

## THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014

The Speaker, Mr Ajilon Casper Nasiu took the Chair at 9.40 am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

*All Members of Parliament were present with the exception of the Honourable Member for West Kwaio.*

### **MOTIONS**

#### Motion No.1

#### Motion on Resolution – Section 103(1) of the Constitution

**Mr Speaker:** Honourable Members according to Standing Order 26(1) notice must be given three clear days before a motion is moved. However, on grounds of public urgency I have given prior permission to the Honourable Prime Minister to move his Motion standing against his name in the Order Paper.

**Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*Acting Minister for Finance*): I beg leave to move that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands in accordance with Section 103(1) of the Constitution, hereby resolves to empower the Honourable Minister for Finance to authorize the issue of monies from the Consolidated Fund for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on public services at a level not exceeding the level of services in the previous financial year, until the expiration of four months from the beginning of the financial year 2015 or the coming into operation of the Appropriation Act 2015, whichever is the earlier.

As you are aware, Members of the new Parliament met on the 9<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 to elect the new Prime Minister of Solomon Islands and from there the new government was established. Without undue delay, the finalization of ministerial positions was concluded in recent days with, of course, two more ministers to be dealt with.

The annual budget is one of the more important tasks of any government. Effective budget strategy requires all ministers to bring to Cabinet a strong understanding of the pressures within their portfolios. And in order to achieve this, ministers need time to consult widely, as well as to work closely with officials from their ministries.

The 2015 financial year will be complex to manage as the economic outlook remains fragile and remains influenced by the suspension of the mining in Gold Ridge and the ongoing reconstruction following the April 2014 floods. This Government is committed to many important reforms including commencing structural reforms to the public service, the tax free system and to focus on opportunities for a more vibrant economy with a broader base. That is not focusing on resource extraction but we will focus on other areas that are more sustainable. We are determined to ensure that the 2015 Budget sets in the motion of this vision. I trust that all Members of Parliament will accept that there are reasonable grounds for the delay of an appropriation bill and why it will be presented to Parliament in early 2015. There are only a few more weeks before the end of 2014.

What this resolution does is to enable the salaries and services which Government is funding to flow unimpeded as of 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2015. When the 2015 appropriation bill is presented in Parliament in early 2015 any expenditure incurred through the provision of section 103(1) of the Constitution will be included in the annual appropriation for each head of expenditure.

It is therefore my humble request and expectation that this resolution would receives unanimous support of all Members of Parliament present here today. I now beg to move that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands in accordance with

section 103(1) of the Constitution hereby resolves to empower the Minister of Finance to authorize the issue of money from the consolidated fund for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on public service at the level not exceeding the level of services in the previous financial year until the expiration of four months from the beginning of the financial year 2015 or the coming into operation of the appropriation act 2015, whichever is earlier.

With these few remarks I wish you all, your families and your constituents a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year 2015. I commend this resolution to the house and I beg to move.

*(The motion is open for debate)*

**Hon JEREMIAH MANELE** (*Leader of Opposition*): Mr Speaker, let me at the outset on behalf of the official Opposition Group congratulate you and the Deputy Speaker on your successful election as presiding officers for the 10th Parliament. As head of our legislature we are confident that you will discharge your important duties and responsibilities with due diligence and impartiality. I wish to assure you of our support and cooperation as you embark on this important assignment.

Secondly, I wish to congratulate the honorable Prime Minister the Member for North East Choiseul on his election as Prime Minister as well as the appointment of his cabinet ministers. However, this side of the House and, of course, the country as a whole are concerned that a critical portfolio, that of the Minister of Finance and Treasury is yet to be filled leaving the Prime Minister to be acting Finance Minister. While the Prime Minister has the experience and background in finance and is capable of handling both portfolios, there is a lot of speculation as to what is going on in the Democratic Coalition for Change Government (DCC). It is vital therefore that a substantive Minister of Finance and Treasury is appointed as soon as possible so that he provides the necessary guidance on the preparation of the 2015 Budget, aligned of course with the new government's priorities for our country.

Be that as it may, let me thank that honourable Prime Minister for tabling the important motion this morning. It is a motion that has the full support of this side of the House. It is justified given the circumstances we are in and we hope that with the passage of this motion, public services including important social services - health and education will continue to be provided to our people in the first quarter of next year. I trust also that the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Developing as well as the Ministry of Finance and Treasury will improve in the processing of payment of allowance, especially for tertiary students, including those studying overseas and, of course, other essential services the government needs to provide including salaries as the Prime Minister has mentioned.

There are also important national projects in the 2014 Development Budget, such as the Tina Hydro project, the Munda International Airport, Suava Bay and various other infrastructure projects that are still being implemented or yet to be completed. How will the DCC Government treat these ongoing national projects? Will these projects continue to be the priorities of the government or not? These priority projects are critical as far as we are concerned for the long term development of our country. I am sure the government will take these priorities onboard and see how best to priorities these projects in the first quarter of next year and, of course, in the substantive budget for 2015.

I also understand that expenditure under the 2014 Development Budget as of November 2014 stands at 78 percent, an increase of 15 percent compared to the 2013 development budget expenditure for the same period. Reforms in our planning and budgetary processes within the last few years have led to improvements on expending the development budget. However, these expenditures need to be verified to ensure value for money and there is actual progress on the ground in the implementation of these projects and programs.

Challenges remain in the implementation of the development budget, which included inadequate planning and technical skills capacity of implementing line ministries. This needs to be strengthened if we are to improve on the implementation

of major investment projects and programs such as Tenaru, Doma and the Suava Bay cannery processing sites. Furthermore, land accessibility including slow land acquisition process and land disputes, as we all know, remains a major impediment to infrastructure development and other major developments in our country. It is important that we pursue land reforms that unlock the development potentials of our country's vast land resources in a way that protects the rights and benefits of resource owners and at the same time, provide some level of economic security for genuine investors.

Finally, as the Government is in the process of finalizing its policy priorities and programs, it is imperative that the 2015 development budget and subsequent budgets focus on a few programs and projects at a time - projects that would bring transformational impacts in terms of jobs and income opportunities for our people and underpin peace, stability and development in our country. Over the years, funds in our development budget have been spread so thinly across many micro projects, making it very difficult to see any impact at the end of the day.

I will reserve my appreciation, gratitude and greetings for the festive season to various stakeholders including my good people of Kia/Hograno/Havulei constituency, when the motion of Sine Die is moved and debated. But for now, with these few remarks, this side of the House fully supports the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister.

**Mr. MANASSEH MAELANGA** (*Leader of Independent*): I also rise to contribute to the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister, the resolution motion in accordance with section 103(1) of the Constitution.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister and the Cabinet Ministers which have been appointed. This side of the House does not have any problem with this motion as we are all aware there is very limited time left to put together the 2015 budget. We are also in support of what the Leader of the Opposition

has said. This side of the House looks forward for the 2015 Budget that will be brought in next year.

What I would like to raise here is it would be good if the Honourable Prime Minister appoints a minister of finance as soon as possible. Since we are now looking forward for the 2015 budget I think it is good to have the Minister for Finance appointed now. That is what I would like to say from this side of this House. If we are looking at having a budget in early 2015 then there is need to have the Minister for Finance appointed. But in terms of this motion of resolution moved by the Prime Minister, this side of the House does not have any problem with it and supports the motion.

**Hon. MILNER TOZAKA** (*Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade*): I too would like to contribute very briefly to the motion and would like to thank the Prime Minister for moving this motion.

First of all, I too would like to join the Honourable Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and Member for Kia/Hograno/Havulei and also the Member of Parliament for East Malaita in congratulating you Mr Speaker on your successful election as Speaker to this Honourable House. In the same manner, I would also like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker as well. I am confident that under your leadership we will be able to achieve the enormous responsibility that is before us in the next four years.

Secondly, I think this Motion is very responsible and I am sure the support of that side of the House as well as the Government side will also be taking that responsibility, because it is an obligation under the Constitution that this Resolution is moved and the Prime Minister has taken on that responsibility by moving this Resolution and I thank him for that responsibility he has taken for us to be able to continue spending money after this financial year ends until a budget is introduced next year. Therefore, I would like to support the motion moved by the Prime Minister seeking the House's approval to allow the DCC led government to continue drawing

on finances until the next budget is approved by this House. As I said, this is a requirement under the Constitution and my Ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade need this provision in order for us to continue to spend and meet urgent outstanding commitments both here in our country and overseas diplomatic offices.

The provision approved is highly recommended not only for my ministry but for the sustainable functioning and operation of other government ministries. This is to ensure, as our Prime Minister has mentioned, our police officers have the right facilities to continue protect our citizens; our health workers also have the right medical supplies and facilities to provide medical services, and to ensure that operation as a government is maintained, particularly in the compliance behaviour of the public in the areas of taxation, bio-security and immigration. These are very important areas that require sustainable resources in order to carry out our responsibilities effectively. I am very happy to support this motion and therefore, in this context we are responsible to take this provision after the end of the financial year to do this.

The budget for next year is another matter. Like the Prime Minister has stressed, it will be guided by the policies of this side of the House which is the Democratic Coalition for Change. The Prime Minister has assured us the process is now in place. He also added that the budget is going to be a very responsible budget. With these few comments I support this resolution.

**Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA** (*Small Malaita*): Mr Speaker, I would also like to join the others in expressing our congratulations to you and your deputy for being elevating to that prestigious office.

My Leader has already expressed the position of this side of the House and so that is our position we have agreed upon and supported. The reasons given by the Prime Minister are very important reasons and I do not have any problem with them. I am sure Ministers are still finding their places and settling down in their offices, and

the Government also as expressed by the Prime Minister is still to put its policies in place. I can understand that to put a budget in accordance with the policies of a new government is not an easy task, and that I recognize, and I think the House should acknowledge that in giving them time to put those together.

But beside that, I think the architects of the National Constitution have foreseen this kind of situation happening and that is why they have included section 103(1) in the National Constitution to ensure we do not have a constitutional crisis. Because if Parliament does not pass this resolution, you can be sure, we are going to have a crisis. And the crisis is not going to be only constitutional, but also financial and government crisis because the government will have no funds to spend. The funds that the last House appropriated have been used up by 31<sup>st</sup> December. We have to have funds for the normal operations of the government, wages have to be paid, school fees for tertiary students have to be paid, government programs, activities and services have to continue. It is for that reason it is very important that the House approves this Resolution.

