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InfoGibraltar

Discurso del Ministro Principal en la Inauguración del Parlamento (extractos)

Gibraltar, 11 de noviembre de 2023

[El viernes, 10 de noviembre, el Ministro Principal se dirige al Gobernador que inaugura el Parlamento en nombre de SM del Rey Carlos III.]

...

Me levanto para darles la bienvenida y dirigirme a la Cámara como su líder, y a nuestra nación como su Ministro Principal, por cuarta vez consecutiva, con un sentimiento de la más profunda humildad.

Por supuesto, me siento igualmente profundamente honrado por el hecho de que sólo otras dos personas hayan tenido antes tal honor en la historia de la democracia británica de nuestra nación.

....

Mi Partido y nuestros colegas liberales nos sentimos todos igualmente abrumados ante la confianza de nuestro pueblo, que nos ha elegido una vez más para ocupar los más altos cargos políticos en esta gran tierra nuestra.

El Partido Socialista que lidero, con su orgullosa insignia del GSLP, ha vuelto al gobierno en seis ocasiones.

Hemos formado la Oposición oficial en otras cinco ocasiones.

...

Y ahora que estoy aquí, para lo que será -si este Parlamento sigue su curso- sin duda mi último discurso en una Ceremonia de Apertura como Ministro Principal y Líder de la Cámara después de unas Elecciones Generales, me corresponde empezar con algún elemento de reflexión.

Excelencia, me encontraba aquí, en este estrado, hace poco menos de doce años, dispuesto a liderar un Gibraltar muy diferente.

Un Gibraltar que formaba parte de la Unión Europea con el Reino Unido.

Un Gibraltar a menudo enfrentado con el Reino Unido.

Y un Gibraltar que no progresaba socialmente como lo habían hecho el resto de Europa y el mundo desarrollado.



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Todo eso ha cambiado.

Lamentablemente, como todos sabemos, hemos abandonado la Unión Europea con el Reino Unido, a pesar de los grandes esfuerzos de la ahora Ministra de Sanidad cuando lideró la campaña "Stronger In" [Gibraltar Stronger in Europe] en 2016.

Hemos convertido una relación tirante con el Reino Unido en una asociación real y genuina. Una asociación moldeada en la comprensión de los intereses de la política exterior británica y asegurándonos de que nos beneficiamos y no nos ofendemos por complementarlos sin socavarlos.

Esto nos permite ser un indudable activo neto para el Reino Unido.

Y permite que nuestra relación continua y reforzada con el Reino Unido sea aún más que nunca un activo neto para nosotros.

Se trata de un Gibraltar que no es una incomodidad para el Reino Unido a ningún nivel, ya sea normativo, económico o social.

Es un Gibraltar que juega por encima de sus posibilidades, y no sólo por su evidente, continua e insustituible ubicación geoestratégica.

Un Gibraltar que destaca por encima de los demás por cómo hacemos lo que hacemos.

Un Gibraltar que demuestra que está por encima de su peso por lo que representamos.

Una sociedad socialmente libre y abierta, donde otras no lo son.

Una historia de éxito económico, a pesar de vientos en contra que habrían hecho perder el rumbo a muchos otros.

Y un ejemplo de regulación en todos los ámbitos, desde el juego a los servicios financieros.

[Enumera brevemente logros, pero también necesidades aun no cubiertas en las áreas de vivienda, sanidad y medio ambiente. Subraya las múltiples instalaciones deportivas inauguradas y los diez colegios y escuelas construido en los mandatos anteriores, la bajada de la edad escolar, y la introducción de la coeducación en la secundaria.]

...

Se ha hecho tanto, Excelencia, que incluso nuestros adversarios más mordaces -que nos han combatido con uñas y dientes en relación con muchos de los cambios que hemos llevado a cabo- se refieren ahora a estos logros social-liberales que a menudo votaron en contra en este lugar como "progreso que estaría a salvo con ellos".



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Hemos cambiado tanto en doce años, Excelencia, que incluso hemos cambiado las mentes, las opiniones y las políticas de quienes se nos oponen.

Lo hemos hecho hasta tal punto que algunos de nuestros oponentes hablan ahora de proteger nuestro legado como si fuera el suyo.

