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<b>PRESS RELEASE</b>
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**Launch of the digital broadcasting network**

The Chief Minister, the Hon. Fabian Picardo MP, will officially launch Gibraltar's digital broadcasting network at midday on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> December when he will unveil a plaque at the Upper Signal Station on the top of the Rock where the transmitters and mast are located.

The network comprises of two digital television multiplexes and two digital radio multiplexes. On each television multiplex, Gibraltar will be able to transmit up to 6 distinct programmes. Similarly with digital radio, each multiplex will allow for 4 distinct programmes. This means that a greater choice of programmes can be made available and that additional broadcasters could be licensed.

The launch of the digital TV network will also mark the start of 'Gibraltar Freeview,' the name for the collection of free-to-air service on the digital terrestrial television platform in Gibraltar. This new TV service will allow other licensed broadcasters to offer new channels for both TV and radio and so widen the choice of programmes and information services. As from Wednesday afternoon, GBC will be broadcasting TV and radio programmes on digital so viewers and listeners alike will benefit from clear pictures and sound. Within the next few weeks, GBC will commence broadcasting in High Definition (HD) which will be a welcome development as Gibraltar moves ahead with the times.

The arrival of digital television in Gibraltar also marks the end of analogue TV. On the 31st December 2012, the analogue signal will be switched off. This switch-off was agreed at an EU and international level and is required as these frequencies will be used for other services internationally. HMGoG had committed to this switch-off and is pleased to announce that it will meet the required deadline.

As the Chief Minister informed Parliament at the time of the Budget, when this Government was elected just over a year ago, it found out that nothing had been done to fund or progress the changeover to digital and if it did not achieve this by 31st December this year, there would have been no broadcasting at all in Gibraltar, either on analogue or digital. As a result, this Government acted promptly to meet Gibraltar's international obligation.

HMGoG tasked the Gibraltar Regulatory Authority (GRA) to deliver the switchover and the GRA has been responsible for securing and arranging the procurement of the network and managing of the project. Ten months ago the GRA began the unenviable task of providing a digital network in record time. The cost of the digital network and associated infrastructure is just over £1M, compared to the original estimate of over £5M.

Earlier this year, the GRA awarded the tender to Arqiva to build the digital infrastructure in Gibraltar. Arqiva is a communications infrastructure and media services company at the forefront of network solutions and services in the digital world. Arqiva provides much of the infrastructure behind television, radio, satellite and wireless communications in the UK and has a significant presence in Ireland, mainland Europe and the USA.

Throughout these past 10 months, the GRA and Arqiva have been busy working non-stop in order to meet the end of year deadline. At the end of November 2012, Arqiva began test transmissions to verify that everything was working properly and also to allow cable television providers to tune-in to the digital service. Tuesday shall see Arqiva handover the digital television network to HMGoG which will mark the beginning of digital television and radio in Gibraltar.