A point raised by the Leaders of Opposition and Independent is what I want to reiterate. I think it would be really good and also very important that the substantive minister is appointed as soon as possible. I do not see any problem with the Prime Minister choosing anyone on the government side to hold that position. The Prime Minister, I would like to encourage you to quickly appoint a substantive minister for finance because we cannot have this ministry go without a substantive minister in place. With these few remarks, I would like to express my full support for this motion.

**Mr MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*): Mr Speaker, I want to add my voice to the chorus of congratulations that is due your way, representing one minority group and perhaps our smallest province. It is a big thing that you have been elected to this important position and I heartily congratulate you and your people for achieving this outcome. Also for your deputy, whom I am sure will ably support you and deputize

for you and of course, the Honourable Prime Minister for his election. The process that we came through, apart from the shooting incident at Mbike Island that has shaken us a bit, the process has been a relatively healthy one. It is really sad that that tragic event had occurred. But, of course, that matter is now in the hands of the police.

I was also listening to the honourable Leader of Opposition, and I am very encouraged with how he speaks and contributes. It gives an indication of the kind of cooperation and collaboration this Tenth Parliament will work on. His debate is constructive because he looked at these issues and gives a good policy approach to them. I am happy to hear that from my brother, the Member for Kia/Havulei/Hograno/Katova. Those of you on the other side are our brothers.

*(laughter)*

In so far as this motion is concerned, it is straightforward, as stated by the former Minister for Finance. We have now come to the end of the year and there is nowhere for us and with a new government in place, it needs some time to put its policy priorities together and a budget to reflect those priorities.

In saying that, I would like to say, and we have said this many times when those of us here were on that side during the previous government that we must now also heed our own advice. I am sure the Member for Small Malaita can tell us how difficult that is because of the many demands on the public purse. Yet, what is clear is that the Solomon Islands Government cannot continue on business as usual footing for much longer. We may continue on it for another year or two, but we are working on a very, very unsustainable pathway and so some major sectors must give. And it is these areas of giving that we have to seriously think about. The areas that must give may affect us as Members. It might affect constituencies, it might even affect some important sectors in our communities in the immediate short term. And so it is something we have to seriously consider. Of course, it will become much clearer when the government finally puts its priorities together and give more focus on what

is strategic in those priorities. And with constructive criticism and debate coming from the two sides of the house, I am sure it will help the government to sharpen more its focus to help the economy create the jobs we want our people have. That will also help government finances to improve in the long run.

In so far as the motion is concerned, it is straightforward, and since the other two sides of the House supported it, this side also supports the resolution. Thank you.

**Hon DOUGLAS ETE** (*Deputy Prime Minister/Minister for Home Affairs*): I support this motion by virtue of what the Constitution says. In terms of the government, the Prime Minister has set out the path on which the government would drawdown in the next few months to come up with a policy framework, and that policy framework demands reform. The government is going to go down that line. We are going to put it down within the next 50 to 100 days.

The situation the country is facing now, which my former Minister for Finance knows is precarious. We are fighting debt servicing as one of the major pressures under the Honiara Agreement. There is no growth this year- the third quarter of this year is zero. The current account of government in terms of GDP is 9.5percent. I am stressing this so that the 50 Members of Parliament really know the economic situation of our country.

We will be working hard as a government and supporting the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in working towards sorting this out as to how we should be spending money. This Government will not be taking money allocated for the Munda Airport and putting it in different sectors when Parliament already approved it. I am saying this because as the former chairman of the public account committee, I had the opportunity to look into the bucket or money. We will be doing things that the country does not want. The confidence in this Government would be reflected widely in this country to ensure that this country moves forward and bolster the growth in this country in the next one to three years. I want to say that it would not be an easy

ride if we were to get this current out from these current pressures that we are facing right now.

So with that we would support this Government and the Prime Minister, Thus I am happy that the issue of the appointment of the remaining ministries will come, we will do it in due course as the Prime Minister has already assured the country.

All in all my point is, it would not be an easy thing to do; given the current state of the economy at present, however, all of us have to work hard to build the country and we will build this country in the spirit of a true Solomon Islander, we must build this country for the benefit of the people of this country. With that Mr speaker, thank you indeed.

**Hon JOHN MANENIARU** (*Minister for Fisheries & Marine Resources*): Thank you for the opportunity to also add my voice in singing the chorus in support of the motion of the Prime Minister which he moved and is before us for debate. At the outset I would like to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, for your successful election to the esteemed post of the legislature of this country. I would also like to congratulate your deputy for his successful election as well.

As part of the Government I fully support my Prime Minister on this motion as it is a straight forward motion. The point I would like to register here is to encourage the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Most of us here came through the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. The budget will come proper in 2015 and that is the budget we can promise our people. The challenge is let us make a difference from the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

To us 50 members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, our people and country are looking forward to receiving this budget but the question they have on us leaders is whether we are going to make it a better one or a bad one for them. That is the perception our people have on us. I have full trust and confidence on the 50 Members of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I know that we are capable of making the change that our country and our people aspire and waiting for and that is why they voted us back into this honorable chamber for this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. That is all I wanted to register in

encouraging all of us the 50 Members of this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. With that I support the motion.

**Mr PETER SHANEL AGOVAKA** (*Central Guadalcanal*): Firstly I would like to congratulate you on your elevation to the position of the Speaker of Parliament; one of the privilege position of the country. Secondly, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for moving this motion, the Motion of Resolution under section 103(1) of the constitution.

I listened to the Leader of Opposition, the Member for Aoke/Langalanga and the Minister of Foreign Affairs contributing to the debate of the motion and it seems that we all are in support of this motion. My debate will be short as a Member of Parliament representing one of the constituencies that contributed much to the economy of this country.

As we all know the government has just formed and ministers have been sworn in, and I think it is important for Parliament to give time to Ministers to contribute effectively on how their ministries will want to run their budget and activities. Therefore, the need to consider properly the 2015 budget, and this resolution allows us to spend money until the next first quarter of next year to allow the continuous delivery of goods and services to our people. Some people have mentioned the need for health and medical services as well as education to continue. For instance, by next month schools will start and the need for the whole public sector to continue. The salaries of teachers, police officers, medical workers, public servants must continue and that is the importance of passing this resolution so that it will allow the government to spend according to the Constitution.

One other thing also mentioned by the Deputy Prime Minister is that the PAC in the last House was informed that our country is heading towards negative economic growth. That is something this government would like to reverse that negative growth into positive growth. And so it is important that our budget must be

considered seriously so that what we do next year reflects how we grow and drive our economy for the benefit of our people in this country.

I am not going to speak very long but we must reverse this negative economic growth, and it is important for the government to sit down and seriously consider our budget to reverse that downturn. With these few remarks I support the motion.

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I just want to stand up and say thank you. I acknowledge the Leader of Opposition, the Leader of the Independent Group, colleague Ministers, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister for Fisheries and Member for Central Guadalcanal for contributing to the motion. The objective of the motion is clear and that is the need to continue government services from the 1<sup>st</sup> of Jan as the fiscal year ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2014 and from there onward there is no budget for us to continue with essential services to our people, and so it is incumbent upon this parliament, it is the responsibility of this Parliament as a whole, it is a constitutional requirement under section 103 that if the budget is not ready, Parliament has the responsibility to authorise the Minister of Finance and Treasury to draw funds from the consolidated fund. We acknowledge the support of everyone who have spoken on this motion and have seen the need for that and have rendered their support.

We take the advice on the need to appoint the substantive Minister of Finance and Treasury and we will exactly do that. By early next week we should have a substantive Minister of Finance at post to take care of the ministry and, of course, the huge task of putting together the 2015 budget.

As rightly pointed out by ministers that have spoken, the government is in a hurry to put together the joint policies statements of the various political parties that make up the government. As you know, it is not only three political parties but there are other political parties that merged into the parties that have been registered and so there will be a need to massage into the joint policies statements the views of the other smaller parties that have been merged into the three major coalition partners. We are determined to do that as early as possible and it is important that we have that in

place in order to direct the content of the budget and the direction the budget is going to take. It is important as you know that the budget is the policy of governments reduced to figures; it sets the direction. And if we do not have that policy statement in place in time it will be business as usual. We do not want to do that, we really want to redirect the economy.

On ongoing projects, the Government is fully cognizant and aware of major economic development projects, especially on Malaita and Guadalcanal which are part and parcel of the ongoing peace process that started a long ago when we established the Ministry of Peace and National Unity to drive the process. And as we progress on consolidating the peace process, coming into play, the real issues that actually drive this country down the path of ethnic crisis. And there is lack of economic opportunities in our other provinces. As we all know, everything happens in Guadalcanal and so this song, "Guadalcanal sweetim evriwan" and so everyone comes to Guadalcanal becomes a reality. And it was very sweet but later becomes sour. I think that is the reality we faced as a country and together we would like to tackle that problem head on. And we did that and we thank past governments for realizing and acknowledging the fact that we need to spread major economic development projects from the island of Guadalcanal.

We acknowledge there are three or four major projects on Malaita that ground breakings for them have already happened. We will look more into them that if there are any outstanding issues to be settled before we go into them, we will do that, we will take it head on because we cannot just leave it. We want to assure this Parliament and the people of this country that we will make every effort within our fiscal position of the government to address the outstanding major projects raised by the Leader of Opposition. We thank you for raising that. Of course, the continuation of essential services is directly within the objective of this motion to have government continue with the supply of essential services.

We fully support the call by the Leader of Opposition on the value for money. I think that is something dear to the heart of this Government. We will need to really

look at this, and ask some serious questions, even the structure of the public service - the delivery mechanisms, are they right ones, are they mechanisms we deliver with minimum cost but maximise the output that we wanted. These are serious questions that we need to ask. And there are a range of questions that we will ask ourselves as a group in the process of formalizing the 2015 budget. This will be reflected in our joint policy statements. So value for money is something dear to our heart. Of course, we will rely very heavily on the close scrutiny eye of the Opposition to lead and guide the Government when it comes to spendings and so forth.

We acknowledge land acquisition problem, and it will be one of the major activity the Government is going to pursue, and rightly so because developments do not happen in the sky but on land. As we often mention in Parliament, the land reform program that was started by the last regime was stalled. But it is something we are going to pick up again because we believe it is very important and we will continue to do that.