Esto es especialmente significativo en las áreas de progreso social.

En las uniones civiles y el matrimonio igualitario.

En la FIV asistida por la GHA, que está creando vida.

En los derechos de inmigración, nacionalidad y residencia.

En los derechos reproductivos.

En todas esas áreas, en las que Gibraltar estaba fallando gravemente, hemos hecho algo más que progresar.

Realmente nos hemos transformado.

De hecho, parece que hemos transformado incluso a nuestros oponentes.

O, al menos, eso parece basándose en sus declaraciones, normalmente poco fiables.

Porque ahora, incluso aquellos que votaron en contra de todas esas medidas progresistas que introdujimos, parecen querer fingir que esos avances progresistas contra los que se alzaron, estarían a salvo con ellos.

Es decir, nuestros oponentes pretenden ahora que, habiendo predicado el infierno y el azufre cuando se adoptaron esas medidas progresistas, que no las revertirán, aunque algún día tengan el poder de hacerlo.

Que no desharán cosas que les parecieron tan malas que argumentaron y votaron apasionadamente en contra de ellas.

...

[Subraya que la Alianza GSLP/Liberales cumplirá un denso programa lleno de visión para Gibraltar.

Detalla iniciativas del Gobierno emprendidas desde la investidura en finanzas, el sector marítimo y la atención sanitaria]

...



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Además, el Gobierno iniciará una consulta con la profesión médica sobre la adopción en Gibraltar de medidas similares a las adoptadas en el Reino Unido y Nueva Zelanda para estudiar la posibilidad de impedir la venta de productos del tabaco a los nacidos después de 2009.

Pero creemos, Excelencia, que puede ser necesario ir más allá del Reino Unido y Nueva Zelanda.

Por eso nuestra consulta también pedirá la opinión de la profesión médica sobre si debería o no ser ilegal vender vapeadores a cualquier persona nacida después de 2009.

Está claro que vapear es mejor que fumar.

Pero también parece claro que el vapo conlleva sus propios peligros pulmonares.

Por ello, el Ministerio de Sanidad ya está estudiando estas cuestiones e informará al Consejo de Ministros a tiempo para los próximos Presupuestos.

[Detalla iniciativas del Gobierno sobre el turismo, urbanismo, relaciones con los sindicatos.]

En Vivienda, la ministra Orfila se ha asegurado de que se abran las ventanillas al público, al igual que en todo el sector público, a las dos semanas de las elecciones, como me comprometí a que se hiciera.

Se están identificando viviendas para arrendar y reparar.

Vivienda también está colaborando estrechamente con otros organismos en casos de violencia y malos tratos en el hogar, de modo que se pueda proteger a las víctimas y expulsar a los presuntos autores hasta que se resuelvan las causas judiciales pertinentes.

En mi oficina también se está trabajando en la ubicación de otros 2.100 pisos, con lo que el total que entregaremos durante este Parlamento será de 3.000 nuevas viviendas.

Éstas incluirán viviendas asequibles, asequibles para compradores primerizos y asequibles para pensionistas, así como viviendas de alquiler para pensionistas y la población en general.

...

Así pues, con un corazón valiente, unido a los aliados gemelos de un análisis frío y una determinación férrea, estamos preparados para terminar la negociación de un tratado seguro entre el Reino Unido y la UE.

Nuestro prerrequisito esencial, por supuesto, es que dicho tratado NO implique ninguna cesión de soberanía, jurisdicción o control.



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Dado que esa ha sido la posición que se nos ha planteado en repetidas ocasiones, hay motivos de sobra para seguir siendo optimistas sobre la posibilidad de llegar a una conclusión positiva una vez que se haya investido un Gobierno en España.

Esto parece estar a punto de resolverse.

Y creemos que lo correcto sería avanzar para resolver todos los aspectos pendientes de la negociación lo antes posible tras esa inversión.

Para concluir, Su Excelencia, sería negligente por mi parte no recordar a todos los presentes en la Cámara hoy y más allá la sabiduría de las palabras de Su Santidad, el Papa Francisco, a ambos ayer en Roma.

Su Santidad destacó su explicación sobre el respeto que caracteriza y existe entre las personas de todas las religiones en Gibraltar.

