



**GOVERNMENT OF GIBRALTAR
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PRESS RELEASE

No. 2/2008

Date. 3 January 2008

CHIEF MINISTER'S NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE 2008

Good evening. I hope that you and your family and friends have had a very happy Christmas, and that you will enjoy a healthy and prosperous 2008. 2007 was another very good year for Gibraltar, and, I believe 2008 will be as well.

Following the General Elections in October, I am hugely honoured and privileged to be delivering the Chief Minister's New Year broadcast for the 12th time.

Thank you for, once again placing your confidence and trust in me, my ministerial colleagues and in the values, standards and vision for Gibraltar that we represent. As always, I will work tirelessly to continue to advance and promote Gibraltar's political interests, and economic and social development.

In these Elections our share of the vote was just 2% less than in 2003. While this is a creditable result after 12 years in office, I am determined to redouble my efforts to win the support of those of you who did not vote for us on this occasion. Thousands of you preferred to vote for us despite promises of large cheques in the post by Christmas to pensioners and other personal "goodies". I feel truly humbled by that, and during these 4 years we will show that Gibraltar has, in putting the general good of Gibraltar before personal financial interest, once again made the right collective choice, in deciding that this continues to be the right Government for Gibraltar into the future.

I am excited by the opportunity that this fourth term gives us to bring to fruition so many of the ambitious projects that we have been working on in recent years, and to take Gibraltar up to yet another level of economic and social prosperity, for ourselves and our future generations. We will also have the opportunity to consolidate the Constitutional progress that Gibraltar has made, as well as building on the positive and unprecedented political successes that we have been able to achieve on the

international front, especially in regaining Britain's respect and support, and in bringing greater normality to our relations with Spain.

The next four years will see investment on a huge scale that will assure Gibraltar of a prosperous and successful economic, social and thus political future. These include the Eastside Development, for which final agreements were signed before Christmas, the Mid Town Development, the Affordable housing Schemes, the New rental housing Estate, a new power station to replace all the existing old ones, a sewage treatment plant, a new prison and of course, a new theatre. When added to the new hospital, the new Sports Centre at Bayside, the new leisure centre and the huge investment in street and public housing refurbishment that have already taken place, these are a measure of the very fundamental and continuing transformation and repositioning of Gibraltar for the present and future that this Government is embarked upon.

Preparing Gibraltar for our future generations' prosperity requires vision, leadership and courage. Our airport and its magnificent new air terminal building, together with the new dual carriage way and the tunnel under the airfield are key pieces of that modern, vibrant and prosperous future. And so is tackling Gibraltar's perennial parking and traffic issues, so we will build new roads and parking facilities on a massive and unprecedented scale.

Much less glamorous, but no less vital for being out of sight, are Gibraltar's public utility infrastructure, our sewer system and electricity and water distribution systems. In most parts of Gibraltar, these are antiquated will not meet our future needs. A thorough infrastructure review has been carried out, and detailed upgrading works are now being designed, especially to our sewer system.

Many of these major projects, including the refurbishment of Europa Point, get under way this year, and during the construction phase we will all be subjected to varying degrees of inconvenience and discomfort. But their value to Gibraltar and our future prosperity are well worth our making these sacrifices for the benefit of future generations, just as past generations made for us. However, as promised in our election manifesto, development will be carried out in a balanced way: sympathetically with our environment, our heritage, our public amenities and our quality of life, in accordance with our very detailed new Development Plan for Gibraltar.

But progressing Gibraltar is not just about physical developments. Enhancing our individual and collective quality of life is also about developing our health, social and leisure services, and we will certainly not let up in introducing further advances in these areas, to add to the veritable transformation, improved facilities and rising standards of the last 10 years.

During the first half of the year we will publish consultation drafts of major, new, reforming legislation on several key subjects, such as how we protect and enhance the interests of our families, our children and our heritage, as well as new immigration legislation to replace our present antiquated laws. The drinking and smoking ages will be increased. Anti – social behaviour legislation will also be introduced. We will consult with a view to commencing the introduction of a ban on smoking in many public places.

Many of you will be concerned, as I am, by the apparent increase in gratuitous violence creeping into our community, including among a very small element of our youth. Although the position in Gibraltar is still a very long way from what it is in the

rest of Europe, I believe that as a community we should take tough steps to stamp this out before it takes an irreversible hold. We will be proposing and consulting on specific measures in this regard.

One of the GSD's core principles since we have been in office has been adherence to the traditional family and its values, which of course includes one parent families. These values are the basis upon which our community is built and organised. We must therefore be similarly on our guard against those who would import into Gibraltar "politically correct" but failed so called modern principles masquerading as human rights which undermine the traditional family, and which have been at the root of so much social failure elsewhere. We will continue to resist all such pressures, while ensuring that the real and legally recognised human rights of every citizen is respected and upheld.

Many of these societal reforms to which I have referred raise fundamental issues about our values and social direction as a community. The Government will therefore consult widely and will consider a direct consultation in the form of a referendum. In addition, we will put in motion the process of reforming our electoral legislation and also the way in which our Parliament works and goes about its business. This needs to be modernised and made more effective and relevant to the ordinary citizen. And new Legislation will continue to be introduced to reflect and implement our new Constitutional status, adding to the legislation already introduced transferring powers formally to the elected Government, and modernising the legal framework of governance and accountability of the Police and the Judiciary.