In regards to economic growth statistics we have been experiencing in the country, we do realize that we are staggering and are struggling with the closure of the Gold Ridge and our heavy reliance on the unsustainable harvesting of our forest resources. This is something we know all along in this Parliament. And as expressed widely on this floor of this Parliament we need to shift our resources to more sustainable areas, which are tourism, fisheries, agriculture and so on. This is widely canvassed on this floor of Parliament and is becoming the question of "man talem duim na".

This Government is committed and if we need to put resources where our mouth is we have to do it. An example is reef fish. We have an abundant stock of reef fish and all it needs to do now is to facilitate it. There is a set up at Didao that is ready to export fish. Probably what we need to do is to give some more resources to it so that it is able to bring in more fish from our outer islands. The concept is already there that we could just assist. It will be very encouraging to see three times a week for a plane from Australia taking our fish abroad. That would be really heartening. We

would like to see that happen, and we have abundant stock of reef fish but we are not really going down that path.

In summary, this Government will be seriously focusing on the supply side of the economy. On the demand side we really need more roads and so forth but we really need to look at our capacity to be able to take on those responsibilities in the long run. It has to be sustainable.

Depending on aid donors is good and we thank them so much for what they are doing. But at some point in time this country will have to learn to stand on its own two feet and take up the responsibility to finance our own roads, bridges and our infrastructures. I look forward to that day. If that objective is 50 years ahead, I would be very sorry. All of us should have that concern. We need to bring that day closer when the Solomon Islands Government will be able to finance major infrastructure programs, and I do not see any reason why we cannot when the strength of this country are all there – fish, land, tourism and so on. I think we are just not doing enough to improve our capacity to be able to do that.

I thank everyone who have contributed positively and constructively to this motion. I beg to move that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands in accordance with section 103(1) of the Constitution hereby resolves to empower the Honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury to authorise the use of money from the consolidated fund for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on public services at a level not exceeding the level of these services in the previous financial year until the expiration of the four months from the beginning of the financial year 2015 or the coming into operation of the Appropriation Act 2015, whichever is the earlier. I beg to move Mr Speaker.

*Motion is passed.*

## **MOTIONS**

## Motion of Sine Die

**Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*Prime Minister*): I stand to move the motion of sine die, that at the adjournment of Parliament on Friday 19<sup>th</sup> December 2014, the present meeting of Parliament shall be concluded and Parliament shall then stand adjourned sine die.

I am very humbled to stand in front of colleague members of Parliament and our people listening out to take the opportunity to thank the people of this country. They have been praying. We professed ourselves to be a Christian country, followers of the teachings of Jesus Christ. There are many practicing Christians throughout this country who have been petitioning God, not only leading to the General Elections but they have been petitioning God for supporting governments of the day. They do that quietly, we do not see them. Some of them are blind people, lame people; they are not people of big standing. But these are people who believe in the God that we worship in this country. They continuously do that without failure. We as Christians acknowledge the fact that God is not blind or deaf but hears the prayers and petitions from our people. And I would like to thank them, first of all, through the churches established throughout this country who are members of the Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) and the Solomon Islands Full Gospel Association (SIFGA). There are other religious groups in the country that also believe in God, who in their own way in their own villages continue to do that. I would like to thank them for that. I think it will be remiss of me if I do not acknowledge them right from the beginning.

The overwhelming support for the Government nationwide touched our hearts. Ordinary people are speaking and are happy about the outcome of the Parliament's vote on bringing into existence the Democratic Coalition for Change Government. But it will be remiss of me as well too standing here not acknowledging the effort that the NCRA Government has put into place. That is a government in place that has done a lot of good things. It is easy in politics to stand up here and point fingers at each other

and rubbishing each other. That is easy – may be to score political points. But that is not how this Prime Minister will lead this country. We attribute credit where credit is due, and so we acknowledge the many good things that the NCRA Government under two prime ministers in the last term of Parliament.

We have gone through the democratic process and our people have made their choices. Again, we acknowledge as well the weakness of the Political Party Bill, which I will touch on later on and which we cannot rely on as a framework to make some very big claims on this floor of Parliament as to who should be in government. We need to acknowledge that across the floor of this Parliament. I just want to make those introductory comments. Thank you very much former ministers of NCRA Government and the former Prime Minister who unfortunately cannot make it to Parliament because of the verdict passed by the people of Gizo/Kolombagara. But he has led a government and we need to acknowledge that.

I would again like to do the normal thing; I have done that yesterday, but I would like to join the others who have taken the opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, in your successful election to the office of the Speaker of Parliament and head of the Legislature. It is a very important position and honour to have you up there. As was rightly pointed out by some Members who have spoken earlier, your elevation to that office speaks volume of the trust and confidence that Parliament has in your ability to progress the development of our parliamentary democracy as head of the Legislature. Of course, you will be deputized by a very competent Deputy Speaker, who has passion for reform. You will find him very useful in driving reforms to our democratic process, especially one that is driven by the National Parliament as one of the arms of our government system under the Westminster system that we have adopted at independence. I also extend my heartiest congratulations to the newly elected Deputy Speaker.

Our parliamentary democracy has come a very long way. Many of us would attest to the fact that we are progressing in that regard. And it is good to see that Democracy is alive and well in this country. Other neighbouring countries close by

are suffering from democracy. They may have law and order but the underlying principles that we agreed upon with the United Nations and other democratic countries and values that are dear to our hearts as a member of the democratic family. Democracy is alive and well in Solomon Islands. It is something that we should be proud of. Although we acknowledge that more needs to be done in that area so that we fully realise the spirit and objective of democracy that should permeate through everything that we do, even in the policies of government and how we implement things. Our minds should be guided by the principles of democracy in implementing things. That is why it is no coincidence that one of the pillars this government stands on is democracy. We called ourselves the Democratic Coalition for Change. I also acknowledge that the party on the other side also upholds that policy.

As far as Parliament as an institution is concerned, there is a lot we can do to polish our version of the Westminster system. Let us not take it like lock stock and barrel. I thank the founders of this country for not adopting lock stock and barrel of the Westminster system but we have our version closer to it. I believe the ongoing reform agenda will move us closer to the ideal but, of course, tailoring that version, the system to our needs.

I believe we must bring in the new standing orders to Parliament and continue to improve the way parliamentary committees carry out their responsibilities as extensions of Parliament. As you know, the parliamentary committees are very important part of our parliamentary democracy of the country. They continue to meet even though Parliament is not meeting. So in effect, when Parliament does not sit, Parliament continues to engage with the people of this country through the committees of Parliament. We have to look at that to improve the effectiveness of the committees to engage with our people. There may be a need to come up with an Act of Parliament to properly empower the committees so that they have some teeth to bite. Right now it is not very clear, although by convention we have adopted the practices of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in regards to our parliamentary practices.

This and many more will occupy your term as head of the legislature Mr Speaker and I take this opportunity to wish you well as you take up the responsibility of the office, and please be assured of my Government's unreserved support in our joint endeavor to improve the quality of governance in our country.

I would also like to take this opportunity in front of all colleague members of Parliament, because most of us are returnees, to commend the outgoing Clerk to Parliament for years of outstanding service to our parliamentary democracy. She has proven to Solomon Islanders that as a woman she can provide tough competition in the race for higher office with any men. She has proven that. To poll 23 out of a male dominated house of 50 is a great achievement indeed. In other words, 23 out of 50 members of this honorable house including some members who helped to establish this Government believe that it is time to give woman a chance to prove that they are just as capable as men to be entrusted with the responsibility of higher public office. Of course, this was not to be under the democratic process that eliminated her, but I want to salute her and thank her for her outstanding performance. I wanted to assure this nation and especially the women population of this country that her elimination does not in any way undermine the commitment of my Government to recognize the contribution of women in leadership. We will continue to pursue this objective with vigour. The former clerk like other women are too good a material to be wasted and we believe she will be better suited in other areas of public office.

We are yet to finalize the appointment and posting of senior government officials. I believe a lot of Permanent Secretaries' contracts have lapsed but are extended to March to help the Government settle down. And we are expecting that suitably qualified women will be considered to some of these posts. So apply when the posts are advertised.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all Members of Parliament for making it through the elections. I think most of us are returnees. If you come in as a new comer, it is not easy. Some of us have gone through five elections now. We were battered and bruised but we came back. It has not been easy. Some have to

endure allegations that borders on defamation of character. But I guess that is part of leadership and part of this “game” of politics. Game, is it? I do not know. I find it in my own constituency. If an analysis is to be carried out on the kind of issues that were tendered during the campaign, high on the scale are issues relating to the use of rural community development funds. People seemed to be bogged down on that thing. One candidate who contested against me put up charts starting from there to here, the whole wall is filled with charts, he outlined all the funds on the charts, and I was alleged to have misused \$33million. So we are bruised and battered but here we are - we survived. But I congratulate the new ones that came through. You probably have done the right things and so that is why you came through.

There may be some elements of truth in some of the things that were said against us during the campaigns but my concern is that such thinking is narrowing down our political thinking. That is the political thinking that was canvassed during the elections and so people only just talked about and dwell on those things as if that is the only national issue. At the end of the day with such an approach, members are elected into Parliament not on serious policy issues but rather on the use of the Rural Constituency Fund. If that is the premise upon which people are elected, then we must start to learn. Not only that but we would be in danger of narrowing our people’s thinking and creating a situation of dependency. We will be expecting our people to line up in our houses for their basic needs. And we should not blame them because that was what was canvassed during the elections and so people only think about money from Members of Parliament. And so we expect it to be like that because that is how campaigns were conducted and the issues tendered were that. This can be very, very unhealthy as we will not be able to sleep very well because we wake up to people lining outside our houses. I think there are lessons to be learned from this experience. The next election is 2018 and we would be fools not to heed the lessons of 2014.