Su Santidad reflexionó sobre el tesoro que es Gibraltar.

Un modelo de respeto multicultural religioso y cultural.

Un tesoro que conservar y preservar, en palabras de Su Santidad el Papa Francisco. Ojalá más partes del mundo fueran así

Nota a redactores:

Esta es una información elaborada por el Servicio de Información de Gibraltar.

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PRESS RELEASE

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The Chief Minister's Address on the Ceremonial Opening of the Gibraltar Parliament

Your Excellency,

It is more than a privilege to welcome you back to this House for only your second address to us in the time that you have held the office of Governor.

The first was on your arrival.

The address you have just delivered is one on which we have worked collaboratively and collegiately so that it is, in effect, the second Kings Speech delivered in a British Parliament this week.

One was delivered by the King himself at Westminster.

The other is delivered by his representative here.

And I rise to welcome you and to address the House as its leader, and our nation as its Chief Minister, for a fourth, consecutive time, with a sense of the deepest humility.

I am, of course, equally deeply honoured by the fact that only two other individuals have had such an honour before in the history of our nation's British democracy.

As a cursory perusal of my last address on the Ceremonial Opening in 2019 will reveal, this is not a speech I ever wished or expected to deliver.

The fact is that the conspiracy of circumstance sometimes delivers unexpected humbling destinies to each of us, however ostensibly successful they may, at first blush, appear.

My Party and our Liberal colleagues are all equally humbled by the trust and confidence of our people in having elected us once again to hold the highest political offices in this great land of ours.

The Socialist Party that I lead, with its proud insignia of the GSLP, has now been returned to government on six occasions.

We have formed the official Opposition on an additional five occasions.



Of the parties contesting the General Election, that makes us undoubtedly, with our Liberal colleagues, the natural Party of Government in Gibraltar.

With Sir Joe Bossano in our ranks, we also enjoy the great benefit of having, sitting amongst us, the most experienced parliamentarian in the Commonwealth.

With just shy of 50% of all votes cast, we have been returned to office, once again, with a larger share of the vote than any other party after a fourth General Election win.

In 2007, our opponents then formed government with 49.3% of the vote.

We have achieved 49.9% of the vote now and that says something.

And as I stand here now, for what will – if this Parliament runs its course - UNDOUBTEDLY be my last address at a Ceremonial Opening as Chief Minister and Leader of the House after a General Election, it is incumbent on me to start with some element of reflection.

Your Excellency, I stood here, at this crease, just shy of twelve years ago ready to lead a very different Gibraltar.

A Gibraltar that was a part of the European Union with the United Kingdom.

A Gibraltar very often at logger heads with the United Kingdom.

And a Gibraltar which was failing to progress socially as the rest Europe and the developed world had progressed.

All that has changed.

We have, as we all know, unfortunately left the European Union with the United Kingdom, despite the sterling efforts of the now Minister for Health when she led the “Stronger In” campaign in 2016.

We have turned a fractious relationship with the United Kingdom into a real and genuine partnership.

A partnership moulded in understanding British foreign policy interests and ensuring we take benefit and not umbrage from complementing those and not undermining them.

That enables us to be an undoubted net asset to the UK.

And it allows for our continuing and strengthened relationship with the UK to be even more of a more of a net asset also for us than ever before.

This is a Gibraltar which is not an embarrassment for the UK at any level, whether regulatory, economic or social.



This is a Gibraltar that punches above its weight - and not just because of its obvious, continuing and indisplaceable geo-strategic location.

A Gibraltar that punches above its weight because of how we do what we do.

A Gibraltar that demonstrates that it punches above its weight because of what we represent.

A socially free and open society, where others are not.

An economic success story, despite headwinds that would have blown many others off course.

And a regulatory example in all areas, from gaming to financial services.

And always acutely aware that we have to retain pole position in all those respects in every iteration of the development and progress that we will deliver in the lifetime of this Parliament.

And on social issues, in the time we have been in office we have also, already, reduced the housing waiting list greatly, although not as much as we wanted.

We will shortly have delivered more affordable and rental housing combined than any government in our history.

COVID and BREXIT got in the way of our timetable for some developments.

