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PRESS RELEASE

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EU Commission six months frontier deadline expires today

The six month deadline set by the European Commission for the improvement of traffic flow at the border between Gibraltar and Spain has expired today. However, the delays at the border continue in both directions and there has not been any improvement.

It will be recalled that the European Commission sent a visiting mission to the border on 25 September 2013. This was followed on 15 November by a report and letters which included three recommendations to the United Kingdom and three to Spain which were designed to improve the flow across the border.

In its letter to Spain, the Commission pointed out that there was no justification for the intensity of the incoming checks to persons and vehicles leaving Spain and entering Gibraltar. The Commission also told Spain that their checks on vehicles entering Spain needed to be random and based on risk profiling as opposed to the systematic checks to all persons and all vehicles leaving Gibraltar which are often experienced at the border.

The reality is that, six months later, while the Gibraltar Government has virtually completed the work on the recommendations made to it by the European Commission, the Spanish Government has barely started. All that has happened is that they have leaked a drawing of the infrastructural changes planned for the border area.

Moreover, despite the description of the checks to leave Spain as unjustified, these checks continue, causing long delays to traffic into Gibraltar. Meanwhile, the delays to exit Gibraltar continue to be systematic and at the whim of the Spanish authorities, with no evidence of risk profiling checks being carried out.

It is obvious that if Spain had implemented the recommendations made in respect of the nature of the checks that it conducts, there would already have been an improvement in border flow, irrespective of the infrastructural changes which will follow on the ground. More than that, their improved infrastructure alone will change nothing if it is not accompanied by a change in the nature and the intensity of the Spanish controls. HM Government of Gibraltar will be writing to the Commission again setting out everything it has done in the past six months and will continue to do in coming weeks to comply with the Commission's recommendations whilst highlighting the apparent inaction on Spain's part.

The Chief Minister Fabian Picardo and the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia, who are in a London, had the opportunity to review these matters this afternoon with the Minister for Europe David Lidington. They also met Armed Forces Minister Mark Francois yesterday afternoon in order to discuss MOD issues.