I believe this Parliament has the duty to ensure that regulations to the RCDF Act is finalised to properly regulate the use of development funds channeled through

the constituencies and entrusted to our good lady, the Minister for Rural Development and Indigenous Affairs and of course, the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, the Prime Minister's Office and the whole Cabinet. There has to be some real change in attitude and that we advocate change so be it. A framework will come and it is something that will affect all of us, all 50 Members of Parliament. It is something that we would say the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament is different. We want to do something different from the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

On that, I appreciate the many views expressed by the public on this issue, which will be taken up seriously in designing this framework, especially the regulations to the RCDF Act. From what was discussed, there may be the need to even amend that Act so that transparency and accountability is clear to our people, and especially people who continue to talk about these issues and they are entitled to talk about it because it is their money.

The other lesson learned is the weakness of the Political Parties Integrity Act 2014, which failed miserably to achieve its full intention or rather address the issues that plague politics all these years - political instability. Political Parties and all the work they are doing are still very vulnerable under the current legal framework. They are not protected at all, not at all. And this is an insult to political parties that worked so hard and invest very heavily on candidates only to find them resigning from their political parties. But this Act allows it. In fact, how the Act is structured says 'you can continue to do that'. That is what this Act is saying. When it is passed on the floor of Parliament it allows people to resign from other political parties to join another political party. It still allows people to change their political beliefs and join groups that appeal to them, even at the last minute. And we are not blaming them but it is the Act that allows such things to happen.

And so it is incumbent on us whether we still allow such things to continue to happen or not. When this bill came to Parliament that side of the House really came out very, very strongly. We were saying, "Let us do it properly first before using it in the elections" fell on deaf ears. It was pushed in. And very interestingly the group

that pushed for it have all gone independent too. That side of the House - understandable because we strongly opposed it and therefore we go independent. But it does not speak well of the government of the day then passing that Bill and then going independent instead. We did not even believe it. And so it casts doubt on who is actually driving this thing. Is it Cabinet? Is it some factions of Cabinet?

I am talking about lessons to be learnt - we come through it and we are here now and every power is given into our hands to do something to sort it. Political parties are not protected, as I have said already because resignation of members from other political parties is allowed under the Act and so our colleagues are doing it.

This Government is going to review the Act with the view to addressing its weaknesses and we are hoping that the 2018 Election will be more rewarding for political parties. We are all looking forward to the day when our people elect Members of Parliament based on good policies, not on how much they spend during their campaigns. That is what we should aim towards. We should go and preach policies so that people elect policies into Parliament and not individuals. We need to design a framework that ensures that that happens. And that is what we will aim towards in the 2018 Election. By that time maybe some of us would have retired.

That said, I would like to remind all of us since we are all here that probably it is not good crying over spilled milk. All of us have won the elections, we are here now and our people have high expectations on the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

That said, I would like to remind all of us since we are all here that to be elected into Parliament amongst more than 460 contestants during the last election is a big honour bestowed upon each of us by our people based on, I guess what we have been telling them during our campaigns. And you probably would still remember in your minds that I am saying this and that to my people and that is why they have elected me to this House, and so we probably expect this in the next budget. And to you as well, Mr Speaker! We are delivering as 50 Members of Parliament to our people. And it is an honour, I believe, that we have a collective and individual responsibility to uphold with the highest respect.

Indeed, we have a collective and individual responsibility to ensure that we do not bring disrepute to the dignity of Parliament. We have that responsibility, that duty to ensure that people look at us and say, "Yes, the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament is different, these people want to make a difference to the reputation, dignity and integrity of Parliament". And this is about us. This is just a building, it is inanimate and we are animate. We move, we think, we behave and we conduct ourselves in this House and it is us that responsibility lies on each and every one of us.

We must develop a mature attitude and not be blinded by our narrow political interests. We hear these terms used widely on the floor of parliament in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. We traded those terms at each other. In that respect, I have already heard people starting to talk about a vote of no confidence in six to nine months. This is a small world and we are hearing stories like that. I do not know for what reasons but I want to appeal for mature attitudes.

The people of this country expect so much from Members of this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, and we have the responsibility not to let them down. I want to appeal to these people, and I say generally that we need to grow up from our *political nappies* and act like mature leaders in this House. If there is anything this country needs from us, all of us, it is for us to put the interest of the country before our own narrow preconceived interests. (I want to say that in the strongest term). This is a tough ask, I understand, considering the culture that has already taken root in our brand of politics in Solomon Islands.

The general feeling amongst our people is that the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament and especially the formation of this Government, is that it will bring new hope. And I want to add that it is not only this government, it is not only the DCCG Government but it is also the opposition side of the House - you have a great responsibility to ensure this government acts responsibly. That is your duty! I will only respond to issues when I see them undermining the interest of Solomon Islanders. Petty politics is something, and let us not allow things like that to cloud our minds to the general,

bigger objective of delivering to the people of this country. People expect us and are looking at us to bring new hopes, so let us not ruin the name of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

In the previous parliament there were two prime ministers and the previous one was almost three. Are we going to continue this trend? And if you look back on the reasons why governments fall down, it is only because of petty, little, personal private interest of people. We need to grow out of that. We must not allow our petty, political and economic interest to undermine our collective effort to deliver our people's expectations. This Prime Minister is grown up. This is his third time and I think he is much clever enough now. In dealing with issues, it is my determination to ensure that this Government survives for the next four years. I will make sure that that happens.

There are a number of major projects on Malaita and Guadalcanal that need to be delivered. We have heard that from the Leader of Opposition - it sinks and we are fully aware of it, and it must happen. Thank you for the ground breakings; they have happened already opening the way. Sometimes we say the difficult parts have been already done. I want to acknowledge that - to negotiate and do those things so that the land is ready. That has already been done. It is incumbent on us now - this side of the House to deliver.

I listened out for the Auluta Basin and thought there is land dispute there, but there is no longer any land dispute there. We were told everything has already been sorted out. I want to make sure that if funds are allocated in the next budget, I want to see palm oils growing there; not meetings or allowances and things like that. Change! Change of attitude must start from the village too - the chiefs too must change as well as all of us. If we want major projects to happen, let us have some change in attitude. This Government is fully committed. If we need to allocate resources to major projects in Malaita, then it must go towards doing the work there. Not just to talk about those things. The time to talk about those things is over. Let us move ahead, and as I said, I want to acknowledge the great work the NCRA Government and its ministers have done in breaking the ground so that they are now soft for us to go and do the work.

The Russell Islands proposed development was left in limbo as well because of issues surrounding the legitimacy of payment to the previous owners of the plantation. There is a tough decision that we need to make. We need to weigh some things here. I do not know how much is involved – maybe \$30million? What is \$30million compared with billions that we can get from opening the opportunity in the Russell Islands? We dwell over it. Let us think, let us move. It was left in the limbo. Maybe the Member for Savo/Russells must cross over to this side of the House so that you can help us do the work. This Government is committed to do that – to revisit that project and weigh the opportunities there. Are we going to cry over \$30million or the billions of dollars that will come out from opening the opportunities in Russell Islands? Let us weigh those. I think we have not been making decisions and so we are not moving. A decision has to be taken whether to be tangled up with these issues and do nothing or to sort it out and move on with the proposed development. Opportunities are sitting idle and nothing is done.

Our potential is in tourism, fisheries, agriculture and livestock. Locations throughout the country must be aggressively pursued if we are to realistically address the supply-side strategy to grow this economy. We cannot progress if we are bogged down and preoccupied with strategies that undermine the government and undermine all of us. It ends up with the Prime Minister just sitting down and talking about managing numbers than managing the economy. It is unhealthy for the moving of this country. I do not want to be in that kind of situation. And I sympathize with former prime ministers who were pushed to that position sitting down and worried about who else is going to cross the floor, who is going to come over, how much do they need. We are bogged down with issues like that and forget the reason why we are elected into this Parliament, which is to address the needs of our people. Instead we are involved in petty politics. So much for that.

As you would know, the Government is trying to settle down after being elected to office. With the resolution now passed, we can now proceed to get into

serious business of governing. In terms of housekeeping (it has become a favorite word of this side and so we are using it now), I am pleased to announce that we have been able to complete all, but two Cabinet line ups, with all the ministers already taken their oaths before His Excellency. As I have assured the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Independent Group, we will work on finalizing the substantive Minister of Finance and the Minister of Police in days to come. We will do that.

I want to assure the people that we are ready to work. The lineup, once completed, is a reflection of my government's commitment to not 'business as usual' - nonsense, which I guess marks the way matters of economic management and governance of our economy have been handled. It is not an easy thing and it is not something that government alone can do. We also need help and encouragement from the other side of the House. And that includes the appointment of personnel to the Prime Minister's political office, which over the years has only been used as a place to horde supporters of political groupings. I can understand the reason. It is a tough one, but we need to slowly massage that through the various groups so that we come to some understanding. My intention is to have the office manned by people with integrity and appropriate qualifications to drive the government's development strategies to meet the expectations of our people. These are the people very close to the government in driving policies, and not people carrying papers running here and there, come back carry the same papers and go around again, who look very busy but are really not pushing anything. I want people who sit there, make decisions and give sound advice in moving the government forward, and not people who seek advice from another person to advise him on how to advise the government. And so it is going round and round in circle. For that, I am happy with the kind of people who have made indications. These are people of high calibres. We have two or three PhDs who have applied and we will seriously look at them to man one of the offices; and that is probably the Policy Evaluation Unit. And we are also looking at

recommendations made by the three major political parties and other smaller parties that make up this government.

I acknowledge that I also have the duty to ensure that members of my Cabinet observe the highest level of discipline in the performance of their official duties in the most understandable and civilized manner. As I have assured many people already, this is probably a different person from that person who was elected in 2006 and who suffered on this floor of Parliament. It is a great turnaround and I want to assure the people of this country that we will conduct the business of government in a more understanding and civilized manner that will not unnecessarily trample on people's foot so that we can move forward. I want to assure my colleagues that reshuffling or removal of ministers must be seen as a last resort to the management of the Cabinet. I want to develop a high degree of trust and confidence in the team. We also acknowledge, and this is something we should do in reciprocation as well, that if you want my trust, you have to give me your trust as well.

We also acknowledge that the people of this country are expecting much from the government and we are obliged not to let them down. Our immediate priority will be to put together the Coalition's joint policy statements. Our officials have been hard at work and have produced a first draft for the group's scrutiny. As soon as this is finalised, we should be able to launch it and use it as talking points with all stakeholders. We are open to inputs from the public and interested stakeholders, and we have already received a few submissions from stakeholders and sectors, which is very encouraging.