During the last year there has been much disruption and controversy relating to the Chief Justice. The Government welcomes the decision of the Governor, Sir Robert Fulton, taken, as the new Constitution requires only after receiving advice to that effect from the independent Judicial Service Commission, to convene a Constitutional Tribunal into the question of whether the incumbent Chief Justice is able to continue in office, and to suspend him in the meantime. Much harm has been unnecessarily, undeservedly and unjustifiably caused to Gibraltar, in the name of a supposed defence of the independence of the judiciary, which independence no one has challenged and which no other past or present judge of our judiciary feels has or is being challenged. The situation that had developed over recent years was wholly unacceptable.

And so, the first major events of the new year will include the opening of the wonderful new leisure centre (which unfortunately has suffered a few weeks' delay), the allocation of the remaining houses in the affordable housing schemes and the issues by the Government Company of sale agreements following our taking over the developments from OEM; the marketing and allocation of car parking spaces in the three new car parks which have been built and the sale of post war flats to sitting tenants.

All this change and progress has been possible because of the huge and continuing success that we have been able to achieve in our economy. In addition to funding this transformation of Gibraltar, and massive tax cuts for everyone, this economic success has created jobs for Gibraltarians and non Gibraltarians alike in numbers and of a quality that have never been higher. There have NEVER been MORE Gibraltarians in jobs, those jobs have NEVER been BETTER PAID and it has NEVER been easier for returning graduates to FIND GOOD JOBS in Gibraltar. This is a self evident truth. Anyone who tells you differently is simply not telling you the truth. We await, any time now, the European Court's ruling on our right to have our

own distinct tax system. Even though we are confident of success, this is the biggest single threat that we face.

We must also beware of that breed of local politician for whom only a climate of fear and struggle provides fertile and meaningful political ground. I am the first to do whatever is necessary to uphold and defend our political rights and aspirations as a people. As you have seen over the years, I do not shy away from political battles in defence of Gibraltar, nor from ambitious political agendas and agreements which are in Gibraltar's interests. But I will not lead Gibraltar into continuous political brick walls or dead ends, when there are other more intelligent, effective and successful ways forward.

We now have the modern, non colonial constitutional relations with the UK that the vast majority of Gibraltar wants. We are no longer in a colonial relationship with the UK. That is therefore that until Gibraltar redefines its aspirations. We are no longer on a collective crusade for a non colonial relationship with Britain. Following the new Constitution, Britain has told the world and the UN that its relationship with Gibraltar is not a colonial one. If the UN recognises that then that's great – but we all doubt that it will because of its self evident lack of objectivity and the political realities of Spain's Sovereignty claim that has not and shows no signs of going away. But in the meantime we have and can enjoy our self government and the new relationship with Britain reflected in our new Constitution. And we will mount a campaign in Spain to win the hearts and minds of the new generations of Spanish citizen.

We will also continue to work with the UK and Spain to bring the greatest possible degree of friendship and normality in our relations with Spain, to reach such agreements as we can that are in Gibraltar's interests and to narrow, as far as possible the issues of disagreement and discord with Spain –leaving to one side, but always safeguarding our position on sovereignty and self-determination.

The Government welcomes, and is completely confident and relaxed about the forthcoming establishment in Gibraltar of an Instituto Cervantes. We think it will make a valuable contribution to language and culture in Gibraltar. The same politicians as I referred to a few moments ago see this as a Trojan horse (even though during the election campaign they said they had no objection to the setting up of the Instituto, only to the Government providing premises for it). Why do these politicians have such little faith and trust in their fellow Gibraltarians? What are they worried about? Do they think that Gibraltarians will be converted by exposure to Spanish culture? Anyway, a Trojan horse is only a threat when you are caught unawares, which is hardly Gibraltar's case.

And so, as you will appreciate from this address, and from our election manifesto, despite being in office for 12 years we still have big plans for Gibraltar's further progress and prosperity. A huge amount has been achieved already, but there is much more work to do, much more to achieve. I and my ministerial colleagues are enthusiastic about the agenda ahead of us. No doubt there will again be challenges thrown in our path by events. But we will deal with them as we always do. As the effective and responsible Government of a politically mature country that knows how to govern itself and to face up to and resolve its issues and problems, much as one or two of our neighbours find this galling – just as we are doing right now with the complex New Flame situation.

I would like to finish on a slightly personal note. It has become fashionable for that part of the press associated with our political opponents to speculate that I may not be intending to seek re-election at the end of this term to avoid defeat. As far as I am

aware only the GSLP must find a new leader before the next elections following Mr. Bossano's announcement that he would not fight another election as leader of his party or candidate for Chief Minister.

I have every intention of standing again – unless of course my party sacks me! I believe that come the next elections a majority will, once again consider the GSD to still be the best option for the government of Gibraltar and deserves re election. But even if I believed that we would not win, I would never stand down just to avoid defeat. Just as I relied on the judgement of the majority of my fellow citizens to gain office, so will I always be happy and willing to submit to the electorate's judgement of our performance, whatever the outcome may be. Over the years I have developed a profound respect for the collective judgement of my fellow citizens. That respect does not depend on my being on the winning side of the electorate's judgements. Have a very good 2008.