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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Hon Fabian Picardo Workers Memorial Day and May Day Message**

On behalf of the Government of Gibraltar, and as Chief Minister, I want to highlight to the whole community the importance of celebrating Workers Day on the 1<sup>st</sup> May and commemorating Workers Memorial Day on the 28<sup>th</sup> April.

In the Europe of today, our lives have become increasingly sophisticated by new technologies, social and traditional media. The work place has also developed for many Gibraltarians who have left behind manual trades in favour of more highly remunerated, white collar occupations.

None of that changes where we have come from. In living memory Gibraltarian workers were treated as second class citizens in work places where others – of the same rank – enjoyed privileges denied to our people. Also in living memory our people did not enjoy parity of wages with the UK – another industrial battle won that redefined Gibraltar and had a massive effect beyond the wage packet.

All of these anecdotal references do not have to hark back a century to be relevant to the progress that workers representatives have made in establishing the basic rights of working people.

So on the 1<sup>st</sup> May we remember the massacre of workers demonstrating in Chicago in 1886 as we celebrate the establishment of the eight hour working day (one of the early demands of Socialist International) in times where many of our people have to work longer – but have their doing so recognised by way of overtime payments, bonuses or otherwise.

Indeed, as our society becomes increasingly sophisticated and so many of our people have swapped construction and associated manual trades for days spent labouring in front of computer screens – let us not forget that many of our fathers, grandfathers and great grandfathers had to work much harder for less than anyone can expect to earn today. That is why celebrating 1<sup>st</sup> May on the day itself is important.

It was the GSLP that introduced a minimum wage in Gibraltar when first in Government between 1988 and 1996 and we now also return the 1<sup>st</sup> May Bank Holiday to the day itself;

two key socialist issues. I therefore call upon you all, regardless of party political affiliations, to join in the events being organised by the Gibraltar Trades Council and the Government so the whole of our community can give Workers Day the prominence it deserves.

It is now also the GSLP, with our Liberal partners, who are introducing Workers Memorial Day as an annual bank holiday. As the grandson of a man who died in an industrial accident, it has been hugely satisfactory for me to introduce this commemorative holiday as a long weekend at the end of April. I recognise the work of Unite (in particular Gilbert McCarthy and Christian Duo) in raising the profile of this day.

Workers die around the world everyday whilst they labour to earn a living. Just last year a man lost his life working in Gibraltar.

We can therefore never be too careful when it comes to the protection of life in the workplace. That is why I adopt the phrase “remember the dead and fight for the living” which Unite is promoting as part of the events of 28<sup>th</sup> April co-sponsored by the Government and to which people from across the Community and across the political divide have been invited.

I have heard criticism of the fact that we are declaring a bank holiday to commemorate those who have died at work. Surprisingly, no-one criticised bank holidays given to celebrate royal weddings or winning court cases later lost on appeal. This day is much more poignant, enduring and relevant and I am hugely proud to have been able to declare it a holiday.

Finally, if you are going to take advantage of the fact that this year will be an extra long holiday weekend to go away – wherever you are, spare a thought for the events and sacrifices that give rise to these holidays. Enjoy –but do not forget.