As we are approaching the festive season, I want to conclude this introduction to the motion by wishing all the people of this country a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I will be making a nationwide address to our people in wishing them well. But as an introduction to that address, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I also want to extend the same to his Excellency the Governor General, your office, the Speaker of Parliament and your Deputy and staff of Parliament, the Chief Justice, the Ministers of the crown, the

Leader of the Opposition Group, the Leader of the Independent Group, colleague Members of Parliament, our development partners, the Special Coordinator of RAMSI, the public service, our Police Force and the supporting RAMSI contingent, all our doctors and nurses in hospitals and clinics throughout the country, teachers and all our churches, church leaders, chiefs and village leaders in all the 5,000 plus villages throughout the country, a very Merry Christmas. We wish them all and may this Child of Bethlehem who is born every Christmas gives everyone joy and peace that can only come from Him and Him alone.

I want to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December 2014, the present meeting of Parliament shall conclude and Parliament shall then stand adjourn sine die.

*(The open is open for debate)*

**Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE** (*Leader of the Opposition*): Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the motion of Sine Die moved by the Honourable Prime Minister. I wish to thank the Prime Minister for moving this motion, an important opportunity as you have said, Sir, for Members of Parliament to raise issues of interest to them and their people and, of course, Solomon Islands as a country.

Let me take of all take the opportunity to sincerely thank the chiefs, women, youth and church leaders and, of course, the rest of my people of Hograno/Kia/Havulei and Katova; from Bolitei to Fanavi for their trust and confidence in electing me as their Member of Parliament to the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament and hopefully beyond. I look forward to working closely with all of them through our soon to be finalized constituency development plan, so that we can improve the livelihoods and quality of life for our communities and, of course, contribute to the development of Isabel province and Solomon Islands as a whole. I also wish to assure them that I will try my best to provide that effective voice for them in Parliament.

I also express my profound appreciation to the Solomon Islands People's Democratic Coalition for their trust and confidence in endorsing me as the Leader of Opposition. As a first timer in Parliament, this is a huge responsibility but I am committed to perform my duties to the best of my abilities.

The Opposition has appointed its shadow ministers to different portfolios; most of these members are former ministers in the NCRA Government. These are very experienced members and we hope to positively contribute to the development of this country. We will strive to provide and play an effective role as the 'watchdog' for 'check and balance' for the government of the day. In this regard, I wish to remind our distinguished cabinet ministers that cabinet is answerable to Parliament, and I hope that you will seriously undertake your assigned responsibilities and provide the necessary political direction for your ministries to implement government priorities and programs for the benefit of our people. And I think the honourable Prime Minister has made reference to the importance of this point.

As the DCC Government is in the process of finalising its priorities and programs in the next 50 days, I wish to make a few observations and outline issues that are worth considering.

Solomon Islands has been a sovereign state since attaining its political independence on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978. However, it has not yet fully achieved economic independence. The question that demands a verdict is, what has the country achieved since independence 36 years ago? Is it better off? Are the people of Solomon Islands better off? Or to put it in another way, has Solomon Islands achieved its full development potential as a sovereign state during its 36 years of political independence? I believe Solomon Islands is yet to achieve its full development potential despite its 36 years of political independence. The big question is, how do we move forward as a country? I think the Prime Minister has made reference to some of the approaches and issues that we need to address.

Before we can look forward, we must first look back to learn from the lessons of the past and acknowledge the stark realities of today to help us pave the way to our

collective future. The following are some of the key impediments that have hindered progress and development in Solomon Islands that will need to be addressed by any government to move the country forward.

First, certainly Solomon Islands need visionary and ethical leadership. The country needs sustained visionary and ethical leadership at the political leadership level and other levels of leadership in the country, including the provincial and local levels. There is a disconnect among the various levels of government of political leadership. Of course, we do subscribe to the view that we need strong national leadership and the Prime Minister mentioned that he has that. It is important though that he delivers on it in terms of real progress and prosperity for Solomon Islands.

Our country needs one single unifying vision that affirms national identity and provides the foundation for a long term national development agenda of the country. The country needs a long term vision supported by a long term national development strategy that addresses questions such as, 'what kind of Solomon Islands do we wish to see in 50 years' time'? Certainly we need a long term plan that aligns national and provincial strategies to achieve the key objectives and outcomes, underpinning the long term vision for the country and one that accommodates as appropriate the 17 sustainable development goals that are now being proposed to succeed the millennium development goals or MDGs. This means that we will need to review the current national development strategy 2011 to 2020, taking into account that we are falling behind in terms of achieving most of the MDGs.

The other issue is the dependency syndrome, a serious concern and impediment to development. This is a concern both at national level where expectation has been created over the past two decades of handouts that has taken away from our people the initiative to work and generate resources themselves. As well as the international level where the danger of over reliance on development assistance could lead to worsening of the country's efforts to drive and sustain its future development plans and aspirations. Furthermore, there are ongoing inherent tensions between the national and provincial government systems requiring urgent

review to address the issues leading to potential conflicts to enhance better synergies between the systems of government.

Another big issue that we need to tackle head on is corruption. This has been a serious impediment to our country's development efforts. It is critical therefore that necessary institutional mechanisms and stronger legislations are in place to combat this scourge.

We have witnessed the disastrous effects of the recent ethnic tension on people, families and on the country's economy and international image. Such conflict must not be allowed to occur again, hence the importance of certain key strategic projects that must happen in our provinces. Of course, as the Prime Minister said and we fully subscribed to that on Malaita and of course on Guadalcanal. But let us not forget other middle or small size provinces in terms of development efforts they are pursuing for their provinces that can benefit Solomon Islands as a whole. For example, Isabel Province, the provincial government on Isabel is keen to develop Allardyce as an industrial centre. Land on Allardyce is government land and is not an obstacle. I hope that the DCC Government can work with the province to pursue this project as a national project that will not only benefit Isabel Province but Solomon Islands as a whole.

Solomon Islands is the second largest Pacific island country behind Papua New Guinea in terms of land area, forest and land based minerals. Forest resources as we know have been severely depleted. The potential for commercial agriculture is not fully realized. Land tenure systems as we know are not conducive to development. There is the need to unlock the development potential of the country's vast land resources in a way that protects the rights and benefits of the country's resource owners while at the same time providing some level of economic security for genuine investors. I think this is the point I have made this morning.

We need to maximize the benefits from our oceans. Solomon Islands is a maritime country. Its nine provinces are spread out over its sea area and exclusive economic zone or EEZ of approximately 1,340,100 square kilometers of ocean. This

scattered nature of the country poses huge challenges with transport and movement of people, goods and services within the country as well as internationally between Solomon Islands and its trading partners. This calls for a strategic approach to provide a safe, reliable and affordable maritime transport. Solomon Islands can maximize its benefits from its rich fisheries resources. It has potential in deep sea mineral.

As we all know, Solomon Islands is predominantly an agriculture based economy or country and a net importer of goods and services. It has very few tradable commodities of significance including the fishery and forestry sectors, with some potential in the agriculture, minerals and tourism sector.

The unit cost of doing business in Solomon Islands is much higher than in other similar countries. This is an important consideration in today's competitive global market. Our country has not enjoyed high rates of investments compared to other countries of similar size and when investments do occur they usually concentrate on a few sectors.

The Government needs to continue with reforms to reduce the cost of doing business in Solomon Islands. In addition, we need a new approach to provide more effective support to small medium enterprises. Let us not forget that Solomon Islands has a narrow economic base and relies on the stability of the global markets. Any unfavourable shift in the global economic situation can have detrimental effects on the country's economy as experienced in the recent global economic crises. Moreover, Solomon Islands is susceptible to natural disasters and more frequent and severe weather events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones and associated heavy rainfall, landslides, flooding and disease, resulting in the loss of life and undermines food and water security especially in our coastal areas.

Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) is the largest killer of Solomon Islanders accounting for about seven out of every 10 deaths in the country, most of whom are in the economically productive age group. NCDs have the potential to undermine the

country's economic development if it is not addressed adequately with the urgency that it deserves.

The Private Sector remains critical and will continue to be so to the development of this country or any country for that matter. It is the engine room that drives economic development. There needs to be a conducive policy framework within which engagement and partnership with the private sector can flourish.

Churches, faith based organizations and civil society constitute the building blocks of this nation. They have not been acknowledged as equal partners in nation building and their potential to help drive national development has not been fully realized. This needs to change.

The traditional leadership structures and custom values that foster communal spirit and cooperation are fast disappearing and are being rapidly replaced by new acquired culture that no longer puts much value on traditional systems and processes. There is an urgent need to safeguard the traditional platforms of leadership, recognition of values to strengthen inclusive and communal cooperation to facilitate tangible development and minimize distrust and disputes that undermine community wellbeing and social and economic development.

The single and most important factor that will determine the future of Solomon Islands economy is its population. The country's population is its greatest asset. However, without good education, jobs and livelihood income, it can also become a liability. The population of Solomon Islands during the first census in November 1959 was 124,000. At independence in 1978, it was about 200,000, an increase of 76,000 in 19 years. In 2014 the population is 625,000 - an increase of 425,000 in 36 years. At the present population growth rate, the Solomon Islands population is predicted to pass 1million people by 2035. By 2050 it is predicted to reach 1.3million people. The urban population is also expected to expand exponentially. Importantly, the growing youth population must be appropriately addressed as part of the country's strategy on national safety and security.

This population growth scenario should pose serious concerns for the country's political leaders. The serious question that needs to be asked and answered is simply - if the country is not able to adequately cater for the needs and expectations of this population in 2014, how would it cope with the needs and expectations of these people in 35 years time when the population doubles and the resources it will have at its disposal then are most likely to be less than what it has today? This side of the House believes herein lies the question, the answer to which could determine the future of our country.

From a more practical aspect, the following are some of the major setbacks which have hindered development progress in Solomon Islands over the past 36 years. First, physical infrastructure such as roads, wharves, airports, bridges as well as maritime infrastructures remain dilapidated or yet to be constructed in the country. Most investment infrastructures focus on the national capital probably at the expense of the rest of the country. There is a serious need for comprehensive long term national infrastructure development and a maintenance strategy that is aligned to the long term vision for the country.

Secondly, social services such as education and health are poor or non-existent in many rural areas of our country. Furthermore, investment climate remains weak and the opportunities for private sector growth are difficult to find. There is also a need to improve the regulatory environment so that it gives confidence as we all know to the private sector or to genuine investors.

