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PRESS RELEASE

No: 576/2014

Date: 27/10/2014

Sir Graham Watson to head Gibraltar office in Brussels

Sir Graham Watson has been engaged by the Government to represent Gibraltar in Brussels on a three-year contract.

He will lead and direct the lobbying activities of the Government in the EU capital which includes advising and guiding the Government in connection with the implementation of strategies for the promotion of Gibraltar's interests within the European Union. This will involve both influencing policies at an EU level on matters relevant to Gibraltar as well as protecting the interests and rights of the Gibraltarians as EU citizens. There will be an emphasis on relations with the European Parliament and its MEPs who were elected this year, and also with the new European Commission that will take office next month. The timing could therefore not be better.

Sir Graham will also be responsible for liaising and enhancing communication with the United Kingdom's Permanent Representation to the EU (UKREP). He will also develop working relationships with pressure groups and other bodies which represent EU citizens.

In an additional role to the purely political, Sir Graham will be charged with facilitating the promotion of business in Gibraltar from Brussels.

Sir Graham will currently work from the existing office in Brussels and will move to the new location once the purchase of new premises has been finalised.

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

"The Government is delighted that Sir Graham Watson has agreed to work for Gibraltar and its people. He is already familiar with the issues that Gibraltar faces in Europe having served as one of Gibraltar's MEPs for ten years. This has considerable value since it means that he can hit the ground running and continue from where he left off. I have no doubt that the presence and profile of Gibraltar before the EU institutions will now be raised considerably as a result given that Sir Graham is both highly respected in Europe and also very well known."

For his part, Sir Graham Watson said:

"I am pleased and honoured to have the opportunity to continue in a new role the work I started as an elected representative of the people of Gibraltar. I hope to be able to build on the progress made by the Government of Gibraltar in promoting Gibraltar's political and

business interests at EU level. I look forward to broadening the understanding of Gibraltar's contribution to the EU but also of the indefensible denial of the rights which Gibraltarians are entitled to as EU citizens and which must be respected.”

Sir Graham Watson was conferred the Freedom of the City of Gibraltar on a motion passed unanimously by the Gibraltar Parliament earlier this year and this was presented to him by the Mayor during National Day.

