



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR**  
**PRESS OFFICE**  
**No.6 Convent Place**  
**Gibraltar**  
**Tel:20070071; Fax: 20043057**

<b>PRESS RELEASE</b>
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**Government convenes Commission on Democratic and Political Reform**

In keeping with its manifesto commitment, the GSLP/Liberal Government is pleased to announce that the Gibraltar Commission on Democratic and Political Reform has now been established.

The Chairman of the Commission is Mr Adolfo Canepa. Mr Canepa is a former Chief Minister and Leader of the Opposition. He served as a member of the House of Assembly from 1972 until his retirement from front-line politics twenty years later. He has continued to serve Gibraltar in a number of different roles since then and it will be recalled that he was also a member of the Gibraltar delegation that negotiated the new Constitution with the United Kingdom Government.

The Committee will also include Mr George Mascarenhas who has served in the House of Assembly both in Government and in Opposition, as well as Fabian Vinet who was a Government Minister from 2000 until 2011. Barristers Robert Vasquez and Charles Gomez have also agreed to serve as members of the Commission, both bringing an important perspective from outside the House.

The Secretary of the Commission will be former Clerk of the House of Assembly Dennis Figueras and the Government would also like to involve the Hansard Society in the United Kingdom in an advisory or consultancy role.

The terms of reference of the Commission are “to report on all aspects of the electoral and parliamentary system in Gibraltar.”

The Commission will operate to a fixed timescale. It will issue a consultation paper within three months. This will allow the Commission to seek the views of all Gibraltar society, individuals and groups. Within 12 months of its consultation paper the Commission will make a report to Parliament. The intention is that Parliament will debate the report within three months and then decide which measures should be approved by the House or if a referendum should be held to approve any or all of them. The measures accepted by Parliament will be implemented within six months and any changes to the electoral system will apply for the next general election.

The Government is very grateful to the persons who have agreed to give of their own time in order to serve as members of the Commission.

Commenting on the matter, the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said:

“I am delighted that we have now got the ball rolling on this issue. The Commission will take soundings from the electorate and recommend the future shape the Parliament of Gibraltar will take. The new Government has already introduced monthly question-times so that the Opposition gets more frequent opportunities to hold the Government to account. This was simple and easy to do and is already the most important Parliamentary reform that Gibraltar has experienced in recent times. A new format of Hansard will be available quicker and we are looking at the purchase of a new sound, recording and voice recognition system for Parliament as well as the introduction of cameras into the chamber (which will require the approval of the Parliament). The Commission will now be able to get on with its work and complete the reform process.”

The Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“Bringing Government closer to the people is a flagship policy of the GSLP/Liberal Government. The reform of our Parliament is only one piece in a jigsaw of policies designed to achieve this. Already the Development and Planning Commission meets in public, the Gibraltar Health Authority board will follow suit next month, we have made provision for more responsive Government and we have introduced a 20 year rule for access to documents. The new Government is fulfilling its election commitments to provide real accountability and transparency like we promised. There will be more to follow.”