On human development index, our country currently ranks 143 out of 187 countries. We really need to work hard on this front. Similarly, poverty stands at 22.7 percent, and this is below the poverty line. Our vulnerable population including people living with disabilities comprises more than 12 percent of our population, and most of them are left unattended. Gender equality, of course, is a major challenge in all aspects of this country.

All these impediments, challenges and setbacks call for a response that is both visionary and strategic; a response that addresses the realities of today within the

context of a long term national development strategy. A response that is supported by a shoot of broad based economic reforms and policies for growth that engages and empowers resource owners, the traditional leadership, the private sector, the churches, the civil society and government as equal partners in development. And, of course, a response that should aim to reduce poverty, promotes prosperity, enhance equal opportunity and further enhance peace and stability in Solomon Islands. I trust that as the Democratic Coalition for Change (DCC) Government is in the process of finalizing its policy priorities, it will take into account this setting or the scenario that our country is currently in.

Finally, before I conclude let me also take the opportunity to thank the NCRA Government including the former Prime Minister for the efforts and contributions his government has done in terms of developing Solomon Islands over the last four years. It is important as I have said that the current government does take on board some of the key important projects that are still being implemented. Let me also thank our development partners for their ongoing contribution to the development of Solomon Islands and, of course, the private sector and civil society organizations.

Allow me now to join the Prime Minister in conveying and expressing my seasons greetings to our Governor General, the Chief Justice and your good self, Mr Speaker, Members of Parliament, the churches and civil society organizations. I wish to commend the staff of the National Parliament for the excellent work they have done over the years, which I am sure that they will continue to provide as you embark on your new assignment.

I also wish to convey happy Christmas greetings and a prosperous new year to my good people of Kia/Hograno/Havulei and Katova Constituency, and wish to assure you of our close working relationship next year and the years to come. With these remarks I resume my seat.

*Sitting suspended for lunch break at 11.38 am*

*Sitting resumed at 1.28pm*

**Hon. FREDA TUKI SORIACOMUA** (*Minister for Rural Development*): I stand to join other honourable colleagues to deliver my brief contribution to the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister. Thank you for giving me this opportunity.

Since the motion marks the close of this present meeting, the first of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, I am of the view that essential important issues of national interest have been duly discussed and determined accordingly. I refer to the election of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker as well as the passing of the resolution in accordance with section 103(1) of the Constitution to authorise money from the consolidated fund to enable the delivery of the much needed to our people. Having said so, I thank the honourable Prime Minister for moving this important motion.

It is worthy at this point in time of my life to acknowledge and give praise to the Almighty God for gracing me His blessing to have the opportunity to lead and serve my good people of Temotu Vattu constituency and also a leader of our beloved nation, Solomon Islands.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pass my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the chiefs, church leaders, men and women, youths and children of Temotu Vattu constituency for choosing as your Member of Parliament to serve you in the interest of our constituency and our country into the next four years.

First and foremost, it is important to note that one cannot do everything, but we all need each other to make things happen. To my constituents of Temotu Vattu, I call on your support and look forward to work together with you in addressing our development needs.

I would also like to join other colleagues to congratulate on your appointment to the post of Speaker. Your win is a sure sign of the trust and confidence in your leadership qualities, which I believe stem from the past leadership roles that you have

held at provincial and community levels. I wish you all the best and look forward to a good working relationship in your as Speaker in the management of Parliament.

In the same manner, I would like to also bestow my congratulation to the deputy speaker elect, the honorable colleague for Central Honiara constituency. Congratulation colleagues on your appointment and advice. Likewise, looking forward to work closely with you in the Government and the business of Parliament. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all other honorable colleague of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament; the 49 Ministers of the surrounding 49 constituencies, some records have been set in that a good number of former Ministers have returned their seats to continue serving our people and nation. You have earned the trust and confidence of your people and this is not notable in your successful comeback to this honorable house.

Sir, I will not hesitate to congratulate also those who have not make it in the recent election, your efforts and hard work must be commended. I wish to make mention in this honorable house, the brave women who have contested in the recent election but could not make it. Even so I wish to encourage women further not to give up because even though few of us who are able to make it, this is a sure sign that women will gain political leadership as time goes on.

Let us all be assured that we are all winners in different ways at different times, likewise, coming back to the formation of the DCC government, I am privileged indeed to be accorded the political head of the Ministry of Rural Development and the Minister for rural development. Let me also thank the Honorable Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and colleague Ministers for the trust and confident bestowed on me to take up this ministerial port polio, I acknowledged the responsibilities under the ministry and have the confidence.

I would like to also acknowledge to work which was already delivered by my predecessor, Honorable colleague member for South Vella La Vella constituency, Alex Leona, who helped held the ministerial development role in the last NCRA government, it is important to continue to see that DCC through the ministry will

improve further and deliver as expected to our people throughout the 50 constituencies.

Sir, I wish also to acknowledge the work of our development partners, both internal and external that have assist to develop our country's communities and people over past years. As the new Minister for rural development, on behalf of the government, I took forward to continue faithfully and fruitful relations with your governments and your agencies in the country, as we continue the journey to develop Solomon Islands.

Lastly but not the least. Everyone are now aware that the cabinet is working hard to ensure government policies will be in place soon, I strongly believe that the development of our country rest on the shoulders of every citizen, government policies, development programs are laid down. Development is everyone's business, so having said, so let us put our difference aside and work together for the betterment of our beloved country. Sir, I will not take any more time but to allow other speakers to speak as well but before I take my seat, I wish you all a blessed Christmas and a prosperous new year 2015, Solomon Islands. With this brief contribution, I support the motion.

**Hon MILNER TOZAKA** (*Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade*): I rise to contribute to the motion of Sine Die debate and before I proceed, I want to thank the Speaker for giving me the floor to make my brief median speech. In so doing, first let me warmly congratulate the Speaker for his election as the Speaker of this Honourable House. I am confident that under your able leadership and vice console we will able to achieve the enormous responsibilities that are before us for the duration of the next four years. Let me also extend my hearty congratulation to the deputy Speaker and I offer the same support and allegiance to your leadership of this Honourable House.

On the outset, I wish to first thank my voters, my people of North Vella la Vella constituency for the confidence and trust they have in me by returning me to this

Honourable House. I sincerely thank the people for voting me back from the recent election; it has been an honor to serve you as your elected representative during the last two Parliaments and with God's help I am committed and determined to represent my people and work in partnership with them in advancing the interests and development aspirations our constituency.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate all the elected members of this Honourable House, like myself, you were the choice of the voters. Hence, I do look forward to engage with you all from both sides of the House to make constructive and fair decisions that should uplift the people that we represent. At the end of day, whatever political thing that divides us, the responsibility on us the 50 members to make the right move and press the right button and move the country forward.

My congratulation is also extended to the Honourable Prime Minister and Ministerial colleague who I assumed have already taken up their respective ministerial responsibilities. I assure you of my support and looking forward to work with you as a team and constructive engagement on important national policy issues and require our collective team effort and vice versa. The next few days, would be a crucial period for the Democratic Coalition for Change (DCC) government, a period where the policy priorities of the government must be formulated for the translation of the Action Plan. It is incumbent upon us the DOC to have this important policy document produced so while holiday season is already here, it is time to roll our sleeves and start to work.

Mr Speaker Sir, the portfolio responsibility of Foreign Affairs and External Trade as you aware is an important one and I thank the Prime Minister and members of the Democratic Coalition of Change Government for entrusting me with this responsibility.

As Honourable Members, I am aware the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade is task and mandated with the responsibility to manage Solomon

Islands International Relations and establishing market access opportunities for the private sector Sir.

To achieve this ministry represents Solomon Islands in international settings and trade negotiations, tender advice to Government and Foreign Affairs issues and diplomatic relations and implement the resulting policy priorities of the government.

Mr Speaker, there are of course 13 outstanding issues which have been brought to our attention and I intend to deal with these as priority upon setting in to my office Sir.

The one that has come to mind is an air service in passing between Solomon Islands and Fiji. Sir, I seek the study the detail brief more closely that was provided by the ministry and will also seek further discussion and engagement with the ministry of Communication and Aviation and other stakeholders, with the view to find the way forward to resort the in passing Sir and I am glad that I have already made contact with my counterpart in Fiji and the process of discussion has already started Sir.

Mr Speaker, while we still maintain strong ties with our neighbours, this government will be decision and seek to appoint new heads of Missions to a number of diplomatic posts which have been without substantive heads of Missions for some time, these posts happen to be located in countries where we have strong ties and interest Sir. They are important and they include Canberra, Port Moresby, Taipei, and Geneva Sir. Consultation through the normal process will be initiated to appoint new Heads of Missions to further advance our interest and our relations with the host countries.

Mr Speaker Sir, policy document of DCCG will spell the key and specific Foreign Affairs and External Trade Policy priorities, which we seek to focus on the implementation during the next four years but by way of an overview Bilateral Diplomacy remains an important mechanism in strengthening Solomon Islands relations with other countries. While political and economic activities remain the core of the Relation, thus core bilateral cooperation has spend into other areas, cooperation

in the fields of culture, education, tourism and other areas has yield significant progress over the years Sir.

As of September 2014, Solomon Islands has bilateral diplomatic ties with 113 countries and maintains 10 diplomatic missions in strategic locations to advance its bilateral engagements with friends and development partners.

Many of these missions have concurrent accreditation to other neighbouring countries. This growing number of overseas missions for a small country like Solomon Islands is a reflection of commitment we have to these bilateral diplomatic relations. Solomon Islands during the past four years was involved in constructive and strategic engagement with both its traditional and new emerging partners seeking and focusing on identifying opportunities for political and cooperation promoting socio economic development for Solomon Islands and our government is going to continue with this.

Mr Speaker, at the multilateral front Solomon Islands is a member of several multilateral organisations and groupings including the United Nations, Commonwealth, Pacific Island Forum, and Africa-Caribbean Pacific group, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Melanesian Spearhead Group, World Trade Organisation, the lines of small island states and the group of 77 of many others.

Sir, multilateral diplomacy is engaged in the conduct of Solomon Islands foreign policy since attaining independence in 1978. Solomon Islands have been engaging in a global political and socio economic stability and security through these multilateral systems. Solomon Islands will seek that actively engage and participate in international forums especially through the United Nation system and its specialized agencies.

