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**Response to the Leader of the Opposition's New Year Message**

In his New Year's Message, the Leader of the Opposition has once again broken his earlier, televised commitment to clean, reasoned and reputable political debate. However, due to the seriousness of Mr Feetham's remarks and allegations, Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar is left with no choice but to respond.

Mr Feetham has sent a very clear message by opening his broadcast with personal attacks on the Chief Minister, and he seems intent on falsely depicting this government as one that gambles public money on underhand business deals. This represents a new low in the GSD's unscrupulous political strategy that now belongs if not in the sewer then certainly in the gutter.

As for the so-called 'Big Lie', Treasury figures show that there were only £2 million left in the useable cash reserves when this government took office in December 2011. The reason that the amount in those reserves grew so rapidly is that all government projects were stopped immediately in order to allow the reserves to regenerate. Prudent financial management thereafter has allowed our useable cash reserves to grow to what they are today.

In any free and fair democracy, government policies must, of course, be open to reasoned criticism. However, Mr Feetham's personalised defamatory allegations are wholly unacceptable and fly in the face of his promise to keep to reasoned debate.

What is even more deplorable is that Mr Feetham is no longer limiting himself to personalised attacks on the Chief Minister, but is now using the same venom to strike at the Gibraltarian people and their culture as a whole.

Mr Feetham does not mince his words when he suggests the very notion that all Gibraltarians should be entitled to affordable housing is representative of a 'culture of expectation and entitlement' in Gibraltar, which is 'a rot at our core'. This appalling attack on Gibraltarian people, specifically those who have been given an opportunity to purchase an affordable home, exposes the elitist and snobbish mentality of the GSD, and shows just how out of touch they are with the electorate.

The accusation that the Government are espousing this 'culture of entitlement', which is perceived only by the GSD, and that the education and welfare of future generations is being sacrificed in order to provide a 'plush' extension of Number 6 Convent Place, demonstrates their short-sightedness. Government staff must be enabled and resourced to do their jobs properly, otherwise policies cannot be implemented and progress cannot be made. Not to invest in Gibraltar's future would be to condemn ourselves and future generations to the same antiquated ways of doing things that the GSD would like to see reinstated. Indeed, the biggest obstacle to progress is to say 'this is the way it has always been done'.

Contrary to his promise to the electorate, Mr Feetham has begun the year with personal attacks against the Chief Minister and against the Gibraltarian community as a whole. In order to uphold the integrity of the electoral process the Chief Minister takes a further opportunity to extend his offer of a truce to Mr Feetham. As a forward-thinking and democratic society, this is the very least that Gibraltar deserves.