Health Service, they are not going to get a free ride from the GSD that I lead, and they will not get a free ride from me.

715 So, the Chief Minister, who had promised a New Dawn and way of doing things in 2011, should not be surprised when I tell him that that was a false dawn for some people. And that is not me making a politically partisan point however it sounds, because so much is clear from the many conversations we had during this long campaign. From Gib 5 to the Upper Town we heard many stories of disappointment, dejection and dismay. So, if the re-elected Government truly  
720 wish to deliver a better way for all those people, they will need to try much harder to govern for everyone fairly and equally.

The GSD is a party with clear values and a long track record. On 14th December this year we celebrate our 30th anniversary. It is inevitable that when a party like ours that had a long spell in government goes into opposition, it goes into a period of transition. It happened to the GSLP and  
725 it has inevitably happened to us. But if there is one big lesson that I have learnt from the Father of the House, Sir Joe Bossano, over so many years, it is that in politics it is important to have stamina. So, we must stick the course and come back stronger, and we will. We will reconnect with people and re-energise. We have done it before. When the GSD obtained 20% of the vote in 1992, it would have served no one if Peter Caruana had just given up. We persevered and  
730 came back stronger, to win four years later. In that task, opposition unity and strength of purpose is crucial. I make it clear that I am absolutely determined to deliver that strong alternative, and no one should doubt the single-minded, unified sense of purpose of this GSD team to ensure we emerge much stronger by the next election. We will and do have stamina.

In offering a clear and strong alternative to Government over the next four years, I also want  
735 to set out the principles that will influence our approach. We will offer a positive vision for the Gibraltar that we treasure. We will work with Government, if they properly include us, on issues of public interest and where we have common ground. We will not hide from voicing our disagreement loudly where we think it is important to do so. Our politics will reflect the core values of the GSD modernised for our times. It will be a mainstream, centrist, progressive vision  
740 of social democracy, protecting civil rights, fostering equality, enhancing conditions for working people, economically liberal and ensuring fairness, transparency, opportunity and value for money.

We will continue the work of regenerating the party further. We will seek to enthuse young  
745 people with our new core message and represent all sectors of our society, as we have always sought to do. We will get out into the community, as we have been doing already but with efforts redoubled. We will cover every estate or district or representative association in our outreach programme. We will be there for everyone. We will build on what was an extremely forward-looking and progressive manifesto at the last election, full of good ideas on quality of life, better services, the environment, housing, workers' rights, skills and mental health.

750 The Chief Minister already said in his speech on election morning that he may pick some of the best ideas from all manifestos. We are glad he will do that in acknowledgement that the Government do not have a monopoly on good ideas or the public interest.

We will work hard for the good of our people. We will represent all our people, and not just the people who voted for us. We will hold Ministers to account and scrutinise Government  
755 decisions. We will be critical and constructive in equal measure. Gibraltar will not find us wanting in our commitment. We will be bold in setting out our vision for the future.

The talented team that we have in Parliament will be the immediate public face of the GSD Opposition, but we will combine that with the new energy and enthusiasm of other, younger

760 people, who will play a public role in politics in the future. I believe our parliamentary team has the strength and ability which will market as the clear alternative to Government.

765 While Brexit cast a shadow over the election, I do not minimise its importance to our future. It is crucial we navigate the consequences of Brexit successfully. The die is not yet cast as to whether we leave the EU with or without a deal. I said during the campaign that we consider that the Government lost an opportunity to negotiate a better set of temporary arrangements with the EU. Even so, and despite our misgivings, we prefer those deficient MoUs to no deal. If we leave with no deal, now or in the future, the Government's continuous protestations that they are Brexit ready will be put to the test. We have not been involved in those preparations to any meaningful extent. If there are fissures in preparation, the Government can expect us to shine a bright light on these, as it would be our duty to do so.

770 Whether we leave with or without a transitional deal, the next question will be whether, and, if so, what kind of permanent deal with the EU could be struck by the UK, and indeed Gibraltar, to replace existing arrangements. Here, we are on sensitive ground, not least because of the possibility – indeed, some say likelihood – that Spain may exercise its pressure over our inclusion in the permanent arrangements. Again, we will monitor that emerging scenario carefully. We 775 believe a good permanent agreement can be entered into with the EU.

We are happy to work with the Government if they seek our help on navigating Brexit. This is not a time for political pride or arrogance. This is a challenge of seminal importance to Gibraltar and a time for political leaders to show their ability to work together in the national interest, as necessary.

780 The GSD I lead will be strong on sovereignty and on the recognition of our international rights as a people. So, I also say to the Chief Minister and express our willingness to attend the United Nations with him as part of a joint Gibraltar delegation. Again, it is a matter for him, but I make clear that we are willing to show a common front at international fora where Gibraltar's interests are being discussed. Like was the case in the 1960s, we are happy to face these 785 international issues together. We may deeply disagree with the Government on domestic issues, but it is safe to say we should be able to share a common view on the fundamental aspirations of our people.

I have made no secret of the fact that I believe passionately in parliamentary reform. This will improve democratic accountability, the quality of decisions reached and the pool of talent of 790 people influencing those decisions. We will therefore be pressing the Government on this agenda, so that deep reforms are put in place to improve our democratic system. We are now one of the few places in the democratic world that is hampered by such a rudimentary system. We need to breathe life into our parliamentary system by radical reform, and indeed perhaps also electoral reform.

795 In overall terms, our approach in opposition will be energetic, modern, positive, constructive; but yes, also robust and critical, where necessary. Gibraltar demands the vigour of tough opposition and we will deliver that in fulfilment of our constitutional duty and the people that we serve. We will be the voice of the people in opposition. *(Banging on desks)*

#### ADJOURNMENT

*The House adjourned at 12.39 p.m.*