

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Chief Minister's New Year's Message 2016**

Good evening,

Once again this year Christmas will happily have been marked in most Gibraltarian households with growing prosperity and abundance.

This will have been true for the family celebration of all the other festivals of the many religions that peacefully co-exist in our small nation.

In most homes there will have been much leftover food and drink.

Like many of you, my wife and I have enjoyed the Christmas festivities with our children.

It is certainly true that children really make Christmas.

And in most homes in our Community they will have received more gifts and toys than they can play with.

Yet there will have been some who have not had plenty.

They have needed help to put food on the table.

In Gibraltar, that is, blessedly, a small number of people.

We must continue to work to ensure that the numbers in such a situation in our Community is always reducing.



In the rest of the world, too many are suffering.

We will all have seen on our television screens how terrorism and wars are destroying lives, ruining economies and bringing suffering to families.

And so as we start the year, we need to work together so that everything we each do is designed to ensure that Gibraltar continues to enjoy prosperity and abundance.

Every decision we make has to have that ultimate objective at its core.

We must value what we have, protect it and nurture it.

We need to work together to insulate our children from the problems raging in the rest of the world.

We need to work together to always ensure that the decisions we make as a Community are designed to promote social cohesion, economic growth and the wellbeing of those most in need in our society.

And in respect of all matters, we must debate social issues always with mutual respect for each other and for differing points of view.

At the end of last year you returned me to office with a huge majority of votes in the General Election.

You choose our programme for Government.

And this year we are already starting the process of giving effect to the manifesto commitments you selected.

We have already published draft legislation for consultation and Bills for consideration in Parliament.

And on the first day of the year I visited the new mental health facility at Ocean Views with Minister for Health, John Cortes.

It was a pleasure to see the new environment that had been created for those with mental health issues.



It is light years away from the Victorian environment that had prevailed at the old KGV.

Our dedicated GHA staff there now have the tools they need to provide an excellent service to those who need their help.

The same type of revolution in care will also be manifest in the new Alzheimers and Dementia residential facility and the Day Centre.

Both of these have now been substantially completed.

From my own family's experience of these cruel diseases, I look forward to these facilities commencing operations very soon.

I am also looking forward to next week, when we will be welcoming a new Governor, Lieutenant General Edward Davis.

Like our former Governor, he is also a retired Royal Marine.

I know that we will all welcome him to Gibraltar with open arms, as we have always done.

The Governor's role under the new Constitution is clearly defined and is an important one, representing, as it does, Her Majesty's role as the Queen of Gibraltar and therefore our Head of Government.

We will see Edward Davis sworn in as Governor in Parliament on Wednesday.

And this year we will start the work of reviewing what changes might be necessary or desirable to that Constitution.

In January, Parliament will also deal with a Bill to create a law in Gibraltar for the Referendum on membership of the European Union.

I have today written to the Speaker, Mr Canepa, informing him of my intention to deal with that Bill as an urgent one so that it can be passed this month.

Gibraltar will therefore be ready to hold a referendum at any time that the Prime Minister, David Cameron, may decide.

In this respect, we are continuing our work of preparing our strategy should the result of that referendum be that the UK decides it will negotiate its exit from the European Union.



But perhaps more importantly, we are also going to be continuing our working in earnest in coming weeks and months on the strategy for where we should be going economically in the next decade.

I will be convening the Gibraltar 2025 Committees to start the analysis of what the future may hold for us and how we can best shape that future to most prudently preserve our nation's prosperity going forward.

Make no mistake about the fact that we will have to continue repositioning ourselves and further diversifying our economy.

That is the nature of the modern world.

Things now change very quickly in the digital age.

And as individuals and corporations are having to do, we as a Nation too need to be ready to continue changing and adapting to new technologies and new challenges.

The work on the new power station and LNG fuel facility is part of that work.

We are moving to a new and less polluting fuel and to a new, state of the art, power station.

That work is progressing very well.

As are the negotiations to finalise plans for a sewage treatment plant.

These are important steps forward for us as a Community.

They are important infrastructure investments that we have to make.

Especially as we continue the work of finalising agreement on the development of the Eastside reclamation, which will add a huge number of new homes in that area.

In fact, just this week, many young Gibraltarians will be starting to move to their new homes at Beach View Terraces.

And the negotiations are also ongoing for the exciting redevelopment of the Rooke site.

These are just two of the private sector development projects which are on the horizon and which will fuel the continued growth in our economy in coming years.

Because we are already working towards a growth in our GDP to 2.4 billion pounds over the next



four years.

Indeed, we have seen how our economy has come under attack these past four years of Partido Popular government in Spain.

And yet we have achieved our growth targets and even exceeded them.

Given the political turmoil in Spain now, let us hope that the next Government of our neighbouring nation will respect and recognise our rights.

We will, as ever, remain ready and willing to engage in dialogue under the Trilateral Forum and to work on co-operation for the mutual benefit of people who live on both sides of the frontier.

But we will not be found wanting should we once again have to successfully defend ourselves against unprovoked aggression as we have these last four years.

Because we will continue to promote Gibraltar internationally and plot our course towards an increasingly prosperous future with prudence and with good will to all our neighbours.

And we will do so also remembering that our past generations made huge sacrifices for the Gibraltar we enjoy today.

The evacuation generation that left 75 years ago came back to a Gibraltar that had to be rebuilt economically.

Having suffered greatly whilst evacuated from our beloved Rock, they returned to work harder than ever to rebuild their lives.

They had none of the abundance that they have now bequeathed to us.

And yet they built our Community.

They built our economy.

They built our Nation.

And so, this year, like every year, I will lead a Government dedicated to continuing to work with pride and success in order to leave a stronger nation for future generations.

Thank you all for your part in that work last year and for the work you will do this year.

It is only by dint of our hard work that we will continue to succeed.



Let me end by wishing you all a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2016.

And thank for listening.

Good night.