



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHIEF SECRETARY**

**- Ernest Gomez will retire on 12 February**

**- Acting Director of Education, Darren Grech appointed with effect from Mr Gomez's retirement**

The Chief Minister, the Hon Fabian Picardo QC MP, has appointed Darren Grech, presently acting Director of Education, to be the next Chief Secretary of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar.

Mr Grech will assume his appointment on 12th February, on the retirement of the current incumbent of the post, Ernest Gomez.

The appointment of the Chief Secretary is one of the senior offices reserved for direct appointment by the Chief Minister.

Mr Picardo said: "In making the appointment of the next Chief Secretary I have been very keen to ensure I appointed a person who is young enough to give the development of the role at least ten years. I think it is important that the role should be filled by someone who will be in post over the lifetime of successive Parliaments. Darren is a hugely competent professional who has demonstrated to me that he has the capacity to lead a team and to deliver a programme whilst remaining popular with the people he works with. That is exactly the skill set I want to see at the head of the Civil Service. These are challenging times for Gibraltar and it is important that the team that leads the nation should have available to it the best of the talent available in the public sector, and Darren Grech represents that great talent and ability. I have been working with Ernest Gomez for some time to identify the right person to fill the post he has made his. There are many other candidates who have many great attributes who we have identified in that time, but Darren is undoubtedly the person who has the right combination of all relevant skills for the role today and I believe he will make an excellent Chief Secretary.

I want to thank Ernest Gomez for the work he has done in the past six years since I appointed him shortly after my election as Chief Minister. He and I have worked together 'hand in glove' on myriad issues of great importance for Gibraltar. Our work together has cemented the friendship and respect that was first kindled when I was a pupil of Ernest's at Bayside. I cannot thank Ernest enough for the way in which he has carried out his functions as Chief Secretary. I also want to thank the Senior Administrator, Joey Britto, for the work he has done in support of Ernest. Joey ruled himself out of assuming the role of Chief Secretary, for which he has all the skill set and dedication required, as a result of my desire to appoint someone who would be able to serve for the lifetime of successive Parliaments, given his own decision to retire in March of this year. I have no doubt that



Civil Servants will support the appointment of Darren Grech and will work with him to ensure we maintain the high standard of delivery of public services in Gibraltar and to improve them where necessary or possible."

Darren Grech said: "It is a privilege and honour to be asked to take up the position of Chief Secretary; I accept this immense challenge fully aware of the difficulties that lie ahead as we try to shape the Gibraltar of tomorrow. With hard work and commitment I am sure we will succeed. Our aim is to deliver on all fronts in the public service allowing the private sector to thrive in the interest of Gibraltar PLC. We shall take stock of those things which we do well, and challenge ourselves to improve in areas where this is needed. We shall hold direct and honest conversations with all stakeholders who can expect absolute transparency and honesty from me. My role is also to advise the Chief Minister accordingly, telling him what he needs to hear. I would like to thank a number of people in particular: Joey Britto for his apposite guidance throughout so many years, my staff at the Department, especially Dympna Holmes, Lilli Gomez and Sarah Payas, and all Headteachers. The Educational Projects will still be driven until we achieve the groundbreaking changes we have embarked upon. Lastly I would like to thank my wife Gayle, my children Gabriella, Anna and Nicholas, and finally my parents: without their support none of this would have been possible."