



Deputy Chief Minister

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Spain causes maximum disruption at border**

The Gibraltar Office in Brussels has today been asked to relay information to the European Commission on the latest pedestrian delays at the border caused by the introduction of an Automated Border Control system on the Spanish side. These systems are designed to improve the fluidity of traffic across borders, they are not meant to make things worse.

The Government received initial reports that the Policia Nacional started testing the new system on 16 July at around 12 noon. This created a queue of about 30 minutes for persons to enter Gibraltar on foot. Given the problem, at around 2pm on that day the Spanish authorities ended the tests. These problems arose again at the end of last week when the Policia Nacional started testing the system again. The problem is that they chose to do so at peak time for persons exiting Gibraltar creating delays of up to an hour in the process. This caused considerable disruption to many people, including the elderly and children, who were stuck in a queue to enter Spain in over 30 degrees of heat.

The scenes that were witnessed at the border were shocking and unacceptable.

The tests continued over the weekend and caught up people who were going to the fair in La Linea on their way out of Gibraltar, and again in the early hours when they returned home from the fair. This morning a 30 minute delay started at 7.40am which affected workers and others coming into Gibraltar.

Whilst these have been more recent developments, it should be remembered that, over a period of months, the Spanish authorities also failed to notify Gibraltar in a timely manner of the border changes to their infrastructure, traffic lanes and vehicle checks. In short, they have chosen not to behave as European partners once again.

Commenting on the latest disruption at the border, the Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia said:

“The arrival of the tourist season once again coincides with disruption and delays at the border generated by the Spanish authorities. This time it is the manner in which Spain has chosen to

implement its infrastructure changes that has caused the problem. This is a serious political problem but it also has a very real human dimension. There are thousands of people who live in Spain and who work in Gibraltar who are once again being caught up in these unacceptable delays. Those affected also includes tourists. The irony is that the majority of those affected are Spanish citizens and that it is their own Government that is inflicting this hardship upon them.

In normal circumstances, is only to be expected that such a major change, which affects thousands of people every day, would at the very least have been the subject of a public information campaign on the part of Spain in order to create awareness among those persons who cross the border on a daily basis. This has not happened which means that the element of surprise has served to compound an already serious situation.

The Government will continue to expose Spanish actions at the border for as long as it is necessary. A fuller report, with photographs, statistics and media cuttings will follow what has already been sent to Brussels.”