



# HM Government of Gibraltar

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Deputy Chief Minister

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## Speech for inauguration of World Heritage Site - Tuesday 20 September 2016

### Deputy Chief Minister Dr Joseph Garcia Chair, World Heritage Advisory Forum Gorham's Cave Complex

Your Excellency, Chief Minister, Ministers, distinguished guests from Gibraltar and from abroad.

Welcome to the ceremony to mark the inauguration of the Gorham's Cave Complex as a World Heritage Site.

I was delighted, as a historian, to become involved with the bid for World Heritage Status in 2012, as part of a Government that had been recently been elected into office.

One of the first tasks that we faced was to establish an early slot for the bid. The slot of January 2015 was secured and the nomination dossier was submitted to UNESCO at that time.

This coincided with the commencement of physical works around the site related to the nomination. The investment in the area was funded entirely by the Government of Gibraltar. The works included, but were not limited to, matters like cliff stabilisation and led to a marked improvement in the access to the site.

In this context, I want to thank my colleagues the Chief Minister Fabian Picardo, the Minister for Heritage Steven Linares, the Minister for the Environment John Cortes and the past and present Ministers for Tourism Neil Costa and Samantha Sacramento. In many ways this has been a team effort.

The Gorham's Cave Complex was evaluated during 2015 and early 2016 and the process culminated with its inscription on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites on 15 July 2016.

That important achievement marked the end of one process and the beginning of another.

Reflecting that transition, the Steering Committee that managed the bid and took it forward, which I chaired, has now become the World Heritage Advisory Forum, which I am pleased to continue to chair. The first meeting of that forum took place in Gibraltar today.

The Government, on the recommendation of the Gibraltar Museum, voluntarily set up the International Research and Conservation Committee, known as IRCC for short. That Committee also met today. Its role is to oversee the research and conservation work at Gorham's Cave.



I would like to welcome the Chair and members of the IRCC to Gibraltar and to thank them for their support and their invaluable work.

So welcome to the Chair Professor Minja Yang, who is also here representing UNESCO, also a former Deputy Director of the UNESCO World Heritage Centre in Paris and now President of the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium.

Welcome to Professor Eudald Carbonell who is the Director of the Altapuerca World Heritage Site in northern Spain. The Altapuerca site, which was inscribed in 2000, is the only other Iberian site related to human evolution.

Welcome to Professor Geoff Bailey, who is Anniversary Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at the University of York.

Also to Professor Mina Weinstein Evron from the University of Haifa in Israel. The Professor was involved in the successful inscription of the Mount Carmel World Heritage Site in 2012. This Site and the Gorham's Complex are the only two World Heritage Sites in existence representing the Neanderthals.

Finally welcome to Dr Juan Jose Negro who is a scientist at the Biological Station of Donana. The Donana National Park is a World Heritage Site and has signed a collaboration agreement with the Gibraltar Museum.

All these experts are members of our International Research and Conservation Committee.

We are also very pleased to have with us at this inauguration Ms Helen Maclagan, who is a member of the U.K. National Commission for UNESCO. The Commission works to support the UK's contribution to UNESCO and at the same time brings the benefits of UNESCO to the UK.

On behalf of the Government, I also want to thank the members of the World Heritage Team and of the Steering Committee for their hard work over the years. In particular I thank Clive and Geraldine Finlayson without whose expertise and enthusiasm for this project it would simply not have been possible to achieve.

I want to recall the Government's commitment to the bid for World Heritage Status and to stress now our determination to take the Gorham's Cave Complex forward as a World Heritage Site.

The designation means that the site displays outstanding universal value.

It is a world class site.

We are entrusted to look after it on behalf of humanity - and we will.

Thank you.