But we will get even that back on track.

We have understood that the health service are still not where they need to be post COVID.

But we have transformed primary care and children's primary care, with more to do in the area of the provision of Health Services.

In the area of the Environment, the improvements in air quality and in the quantitative leaps forward in the provision of green areas and cycle lanes is more than obvious.

Indeed, it would require a malicious deprecation of the magnificent work of John Cortes to suggest that Gibraltar is anything other than a leader in respect for, and improvement of, the environment in which we live.

But of course, this has to be judged, if it is to be judged objectively and fairly, in the context of our constraints as a 2.5 square mile peninsula that has to operate as an island economy.

In the provision of sports facilities, the Gibraltar of today is more than a MILLION miles from the Gibraltar of 2011.



The Island Games of 2019 propelled us forward in those areas as we invested huge amounts of taxpayers' money in the excellent sports facilities we have today at Europa and Lathbury, at the pistol shooting range, at the rifle shooting range, at the clay pigeon shooting range and at the Lathbury pool.

We were criticised – talking about shooting - harshly by some opportunists for not delivering quickly enough on the completion of those facilities.

And yet we were criticised by the same opponents for spending too much on those same facilities.

Spend less and deliver better and more quickly.

Now that is a mantra laced with undeliverable nonsense if ever there was one.

But, of course, such obvious hypocrisy has never stopped our critics from seeking to deploy obvious contradictions to the service of their partisan interests above the interests of our nation and our people as a whole.

And yet, under our administration, Your Excellency has seen in your time here the opening of three new schools.

Each of these also features new sporting facilities for students as well as for the community as a whole, adding even further to the sporting facilities now available to Gibraltarians.

If that increase and surfeit of new sporting facilities alone were something to call a legacy, it would be more than a magnificent legacy.

Yet, in education, these three new schools represent only the tip of the iceberg of what we have delivered in terms of change in the past twelve years.

A total of TEN new schools have already been provided.

A truly transformational period in government not equalled in the field of education and in the field of social progress by any government in the history of our democracy.

And, in education, not just magnificent new buildings for our brilliant teachers to impart knowledge in.

Also transformative work done in the infrastructure of the education system itself.

Starting schools a year younger for all our children.

Remunerating our teachers better to more accurately reflect the respect we must have for the teaching profession.

But, perhaps most importantly, bringing - AT LAST - to Gibraltar, co-education in secondary schools.



And a University of Gibraltar – a long held dream which became a reality on our watch.

As well as the outstanding Gibraltar International Bank which is providing much needed capacity to the retail banking sector in Gibraltar as well as going beyond our shores and providing services in other Overseas Territories also.

We are right to be justly proud of so many of our achievements in the past nearly twelve years in office.

So much has been done, Your Excellency, that even our most scathing opponents – who have fought us tooth and nail in respect of many of the changes we have delivered – now refer to these Socialist Liberal achievements **that they often voted against in this place** as “progress that would be safe with them”.

We have changed so much in twelve years, Your Excellency, that we have even changed the minds, the opinions and the policies of those who oppose us.

We have done so to such an extent that some of our opponents now talk about protecting our legacy as if it were theirs.

That is especially significant in the areas of social progress.

In civil partnerships and equal marriage.

In GHA assisted IVF that is creating life.

In rights on immigration, nationality and residence.

In reproductive rights.

In all of those areas, where Gibraltar was seriously failing, we have more than just progressed.

We really have transformed.

In fact, we appear to have transformed even our opponents.

Or, at least, so it would seem based on their usually unreliable statements.

Because now, even those who VOTED AGAINST all of those progressive measures we introduced, appear to like to pretend that those progressive developments that they rallied against, would be safe with them.

That is to say, our opponents now pretend that, having preached hell and brimstone when those progressive measures were adopted, that they will not reverse them even if they one day have the power to do so.



That they will not undo things that they thought were so bad that they passionately argued and voted against them.

Where does that leave the alleged passions and ideology of those who broached such opposition to those measures when we were introducing them?

What does it say about our opponents?

About the seriousness or credibility of their future opposition to other aspects of what we may do or say going forward?

About their political principles, if any?

Precious little, I submit.

And what does it say about us?