As a small and vulnerable country we recognise the special needs of developing countries, especially least developed among them and looks to the United Nations to advance the development agenda of these countries particularly the eradication of poverty and a fair go for the vulnerable members of the country.

With these few remarks I wish to convey my holiday seasons and prosperous New Year 2015 greetings to you Sir, your Deputy, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, all members of the House, parliamentary staff, staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade and my people of North Vela Vela constituency. With those remarks I support the motion.

**Hon MANASSEH MAELANGA** (*Leader of Independent*): Thank you Mr Speaker. Firstly, I would like to congratulate you again. I would also like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker which we have voted in yesterday. I would also like to congratulate all the members of the government side, ministers and the new members of the Tenth Parliament. I trust all of us will continue to work together and also looking forward to working closely with the Clerk and the staff of the National Parliament.

At this juncture, I also wish to thank the outgoing Speaker for his hard work and commitment in the last House, thank you Sir Allan Kemakeza. I would also like to congratulate the honourable member for East Choiseul for his successful election as the 12<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of our beloved Solomon Islands. Congratulations honourable Prime Minister. Again as Leader of the Parliamentary Independent Group, I look forward for a cordial relationship between the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Office of the Parliamentary Independent Group, as together we navigate our national interest forward. I wish your government a change, a government of change stand to the name of change in all its aspect.

Mr Speaker, I wish to take this attention of this House to a specific, but major international policy trends in the world. That is President Foreign Policy shift on Cuba. The President has announced his normal shift relationship policy on Cuba. This has ended more than fifty years of strong and tense relationship between these two countries. In his speech Mr President Obama stated and I quote: "We had been doing the same things for more than 50 years, and expect it to bring a new different result."

In stating this he announced a significant error in United States and world politics to normalise relationships with Cuba. This United States of America reestablishment of diplomatic relationship with Cuba will mean a lot in many fortunes even to our small island states.

Sir, bring us back into our islands, we may wish to look into wisdom of such shifts on what we do and how we do things. We must have a fully focused government that cares for its people and runs the affairs of this nation with the trust and commitment of its citizens. We must shift the times, hoping for the betterment that tomorrow will bring. This is an encouragement that I would like to place in this honourable House.

I understand that the new Government had echoed change as a mandate that fix its own right in what it thinks is best for the people of Solomon Islands. Change has been here, change has always been here, and will come even after we leave. No political rhetoric is good enough to drive a heavy burdened nation, it must be transpired into positive actions. I believe that any government of Solomon Islands can do this. The ultimate test is in our ability to continue on with national government programs passed on by previous governments. This, in all its aspects must embrace all provincial and national projects and programs. I urge the government of the day to continue to uphold meaning projects that have already been earmarked for different provinces.

For the purpose of this motion, I would like to mention a few of such national programs that are important enough to gain the continuity they may so deserve. The Prime Minister himself has announced this in the United Nations some years back; the need to strengthen our local governments. This paves way for a mutual intervention between UN agencies and the government of Solomon Islands in terms of provincial government strengthening programs. The program runs under the Ministry of Provincial Government and has been supported by previous, including NCRA. I hope under this leadership, the DCC government will maintain and even enhance this

important program. This is an important program to support our local governments as important institutions within the governance framework of our country.

Similarly, the biometric voter registration program is far from being over. The NCRA government has successfully under my supervision the implementation of this importance governance program. I urge the DCC government to work on where we have ended and continue to tighten the gaps it may have. This is for the interest of properly conducting of elections and reduction of irregularities towards generals. This work must continue.

In light of the global concern on climate change and environmentalism, I would like to state that our environment is a fragile one. It is threatened both by nature and my man. Our push for economic securities and financial hardships should never be compromised with livelihood. We should embark into serious and sustainable harvesting of our natural resources. We must always put logic in our actions when we deal with our environment. I urge all stakeholders together with our government to help protect our heritage and our flora and fauna for the betterment of our future generations.

With those few issues, as Leader of the Parliamentary Independent Group, I would like to stress cooperation and understanding in the house as we perform our functions as mandated under the constitution of the land. Where there is a need to a bipartition approach to national challenges, the office has open arms to work with the government.

For the office of the Opposition, I would also like to stress that a strategic and a positive role be demonstrated towards the actions of the government where necessary as mandated by relevant national conventions.

Finally, I would like to thank the Members of the last house for your work and commitment towards this nation and also welcome all the new Members to this honourable House.

To all the diplomatic communities and international organisations, I would like to thank you all for your commitment and continuing support that you have rendered

to the government and the people of Solomon Islands. The party plate is important for the people and communities of this nation.

To the churches, I would also like to also thank you for the important part you played in this nation. Without your presence and the role the whole story might be different, I would like to also thank the Public Servants for their hard work and also thank the Police for their work, the Teachers, the Doctors and Nurses, Sport men and women, the youths, children, people with special need, sick people in the hospital or clinics or where ever they may be, the inmates in prison, I would like to thank them and I would to continue this Christmas session, I wish them God's blessing. To all the people of Solomon Islands I would like thank you for your support to the last Government and for myself to serve the Government and the people of Solomon Islands for a complete four years term as your Deputy Prime Minister.

To my good people of East Malaita, thank you for bestowing the trust in me, to further serve our people and contribute to the betterment of our country, I wish you all my good people of East Malaita God's Blessing and a happy merry Christmas and a prosperous new year to all of you.

Lastly, as the leader of the Parliamentary independent group I now wish you and your family a merry Christmas and send you all God's blessing during this festive season . With this few remarks I support the motion. Thank you.

**Mr ALFRED GHIRO** (*East Makira*): Thank you Honorable Prime Minister for moving this motion especially at this time of festive season where we can share our Christmas greetings to our people. Allow me first to begin by congratulating all colleague Members of Parliament, both new and old, once have travelled from far and wide in terms of disdain effort on the campaign trail, to brave the challenges each one have encountered in the course of the recent general election 2014 and rise victoriously as our peoples' choices for the next four years.

We all made this journey to this honorable chamber for a reason; it is humbling so to speak to have received the mandate of our respective constituencies to represent

their wishes and aspirations in this highest institution of our land. But in my heart I am sure we did not come here on our own desires but rather we hold firmly to the belief that there can be peace and conducive environment for development and progress in the next four years in this country. In the face of pessimism we believe there can be hope and in the face of politics that somewhat divided us far too long in terms of our political ideologies, we believe we can still be one people and one nation Solomon Islands.

All the Democratic processes, constitutional processes and Government magnesium legally obligating the orderly running of our general elections has being satisfactorily accomplished and was to that effect that we all find ourselves in this honorable house. Therefore I would like to mention it here that we are not the reason for our people to come out to vote, they did so because they want a better destination for this nation for the next four years and beyond. In that respect, all of us that are in the chamber, owe our people a better future and the honour is upon each one of us to be united in a common effort to chart a new course for our beloved Solomon Islands.

Also I want to say that it has been a humble experience to re-enter this Honourable chamber and for that I want to express my profound gratitude to my people of East Makira Constituency who allow God to walk through their hearts does having the confidence to give me another fresh mandate to represent them in this Honourable chamber and for offering me another chance to fulfill my plan which I started since year 2010 and complete them. As a protocol of tradition on your election to the office of the Speaker of Parliament and my personal confidence of your new duty to this nation, I on behalf of the people of East Makira Constituency extend to you our best wishes and congratulation. I also extend my people's congratulation to the newly elected Deputy Speaker, the member for Central Honiara. Besides, it is also timely that I must say thank you to our new Prime Minister on behalf of my people of East Makira and wish him God's blessing. Often times we make complex choices depending on the circumstances of the situation that we are in at a particular time. I

said so because I may not be in the team that vote the Prime Minister but I believe that is the essence and beauty of our parliamentary democracy or so called 'majority rules'. Besides, as someone who have had the opportunity with our previous government or more specifically as the former Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources, it is only fitting on this chamber that I personally extend my congratulation to my successor. It is a very important ministry as it controls, manage and regulate our vast sea resources which are fundamental to the existence as an island nation and one of the significant contributors to the national economy.

On that note, I am happy to note that during my tenure as the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources together with the staff of the Ministry have undertaken some very significant changes and improvement in the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. During my term, I have managed to instigate an overseas creation of 500 job opportunities in that sector and I have significantly raise fisheries revenue from \$100million to \$200million. The other significant change is that I reduce the long line licences allocation from 300 to 180 in year 2012 and it supposed to reduce further down. This is a significant assignment that I have personally taken to heart during my term as the Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources. I did so because the reduction of long line licenses is very crucial for the sustainability of our yellow fine tuna resources.

Also during my term but during this term I have the confidence in the new Minister for Fisheries that he himself is a very experienced and reputable person who would give impetus to the ministry's programs and projects and I believe under our new government fisheries programs, this new Minister is the right person to enhance the growth of revenue in this sector and help towards creating a broader economic base for our country.

I also extend my best wishes and God's blessing to the Democratic Coalition for Change Government and the new Cabinet Ministers who have recently been sworn in their respective portfolios. Now that the somewhat political tug of war situation has

subsided, the people of our beloved nation expect from you as the Minister to get down to business. I on behalf of my people of East Makira constituency place my support to you and to the Government.

Finally, we are just few days away from Christmas profoundly revered by Christians world over as a time of the birth of our Lord who is the Saviour of the world, meaning his birth is also the birth of a new world order in his terms. Consequently, a new government has also been born to us in this special season, which I believe is meant for us to see new and improve changes in our nation.

With those remarks, I lastly extend my constituency Christmas greetings to your family and to all of us Members of Parliament, a happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year 2015. With these few remarks, I support the motion. Thank you.

**Hon DEREK SIKUA** (*Minister for Education and Human Resources*): I would like to thank you for allowing me to take the floor to contribute briefly to this very important Sine Die Motion which is the first one in this Tenth Parliament.

Let me begin by thanking the Honourable Prime Minister for moving this motion, a traditional motion at this time. I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate him for his successful election to the post of Prime Minister and as head of our government in this country for the third time. My sincere congratulations to you, my good Prime Minister! I take this opportunity to wish the Honourable Prime Minister and all of us ministers and back benchers all the very best as we take the responsibility of governing our country and moving our country forward this time and as we strive to continue to improve the lives of our citizens and our government.

