



PRESS RELEASE

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Chief Minister's New Year Message 2020

Mr dear friends

I hope you have all enjoyed restful and uneventful Christmas, Hanukkah and New Year celebrations.

Our Hindu and Muslim brethren have also peacefully enjoyed their Diwali and Eid festivals respectively throughout the year.

Once again, it has been a year of plenty in most of our homes.

Children delighted with presents, and tables bountifully laden with nothing but the best to indulge in.

These days are also days of reflection.

Tonight, as Christmas trees come down and we return to our daily routines, I want to share with you some thoughts about the year to come.

I believe that this year we will be called upon to reflect long and hard about the values and the blessed nature of the life we lead here in Gibraltar.

This year we must appreciate and value what we have and not take anything for granted.

Because 2020 will undoubtedly be a year of great challenges for Gibraltar.

And these challenges we face are ones we did not choose.

But they are challenges we are confident we will surpass.

Because we have already been working 36 months to deal with the relevant issues since the morning of the Brexit referendum result.

And although 2019 was not the year Gibraltar left the European Union, this year we will leave the EU.



At the end of this month, at midnight on the 31st January 2020, we will cross the Rubicon of departure.

We will do so together with the rest of the British family of nations.

And thanks to the agreements we negotiated, we will do so with the benefit of a transition period.

Securing Gibraltar's inclusion in the transition period was an achievement of critical importance.

It will soften the process and effect of our departure from the EU.

And even though we did not choose this course, we must make a success of it.

I am confident that we will.

To do so, we must all now firmly be in the frame of mind of looking for the opportunities that leaving the EU will bring.

From 6 Convent Place we can see equally clearly both the dangers AND the opportunities that leaving EU presents.

The Government I lead has done the hard work to ensure that Gibraltar is now poised to reap a Brexit Bonus from our privileged position of continued access to the UK services market.

We are also greatly advanced in the work of Gibraltar's inclusion in the UK's new network of free trade agreements around the world.

This is in addition to the establishment of the seminal Double Taxation Agreement between us and the United Kingdom.

Together with the International Tax Treaty with Spain, these agreements will bring certainty to businesses and individuals who do cross-border work or business in Gibraltar.

They recognise our tax systems and position us in the international mainstream.

And those are the circumstances that will give great confidence to those national and international businesses who are making the decision to invest more in Gibraltar.

I expect to be making a major announcement of such an investment in coming weeks.

But that does not mean that we will not also face logistical problems in our departure from the EU.

Of course we will.



But we have also done the work to prepare Gibraltar for all the potential consequences of our departure.

Those consequences will come now at the end of the transitional period.

That is now likely to be at the end of this calendar year.

The solutions for any such consequences are already in hand.

We will be more than ready by then.

Because we have worked and continue to work hard to ensure that Gibraltar is not caught out in any way.

And we must ALL now work together going forward to deliver for Gibraltar.

We must ALL be ready to do our bit and contribute fairly as Gibraltar stares down the challenges before us.

That means EVERY one of us.

Each of us has to be ready to ask for less from our nation and to do more to secure our children's future.

Because Gibraltarians don't run away from difficult challenges.

We run over them.

We run over them with hard work and, if necessary, stoic sacrifice.

That is what characterised the generations that came before us.

That is what has given our nation the strength it has today.

That is what has delivered the prosperity we enjoy and which comes to the fore during the festive season.

What we must now do is ensure that our strength and prosperity endure for future generations.

That is why we will be taking steps to further strengthen our public finances.

That is why we will be ensuring that abuses by some are properly dealt with.

That is why this year we will create a new 'Rainy Day Fund' to guarantee that Scholarships are always available in the future.



As we will also continue to fund the work of the Trustees of Community Care in providing necessary support for our elderly residents.

Our young people and our elderly people protected.

And it is to ensure that we preserve our way of life for our future generations that we have spent prudently and invested wisely.

We are also now starting work on Hassans Centenary Terraces and on the new schools and homes to be built at Europort Avenue and Queensway.

Works on the tunnel under the runway are also now almost complete and I am looking forward to opening that much needed new route into Gibraltar.

Of course we have spent money – and you can see where and to what effect.

The investments we have made are palpable for all to see.

They are investments that make Gibraltar a better place in which to live.

They make Gibraltar also a great place in which to do business.

They will be an important part of delivering on our programme and Economic Plan.

A key part of that plan is the drive for further self-sufficiency, achieving greater efficiency and the elimination of waste.

All these are also key components of action on climate change.

This year we will be developing a Climate Change Strategy and a 25 Year Environment Plan.

These will form the backbone of our approach to the Climate Emergency declared by the Parliament.