It says that we are ideologically clear in the direction of our travel.

It says we have clear objectives for our people.

And it shows that we are not progressive under one leader and conservative under another, as remarkably appears to be the case in other political groupings.

Because, what sort of politics is that?

Labour under one leader, Tory under another?

We, on this side, are not so an allegedly 'broad a church', because frankly to be so broad is to be an ideological wasteland.

We are not a group that comes together just because we are against our opponents.

And so, therefore, for us, it is quite something to have changed the political landscape so much that even our opponents' positions appear to have been napalmed by their own desire to rub out their own previous policy positions.

So, in reflective terms, both in terms of actual delivery for our people and in terms of dealing with our political opponents, not a bad innings at the crease these past twelve years, as the People of Gibraltar have judged by returning us to office once again.

And in reaching their judgements, our People will have looked back to judge us on our record.

And they will have looked forward also to judge our plans for the coming term.



At my request, you have kindly highlighted in your address the areas that I consider to be amongst the main policy priorities of my Government.

His Majesty's Government of Gibraltar has a manifesto that is dense with policies.

Ours was not a plan to review or audit, with no plans for the future.

With no vision of where our nation is going or should go.

With nothing to inspire our people, no.

Ours was a 152-page policy blueprint for the further, continued development of Gibraltar and its People.

Ours is now His Majesty's Government's route map for the lifetime of this Parliament.

Given the four years we have, we will deliver each of the commitments contained in that manifesto.

Where they are timed, we will deliver on time.

Where they are not timed, we will deliver in the lifetime of the Parliament.

Already we are acutely aware that 48 months have already almost become 47 months, at most.

Because our manifesto at the election is not a 'wish list', as our opponents have previously described their own manifestoes.

Ours is a commitment to our People to deliver.

Absent, of course, a global pandemic or a referendum on exiting the world's most successful common trade and immigration zone. Those are the sorts of things that can blow you a little bit off course.

There are some things that even a hyperactive GSLP Liberal Government cannot mitigate for.

Speaking of hyper activity, it will not have escaped anyone that the big shoes that Albert Isola left in financial services and gaming are being more than amply filled by Minister Nigel Feetham.

In this regard, his work with HM Treasury in London the week after the election and his work hear with the Financial Services Commission has shown he was more than ready to hit the ground running.

Hyper activity in the past four weeks since the election has not been limited to the department of Trade and Industry, however.



It will not have escaped notice either that Minister Gemma Arias Vasquez had already been working to be up to speed on potential ministerial responsibilities before the election.

No sooner was she elected she was ready to take decisions and act.

Fulfilling our policy in health of putting the patient front and centre.

Listening to patients and continuing the process of the repatriation of services to Gibraltar.

Already we can say, Your Excellency, that the Catheterisation Lab will be operational in 2024, though I wince even when I say the words, and the larger Oncology Unit will be opened Q4 2024 or Q1 2025.

We have already committed to events marketing our Port, to enable us to expand our port and maritime services, delivering on one of the priorities that you referred to in your address.

Additionally, in this respect, we have committed to a Gibraltar Day in Greece in January 2024 and are actively looking for new ways to engage with maritime operators.

Minister Arias Vasquez has already convened a Business Advisory Board and the Main Street Retailers Association, both of whom will meet for the first time next week as we committed to do.

Additionally, the Government will be starting a consultation with the medical profession on the adoption in Gibraltar of measures akin to those taken in the United Kingdom and New Zealand to consider preventing the sale of tobacco products to those born after 2009.

Our consultation will report in May 2024 so that a definitive announcement in this respect can be made in the Budget for next year.

But we believe, Your Excellency, that it may be necessary to go further than the UK and New Zealand.

That is why our consultation will also seek the views of the medical profession on whether or not it should also be illegal to ever sell vapes to anyone born after 2009.

It seems clear that vaping is better than smoking.

But it seems equally clear that vaping involves its own pulmonary dangers.

The Ministry of Health is therefore already considering these issues and will report to the Cabinet in good time for the next Budget.

Further hyperactivity has been reported in the areas of tourism and training.



The Ministerial whirlwind that is the Honourable Christian Santos has already landed at the World Travel Market and has already started work on apprenticeships and supported employment in earnest.

