



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 194/2017

Date: 27th March 2017

### Amazing Achievements for Special Olympics Gibraltar

Minister for Equality Samantha Sacramento and the Minister for Sports, the Hon Steven Linares wish to congratulate the Special Olympics Gibraltar athletes for their participation in the World Winter Games in Austria. Minister Sacramento accompanied the team and has fully participated in the Games, attending the sporting events as well as the Ministers' Forum and other official meetings and talks.

Later in the week Minister Sacramento also participated in a VIP Unified Sports event in a snowshoeing relay. The aim of unified sports is to integrate special athletes in partnership.

The Gibraltar team were a credit to the community in all their events, achieved a number of medals in both individual and team sports and spent their leisure time travelling the province of Styria.

19 year old Francis Avellano brought home team Gibraltar's first ever Gold Medal in the Alpine Skiing novice slalom event. Francis was presented with his Gold medal by Arnold Schwarzenegger. Samuel Santos was another star in Alpine skiing, achieving a silver medal in the super-G finals and attracting the interest of international sporting broadcaster ESPN.

Team Gibraltar's snowshoeing athletes brought home further medals. Daniella Vinent took both a Gold and a Silver medal in two separate events, Gino Francis achieved a Silver medal, and Nicholas Danino won a Bronze medal in his 100m final. These were extremely competitive races and all athletes should be proud of their remarkable achievements.

The floor ball team were victorious against Uruguay, with a 3-2 win on Saturday. Floor ball athlete Kaydon Mena was also selected to play in a VIP Unified Sports event in Graz. The floor hockey team also achieved a fantastic 6-2 win over Bharat.

Minister Sacramento said: 'I am very lucky and grateful to have been truly immersed and integrated in the Games. I have been able to spend a lot of time with our Gibraltar athletes as well as also looking at the other programmes that Special Olympics have developed alongside the sporting events. Taking part in the Unified race, comprised of special athletes from around the world really opened my eyes.'



'Over the years I have formed a very close relationship with the team and watched them grow as individuals and as athletes, it was absolutely wonderful to see them flourish at these Games. It was truly an honour to once again walk out with the team, the atmosphere and the buzz of excitement right before walking out into the stadium is amazing.

'The aim of Special Olympics is to enhance the lives of individuals with intellectual disabilities through sport. Special Olympics is about inclusion and acceptance of people with disabilities, setting and achieving goals and, most importantly, celebrating talents and abilities. People with disabilities can be outstanding athletes and through sport they are enabled and supported to grow, not least in confidence. Our Gibraltar team truly embody these fundamental principles.

'Special Olympics is a wonderful initiative and Gibraltar is lucky as to how it has been developed in Gibraltar through Annie Risso's leadership. The coaches and volunteers who make this happen have tremendous dedication and we must thank them for all they do.

'I wholeheartedly encourage people to get involved with Special Olympics, whether by joining, volunteering or supporting the athletes in any way they can. I very much look forward to working together with the Special Olympics Gibraltar team again in the future.'

Minister Linares said: 'I am really over the moon to see our athletes participate and compete at this prestigious event. They have made Gibraltar proud not only by being there, but for having achieved the amount of medals that they have returned home with'