A key part of improving our environment in terms of reduction of pollution is our new power station, which is now up and running.

It has already been supplying the whole grid during the testing phase.

This year, we will finalise commissioning and we will finally switch off all our diesel generating capacity.

And we will continue our work on the grid to renew it and make unscheduled power cuts a thing of the past.

And so tonight, I also want to start the year by thanking you.



Those of you who work hard in our economy.

Whether in the public or private sectors.

The good news is that you have done a great job last year.

The better news is that we are all expecting each other to work even harder this year to ensure that our socio-economic success continues.

And I know you expect me to be the one who works the hardest of us all.

Rest assured that I will not let you down.

And as we observe political developments in neighbouring Spain, we will note that there may be a PSOE/Podemos Government in Spain by tomorrow afternoon.

I hope this will be a Government ready to work with Gibraltar for the mutual benefit of citizens on both sides of the frontier.

A sensible, responsible future relationship is, after all, a key component of limiting friction at our border with the EU.

But let me be clear:

The Government I lead is equally willing to walk away if the terms proposed do not favour Gibraltar or respect our red lines.

And I believe that, in this respect, Gibraltar will find a unity of purpose in 2020.

We will share a national purpose.

The purpose of doing a good deal for Gibraltar in our future relationship with Europe; as well as the determination to turn down a bad one.

Any negotiation for Gibraltar for such a deal will be conducted for Gibraltar by a separate and distinct Gibraltar Government team.

That team will be led by me or by Joseph Garcia, your elected representatives.

No one else will lead negotiations for Gibraltar.

And such negotiations must be based on mutual recognition, mutual respect and an understanding that nothing can ever be imposed on Gibraltar.

Because we, in our Parliament, will enjoy a total veto on any agreement or arrangements in relation to Gibraltar.



Because only we, the Gibraltarians, can agree to the application to Gibraltar of anything that affects us.

Make no mistake:

Our sovereignty, our jurisdiction and our exclusive control of our affairs are all non-negotiable.

We will use our veto to protect every aspect of these.

So there is no question of bilateralism over Gibraltar.

And we will negotiate for a fair deal.

For a deal that works for us and those around us.

A deal that protects us, our economy and those who commute into Gibraltar every day to work here, who are an essential part of our success.

As well as a deal that protects the access to Gibraltar of those who come here as tourists or clients of our many and diverse businesses.

Because, we are never out to hurt anyone or damage anyone.

We play by the rules.

We work hard, we stick to the rules and we succeed.

And in the context of the changing face of the Spanish political scene, we stand firm.

That is why we have taken the important step of filing proceedings against the hard-right party Vox in Spain.

We will do what it takes to stop them spreading lies and sowing hatred towards the good people of Gibraltar.

We will not stand idly by as they threaten the safety and security of Gibraltarians by stoking the flames of hatred.

Such hate speech and incitement against our people has no place in modern politics.

We will fight Vox in Courts in Spain.

We will fight them in Courts in Gibraltar.

And we will fight them in Courts in Europe and wherever else we need to.



We will ensure that their vicious political narrative in respect of our people does not go unchallenged.

We will continue to stand up to them.

Because Gibraltar is a beacon of freedom as well as of entrepreneurship.

A success story forged from sheer hard work, grit, determination and a community coming together for the common good in social justice.

In 2019 we were dedicated to honouring the sacrifice of generations of Gibraltarians past.

In 2020 we will be dedicated to working to secure the prosperity of generations of Gibraltarians to come.

Our history lights the way to our future.

So, this year, let us celebrate the idea that there is more that unites us than that which divides us.

Let us celebrate our solidarity with Europe, despite leaving the EU.

Let us celebrate our unity with the United Kingdom, the British family of nations and the Commonwealth.

And let us celebrate the unity of our Gibraltarian society.

A society based on mutual respect.

Whatever your race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation.

We rise as one.

United.

Now is the time for our community's common interests to prevail.

Now is the time to put the Nation first.

Now is the time for our joint work and joint endeavour to propel Gibraltar forward.

Have no doubt that united in support of the Government's strategy, we will achieve just that in the twelve months to come.

We have set Gibraltar on a course for continued success since the referendum three and a half years ago.



Now, as we enter the third decade of the third millennium, be in no doubt.

I am certain that Gibraltar can continue to thrive as it has done throughout its modern history.

Because the Gibraltarians' resolve is as strong as ever.

The Gibraltarian spirit is unbowed.

And the Gibraltarian nation is ready for the year ahead of us.

And so, on behalf of Justine and our children, Sebastian, Oliver and Valentina, I wish you all good health and happiness this seminal year.

Good night.

ENDS