The work to consult on a facelift for Casemates and on the beautification of Chatham has already commenced in the time scale we had committed to.

As well as the go-ahead being given for works to start on the areas between Coral Road and Landport Tunnel to improve that access point to Casemates.

Together with the Honourable Leslie Bruzon, a working committee has already been set up between the Ministry for Sport and the Ministry for Tourism to develop further the work already done on events led tourism.

Minister Bruzon has already started recruitment in relevant areas of the GSLA and has started meeting with Unions in the discharge of his responsibilities for Industrial Relations, an area he knows well from his Trade Union background.

In Housing, Minister Orfila has ensured that counters have opened, as they have throughout the public sector within two weeks of the election, as I committed they would.

Houses for lease and repair are being identified.

Housing is also working closely with other agencies in cases of violence and abuse in the household so that victims can be protected and alleged perpetrators removed until relevant court cases are resolved.

Work is also ongoing in my office on the location of an additional 2,100 flats to bring the total we will deliver in the lifetime of this parliament to 3,000 new homes.

These will include affordable, first time buyer affordable and pensioner affordable homes as well as pensioner and general rental homes.

And it is not just the new boys who have hit the ground running.

In Education, work has already started under Minister Cortes on planning the delivery of the new schools and on strengthening provision for Special Educational Needs.

We are also already working on the establishment of a credible mechanism for the delivery of hot school meals to all our children.

John Cortes is already working on his new designation as Minister not just for the Environment but also for the Quality of Life and the development of the relationship with Morocco, which you also kindly highlighted.



And I announce today that the Select Committees on the Environment and on Disabilities will meet between the November and December Sessions of the Parliament.

That will ensure we deliver on our commitment to have those two Select Committees start their work before the end of this calendar year.

The Parliamentary Reform Committee will also meet on that same timetable.

And Your Excellency will be pleased to know that I am asking the Deputy Chief Minister the Honourable Joseph Garcia to Chair that Committee.

He is also in charge of monitoring manifesto delivery across all ministries.

A good reason for all on this side not to slack!

The Honourable Dr Garcia has already travelled to New York to address the Fourth Committee of the General Assembly and will next week be in London at the Joint Ministerial Council of the Overseas Territories.

Your Excellency, undoubtedly, however, the greatest level of political activity will have been in one Ministry.

And that is in the areas of activity being undertaken by the evergreen Sir Joe Bossano.

The work of the Economic Development Ministry was not paused for longer than absolutely necessary during the election period and continues to seek to deliver projects on time in coming months.

And with the Deputy Chief Minister, I have already continued contact on the negotiations for a safe and secure UK/EU Treaty on Gibraltar as well as both of us continuing to engage in all areas of our responsibility.

It is, as ever, ALL GO with a GSLP Liberal government.

Your Excellency, when Dominique Searle edited the Gibraltar Chronicle he also coined a reference in an editorial in 2003 to effectively encapsulate the brutal nature of our British political system.

He referred to the 'cold steel' of election night and its effects.

It was that cold steel that denuded us on this side of a friend and colleague in this election, Mr Daryanani.

The fruit of his work in the lifetime of the last Parliament is now being felt in the increased cruise calls booked for next year and the year after.

He will be missed greatly on this side of the House.



I know that despite political differences, ties of friendship joined him also to other members opposite who will no doubt also miss him.

Also much missed will be our retiring colleagues, Messrs Isola, Licudi, Sacramento, Balban and Linares.

We were together in Cabinet in the cold days and nights of the winter of 2020.

The COVID winter.

And we stared over the precipice together.

We worked hard to stave off the dystopian possibilities that stared straight back at us.

If I may say Your Excellency so with pride and humility in equal measure, dystopia blinked first.

COVID was dealt with in Gibraltar in a manner that we can all be proud of and I thank my retiring colleagues for their help in that respect.

On this side of the House we will obviously also continue to miss Neil Costa who retired four years ago and we will never forget Charles Bruzon, who sat alongside us here for far too short a time after our election success in 2011.

We will also, of course, in parliamentary terms, miss all other retiring members.

But Dominique Searle's reference to the "cold steel" of election night is but a euphemism.

