



## PRESS RELEASE

No: 209/2017

Date: 31st March 2017

---

### Retirement of Ombudsman

H.M. Government of Gibraltar announces the retirement of Mr Mario Hook as Public Services Ombudsman by placing on record its gratitude and admiration for his 14 years of dedicated service to good practice and administration. Mr Hook was appointed Public Services Ombudsman on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2003 and from the very first day set out to pursue his vision of providing a first class service to members of our community in their dealings with our Public Administration. A qualified barrister himself, he soon realised the importance of encouraging his staff to train to the highest of standards in order to be in the best possible position to deliver the necessary support and assistance to both the public and the Administration.

Mr Hook's tenure of office has been characterised by two key features. Firstly, he has applied sensitive consideration to issues raised and the thrust of his approach has always been to mediate and resolve difficulties rather than rush into a blame game. In this way, he has succeeded in establishing a culture of trust both with officials responsible for improving our public services and those members of the public who have felt the need to seek his professional intervention.

The second key aspect of his achievement has been to project his Office and Gibraltar as a jurisdiction onto the international arena by linking up with relevant bodies abroad which include the International Ombudsman Organisation, the Ombudsman Association, the European Ombudsman and Caribbean Ombudsman Association. Mr Hook can be truly proud of these achievements and a measure of the high regard in which he and his Office are held by the world ombudsman fraternity is the number of fond messages he has been receiving including a very dear one from the Ombudsman for the Republic of Ireland and President of the International Institute.

Mr Hook's wider concerns for the vulnerable and those in need of support have undoubtedly enable him to perform his functions from a very human angle indeed and this has been instrumental in rendering him such a valuable asset to the community and the Public Services.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo, said: 'I am deeply grateful to Mario for his dedicated service as Ombudsman over the last 14 years. On behalf of the whole of the Government I wish him a peaceful retirement.'



HM Government is also delighted to announce that former Financial Secretary Mr Dilip Dayaram Tirathdas MBE JP has been appointed to carry out the functions of the Ombudsman as from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 pending a resolution in Parliament to give effect to a permanent appointment.

Mr Tirathdas joined the Civil Service in 1974 as a Clerical Officer in the then Revenue Department. Throughout his extensive career he also worked in the Government Secretariat, the Income Tax Office and the Treasury before becoming Accountant General in 1995, a post he held until 2007 when he took on the role of Financial Secretary from which he retired in 2012. Since then he has been advising his successor, Mr Albert Mena, in the Ministry of Finance. Mr Tirathdas is highly experienced and skilled and in possession of a vast array of professional and academic qualifications. Among those that he most cherishes is his LLB Degree having also been called to the Bar in 2013. Additionally, he possesses an Honours Degree in Financial Services and is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Bankers. He was also recently appointed Justice of the Peace earlier this year. Mr Tirathdas therefore brings to the role of Ombudsman the necessary experience, expertise and disposition to perform this crucial public role.

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo, said: ‘Gibraltar’s next Ombudsman, Dilip Dayaram Tirathdas, has devoted his career to public service. A former Financial Secretary, Dilip is widely respected for his commitment and meticulousness and is extremely well-placed to take up this important role.’

#### **NOTE FOR EDITORS**

The appointment of Ombudsman has been undertaken in accordance with Section 8(1) of the Public Services Ombudsman Act 1998.