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GOVERNMENT COMMENTS ON RAJOY'S GIBRALTAR STATEMENTS

HM Government of Gibraltar notes statements made this morning by Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy who is quoted as saying the following in an interview on Radio Nacional de Espana:

'Las relaciones entre el Reino Unido y España son estupendas.Este asunto no tiene por qué entorpecer las relaciones entre el RU y España y por mi parte esto no se va a producir. A partir de ahí, la Comisión Europea acaba de estar en Gibraltar y acaba de decir que los controles que hace el gobierno español en la verja son correctos. ...Ha dicho que en Gibraltar hay contrabando, y muchísimo contrabando. Gibraltar es un paraíso fiscal, Gibraltar está atentando contra el medio ambiente. Bueno, estas cosas no las podemos aceptar y no las vamos a aceptar. Ya hemos hecho una denuncia en la Comisión Europea por los temas medioambientales, también por los temas fiscales, y desde luego nosotros vamos a controlar el contrabando entre Gibraltar y La Línea.'

('The European Commission has said that in Gibraltar there is a lot of smuggling. Gibraltar is a tax haven and acts against the environment. We are certainly going to control smuggling between Gibraltar and La Línea.')

As everyone in Gibraltar will know, the European Commission has actually confirmed that there are no issues affecting Gibraltar's compliance with EU financial services' rules. This much was specifically set out by Commissioner Barnier in answer to questions by Sir Graham Watson.

Sir Graham asked: "Can the Commission state whether it has ever received a well-founded complaint regarding an alleged failure by the Government of Gibraltar to provide or exchange information or failure to collaborate generally on tax, financial services or money laundering matters?"

The Commissioner replied on 20 September 2013: "To date the Commission has not received complaints meeting the description given by the Honourable Member."

Sir Graham also asked the Commissioner to confirm that there were no outstanding directives on financial services, information exchange or mutual assistance on tax matters

and money laundering. Commissioner Barnier answered that, “There are no infringement proceedings pending against the United Kingdom concerning the non-transposition of Directives on financial services in Gibraltar.”

On environmental issues, Gibraltar has also been exonerated by the EU Commission previously on spurious Spanish complaints. The most relevant is the decision on the Eastside Reclamation (answer to petition 1311/2010 of 30 May 2012) where, contrary to Spain’s contention, the European Commission said, “planning permission was considered over a considerable period of time and a full environmental impact assessment carried out”. As a result of mitigation measures adopted by the Gibraltar Government the Project “would have no significant trans-boundary effects on the environment of another Member State” thereby acknowledging both that there was no breach of EU environmental law and that the Project was being carried out in British waters.

The EU concluded by stating that “on the information provided, the Commission is unable to identify a breach of EU environmental law.” The Eastside Reclamation project is no longer active as the Government has repurchased the land from the developer.

The Government of Gibraltar would like to ensure that this information is available to the Spanish media and public opinion.