The reality is that the result of the election is what Madam Speaker would more usually, in her previous environment, call a judgement.

It is the judgement of The People that I referred to earlier in my address.

And in that respect, Your Excellency, we have listened carefully to the aspects of the judgement of The People which required our attention.

As well as to what was said by our opponents that may have induced that judgement.

For that reason, Your Excellency, in coming months we will not fail to point out when our opponents are making baseless allegations against us.

Because the reality is that mud, however untrue, nuanced or manufactured, sticks.

And there is only one solution in that situation.



To take the tough disinfectant of truth and use it to wipe off the mud that has been flung and may have stuck.

And for that reason, we will ensure that we address any suggestion that we were somehow misleading anyone on the fact or quantum of any relevant telecommunications invoices referred to during the General Election campaign.

In doing so we will show that the statements made by us were no more than the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

We will ensure that we show that those parts of the election process that were not, in our view, handled with the necessary diligence and rigour from this place, are properly bolstered, if necessary, in legislation.

This will relate especially to residence requirements and how those are objectively, properly verified by the electoral authorities given the failure to do so during the course of this General election.

We will ensure that we demonstrate it is not to play 'bargain basement politics' to enter into a commitment to resolve the massive structural problems created for many of our fellow Gibraltarians by a former government's development of affordable homes in the south district.

And it is a bit rich for our opponents, when the votes have been counted, to say to us, when we were following after them, understanding what they had promised to so many, that we were trying to buy votes.

If the General Election in October ended up being an auction, as some on the losing side have suggested, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we were not the first to bid.

Forensic reality will be deployed by us throughout this term to demolish the malicious rumour mongering relied on to tarnish hard won votes and hard fought for reputations.

And whilst dealing with that we will ensure also that we are delivering to our people in the traditional areas of housing, health, education and employment.

We will work on international matters.

But we will not do so whilst forgetting or not prioritising the domestic agenda of our people also.

That is why each of us on this side of the House has taken on specific responsibility for a different part of our geography in what we are referring to as constituencies, as well as Sir Joe covering senior citizens generally in lieu of a physical area of responsibility.

In that respect, Members opposite should feel free to write to us on any matters which they believe we could help with.



Because as Members of Parliament we interact with each other, not with the Civil or Public Servants in departments.

New Members, in particular, should note that.

As they should note that we will engage constructively to work with any constituent they put us in touch with who may have an issue we can resolve.

And in this place Members opposite will always find us always convivial, supportive and engaging.

What we will, nonetheless, be clear about is that this is the heart of our democracy.

And that we will defend that this is the place for the ultimate test of cerebral fitness, not for a jolly gossip at the taxpayers' expense.

Because this is not a place to come unprepared.

It is a place to be ready to deal with the issues.

This is not a place for rumour.

It is a place for rigour.

And it should be clear to all new members, on all sides of the House, that to succeed in this place requires conscientious preparation.

This is not a place for the weak of mind.

The weak of spirit.

Or those with a weak work ethic.

Because we are elected to deliver the best possible government and alternative government to our people.

We, on this side, are elected **to do**.

They, on that side, Your Excellency, are elected to challenge our doing and to hold us to account.

But that challenge must come within the rules as they are, as they have been and as we may all agree that they should develop into being.

This is not the place to bring the latest tittle-tattle one has heard in town without any serious checking of the facts.



Talk about that in a coffee shop, or in your law firms, but not here.

This is not the place to come unprepared and think that one will not be pulled up on the issue in debate.

Do that at the dinner table, but not here.

This is not the place try to make up new ways of getting up to say something when the rules do not allow it.

Do that in the barrack room or in the sixth form debating societies, but not here.

Because the consequences of a Parliament being allowed to become a place of mediocrity are too serious to countenance.

And we will uphold the highest standards on this side of the House and I call on all members to be up to that standard on both sides.

And that applies as much to the substance of debate as to its form.

And yet despite that, members opposite will find us convivial and collegiate.

Many of us have been in opposition and we deeply respect the work that a Loyal Opposition must do.

Many of us are legally trained and we value the manner of the adversarial system and we do not mind the bruises we may sometimes inflict on each other in defending our respective client's interests.

