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<b>PRESS RELEASE</b>
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**Chief Minister's Tribute to Peter Caruana in his last session as Leader of the Opposition**

Mr Speaker

Before I move the adjournment sine die I think it is appropriate for me to rise in this House, in the context of the statement by the Hon the leader of the Opposition to the effect that he will be standing down from that post at the end of January, whilst remaining an MP for now.

I want to put disagreements aside for a few minutes.

The Government has acknowledged publicly in a press statement and I wish to acknowledge now in this place the contribution made by the Honourable Mr Caruana to politics in Gibraltar in the twenty two years since he was first elected to this Parliament.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, I acknowledged on the day we won the election that Mr Caruana – despite our many differences and disagreements - had left Gibraltar in many ways better than when he was first elected; as I believe all Chief Ministers have historically done.

The extent of that is of course an issue we have debated lengthily and - sometimes, in the cut and thrust of debate, - angrily and in the most pejorative terms in this house; as our adversarial system requires and our respective position on those issues need not change because we recognise the service to our community of a political leader.

Today, Mr Speaker, I recognise not just the Honourable Member's service as Chief Minister, but also as a Member of Parliament since May 1991.

Our differences on ideological or factual issues grounds or on particular matters does not prevent me from acknowledging that substantial contribution.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, my own nascent steps in politics and those of the Deputy Chief Minister were also in 1991; which means we have been at loggerheads for that long!

Despite our many disagreements, he has led the GSD for 22 years by my reckoning and he has led our Nation for 16 years and no one can be in any doubt about the commitment he had to the discharge of his obligations in high office.

I am sure that public life has no doubt been tough on his family on occasions and not just on him, so on behalf of the people I represent, may I just wish him and his family all the best, and wish him every success in whatever professionally and personally he chooses to do in the future - so long as he steers clear of politics, or, no doubt, we will be at daggers drawn again!