Although in this place, where we have recently debated issues related to conflicts of interest, we all, ironically, have the same client.

The People of Gibraltar.

They are the masters here, Your Excellency.

We are their government OF the People and BY the People.

And I urge all members, always to bear that in mind.

In particular, when tempers fray.

Because, in the end, we are all here, propelled into the core of our democracy to do our best for our nation.

We can do so without insults and with a keen focus on the logic of our opponents' arguments.



We do not have to stray into unkind personal allusions.

And that keen focus to which I refer should never blind us to when our opponents may be right.

And nothing in our ego or in our partisan interests should ever stop us from agreeing with each other if the best interest of Gibraltar should so require.

No doubt we will be able to agree on much across the floor of the House.

I believe, for example, that we will be able to agree in particular on Constitutional reform, which we will have to address with alacrity once we have tamed the issues that remain outstanding in the treaty negotiations.

In fact, the party names of all three parties represented in the election that we have just been through and who have representatives in this place share on common name.

GIBRALTAR.

That should be the guiding principle.

Gibraltar.

First.

Always.

Your Excellency, there has not been a day in the past twelve years that has not been taxing or tough.

Yet there has not been a moment when I have not considered it the greatest honour of my life to be the LEADER OF THE GIBRALTARIANS.

This is not yet my valedictory address, but it is close.

It is, of course, closer than ever before.

In these twelve years, I have gained much.

Not least the 35 kilos I have since also lost.

But it is also true that I have lost much too.

In the balance of life, holding the office of Chief Minister represents such an honour that it is right that personal sacrifice and loss must be balanced and nuanced against the privilege of service.

The gains have been greater than the sum of the losses.



For that, I thank all those who have been with me along the way, and especially those who have stuck with me through thick, thin and thinner still.

Not least of these are my great team at No6, who I now have the pleasure to continue working with.

They are the engine at the heart of Gibraltar's administration.

When things go right it is usually down to their diligence and commitment.

And my great personal protection team - who have been allies and friends in the past year more than ever before.

I extend my personal gratitude to you for your support and friendship.

And also, Your Excellency, I extend my gratitude to you for your support and friendship in your time here so far.

We have only got a few months left to have our first row!

Your Excellency, in what is left of your time here or after, the lifetime of this Parliament will undoubtedly throw up its fair share of surprises.

It will bowl us googlies, as every period does, for all governments, everywhere.

I do hope we have done Pandemic Parliament and we are not going to have to go back to that again...

But I am clear in knowing that this will also be a time when we are presented with opportunities to seize and choices to make.

We must make these choices and seize those opportunities looking forward.

Because life is not about looking back.

It is about looking forward.

Because the world does not look back.

It spins always forward.

Because **nostalgia will be with us forever.**

But the chance to leap forward may never come again.

So with a brave heart, coupled with the twin allies of cool analysis and steely determination, we are ready to finish the negotiation of a safe and secure treaty between the UK and EU.



Our essential pre-requisite, of course, is that such a treaty must NOT involve any cession of sovereignty, jurisdiction or control.

Given that has been the position that has repeatedly been put to us, there is every reason to remain optimistic about a positive conclusion being deliverable once a Government is invested in Spain.

That appears to be about to be resolved.

And we believe it would be right to move forward to resolve all outstanding aspects of the negotiation as soon as possible after that investiture.

In concluding now, Your Excellency, it would be remiss of me not to remind all those here in the Chamber today and beyond of the wisdom of the words of His Holiness, Pope Francis, to both of us yesterday in Rome.

His Holiness remarked upon your explanation of the respect that characterises and exists between people of all faiths in Gibraltar.

His Holiness reflected on what a treasure Gibraltar is.

A model of religious and cultural multicultural respect.

A treasure to conserve and preserve, in the words of His Holiness Pope Francis.

Would that more of the world were like that.

And would that in our deliberations in coming weeks, months and years in the lifetime of this Parliament, each of us will show each other, in this place also, the mutual respect that our citizens have traditionally shown each other in this TREASURE that we call home.

Gibraltar.

First.

And always.

Your Excellency, I commend the Opening of this Parliament to all Honourable Members and look forward to our work now starting in earnest.

ENDS