Sir, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate you for your successful elections to the position of Speaker, within our Tenth Parliament and to wish you every success in your role as the presiding officer of our Tenth Parliament from now on and in the same token, I would like to congratulate our Deputy Speaker for his successful election and I also wish him every success in his office as our Deputy

Speaker. I would also like to thank you and convey my congratulations to the new Member of Parliament for Kia/ Hogorano/Havulei for taking over the helm as Leader of the Opposition group.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, that is the seat which I have previously occupied in the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. It is a very important position to look after and it also has a lot of responsibilities. Thus, I wish our new Leader of Opposition all the best in his job. I would also like to congratulate my colleague the Member of Parliament for East Malaita for take over the role as the new Leader of the Independent Group in Parliament. While thanking the Member of Parliament for East Malaita I do recognise the fact that he was also the Deputy Prime Minister in the NCRA Government.

On that note I also think of my good friend the former Member of Parliament for Gizo/ Kolombangara and former Prime Minister. I would like to thank and acknowledge his leadership in our country in the last four years.

Sir, I must not forget the former Minister of Education and Human Resources Development who is also unable to make through the recent election. I want to thank him for his contributions in the field of education. When getting my briefing from the Permanent Secretary and staff of the ministry recently I do realise that there were a lot of good things that the former minister through the NCRA Government have done. I therefore would like to acknowledge the hard work in the past four years. I would like to say here that I will continue with the good work which he has left and hopefully to bring those works to some successful completion.

I would also like to thank the former Clerk to the National Parliament for her valuable contributions to parliament for many years. As being Prime Minister and Leader of Opposition she has helped me in understanding procedures and processes in parliament which broaden and widen my understanding of the Standing Orders and procedures to parliament.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all of my colleagues here in Parliament on both sides of the House for their undeniable success in the recent general elections. I would like to thank their supporters and voters for putting

them into the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I also have a good feeling about this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I think the people have chosen rightly and I hope that we are going to continue working together in moving our country forward.

I must not forget to sincerely thank my people of North East Guadalcanal for re-electing me back for the third time. I would like to say that I am really happy with them for giving me another opportunity again to represent them in this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament making sure that there is ease of doing business in Solomon Islands. There is a whole raft of things that we can do to ensure that Solomon Islands is ready for business. One thing we must do immediately is to increase the employment opportunities for our young people. And I support what the Prime Minister mentioned earlier on of ways to quickly create employment opportunities for our people. In general, we must offer wellbeing and happiness to the citizens of our country. I think that is what we are striving to do for our people at the end of the day in offering them happiness and wellbeing. In all these things the government wants to do when our policy statements come out, I call on our donor partners and traditional friends to support the new government in its endeavour to improve our economy.

I join the Prime Minister in the need for us to introduce the Constituency Development Fund Act and its accompanying regulations. As the Prime Minister has indicated; and because I am also a member of the bipartition committee working on the regulations, I can say that the Act needs to be amended. I thank the former NCRA government for allowing the bipartition committee to work together on the regulations. Our new Minister for Rural Development will see what stage the regulations are at and we need to bring those in to introduce the CDF Act to assist Members on how to use the constituency funds. There will be quite some objections amongst us, but I think we can work through those and make sure that we do have some set of guidelines on how we use the fund as opposed to being a discretion so that we safeguard ourselves and ensure that funds are spent on the purposes intended.

As the Prime Minister has mentioned, we have seen and gone through in the last month or so, the weaknesses of the Political Party Integrity Act 2014, hence the need for it to be reviewed. It has always been wrongly reported in the papers that the Political Parties Integrity Act 2010 was debated in Parliament and defeated. This is not correct. The Political Parties Integrity Act 2010 has never come to the floor of Parliament. What came before the floor of Parliament were the constitutional amendments; the enabling constitutional amendments that allow the Political Parties Integrity Bill 2010 to relax the freedoms of Members of Parliament. Those constitutional amendments required three-quarter majority and I did not get the numbers. It needed 38 Members but I only got about 32 Members. That Political Parties Integrity Bill did not come before the floor of Parliament because the amendments that needed to be preceded by the introduction of that Bill thus it did not pass in Parliament, so it is wrong for the papers to always say that this 2010 political party integrity bill is defeated in Parliament, that is not true, I just want to correct that record. But yes we need to review the political party integrity Act 2014. Much of it is borrowed from this is borrowed from the Political Party integrity 2010; they just did few amendment to it and bring it in without necessary constitutional amendments. That I think is the right way to go, the way we tried to go about it in 2010, so I am sure it will come hopefully in the New Year.

Sir, as the newly appointed Minister for Education, as you may know I had already worked in that particular ministry for almost two decades and became the Minister for Education on my first term in Parliament. Therefore, I am very happy with the appointment as being the Minister of Education again. As I have said earlier there's a lot of good work that have been done and they all improving our access to Education, improving equity, improving the quality of Education and improving the effectiveness of how we deliver the Education to our people in all parts of the country. So all I can say at this time before the policies are in place is that we will continue to strive to do our best in Education especially in areas that touch the very life our people, and so I

am looking forward to see the policies of Education of this Government and we will continue to deliver in terms of access, equity, quality and the effectiveness of how we deliver our services to our people.

As we are coming towards Christmas or rather Christmas is here already, I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone this season greetings and most especially, on behalf of my people and my family, I would like to wish this season's greeting to his excellence the Government General and his family, to you sir and your family, to the Honorable Prime Minister and your family, to the Honorable chief justice and his family, also to all the former Government Generals and their families, to the deputy Prime Minister and his family, the deputy speaker and his family, to all my colleague Ministers and your families, to the leader of opposition and his family, leader of the independent group and his family. Also my season's greetings on behalf of my people and my family to the commissioner of Police and all ranks and file in the Royal Solomon Islands Police force, also to the RAMSI special coordinator and all the men and women of the 15 forum countries that serve under RAMSI both in the past and at present.

I also want to convey my sincere greetings to all my provincial premiers and the members of the provincial assemblies, most of them at this time are trying to form their government after the elections. And so for that, I wish them all the best in their endeavors.

I also wish to convey sincere greetings to all our church leaders and their followers and particularly I join the Prime Minister in thanking them for their daily prayers for us as their leaders and also for our country Solomon Islands. Not forgetting our permanent secretaries in various ministries and the public servants that serve in the public service, the chiefs and leaders from all works of life, health workers which include doctors and nurses and not forgetting the teachers and the students. I look forward to visit some schools in the New Year as your new Minister for Education and Human Resource Development. I must not forget those who also work in our ships,

the captains and crews that will transport people to their various homes. I wish them safe journey as they travel to and fro.

I also want to send all my Christmas greetings, on behalf of my people and family to all those that will work on hotels and nightclubs as they will take care of us during the festive season. It is my sincere hope that year 2015 will bring better opportunities for us and for that we must always put our trust in God who is our provider and protector for all time. May you all have a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year 2015, with these few words I support the motion and God bless Solomon Islands.

**Mr PETER SHANEL AGOAVAKA** (*Central Guadalcanal*): At the outset, may I acknowledge the Prime Minister for moving the motion. The motion of Sine Die is a traditional motion that always comes to Parliament at the end of the year and so I subscribe to what he said and I also acknowledge the contribution that the leader of opposition has done. I said earlier on in the first motion this motion, I would like to congratulate our good self, coming from a minority group in the Solomon Islands to be elected as the Speaker of Parliament and the Head of the Legislature. On that note, I would also like to congratulate my colleague the member for Central Honiara for being elected as the Deputy presiding officer of Parliament, congratulation colleague.

May I also take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people of Central Guadalcanal for having the confidence and trust in me to represent them again here in Parliament. Central Guadalcanal constituency has over the years contributed much to the economic development of this country. I am also waiting for the Member of Parliament for North East Guadalcanal to come and contribute as well but I am trying to listen to my colleague the Minister for Education yet he said that they always ridiculed him.

But as the Member of Parliament for Central Guadalcanal, we have the Gold Ridge Mining operating in our country; the first ever Gold Ridge Mine in our country. And this Government, hopefully the good Minister, my colleague the Member of

Parliament for North Guadalcanal will be able to resurrect that mining again because it is something that is contributing to the economic development and revenue collection in this country.

We also have the Tina Hydro, is there a much needed scheme in this country at this time when fossil fuel are very expensive and its costly, costly in terms of exchange rate as well. With the development of the Tina Hydro we will be able to have much cheaper energy source in our country. We also have the International Airport, the Henderson International Airport sitting right in our constituency. We also have the RIPEL Coconut and Cocoa Plantation right in Central Guadalcanal but not to mention the logging operations that are going on in the constituency. And hopefully this government will be able to get the proposed fishing loining factory going at Tenaru beach. That again is another activity that will be happening in Central Guadalcanal. All these activities have contributed much to the economic development of our country. Those are contributions that Central Guadalcanal Constituency continues to help this country move forward.

Some of the future developments and I see these is that we have the Eco Tourism and the Member of Parliament for South Guadalcanal will know that we are working on our Eco Tourism from Gold Ridge down to South Guadalcanal going up to Popomanaseu and also the Tenaru Waterfall so we offer a lot to this country. We only need to have the proper people to do it, proper finance and budget for it and proper policy statements and development work programs will be able to see some proper revenue coming into some of these activities.

Having said this, all is not well in Central Guadalcanal. Just like in many other constituencies we have issues facing each constituency. Let us put together all these issues and call them challenges that are affecting our constituencies and our country. One of these challenges, which I hope the government will resolve and now that we are in government we will be able to resolve is the \$18million royalty lost. Now that is quite a substantive sum of money. These are the royalties that are not accounted for and they have somehow gone missing through the system or unaccounted for until

today and my people would like to know where the money is, who spent it or who has it, so that we can give it back to them.

We also have the issue of Lungga/Tenaru land that we keep putting through the Ministry of Lands. Our submissions to date we have not received any answer as to the application submitted by the three houses of chiefs - the Gaobata House of Chiefs, the Tandai House of Chiefs and also the Bahomea House of Chiefs. We need to resolve this issue so that national projects within Central Guadalcanal go unimpeded and continue to support government's programs and revenue collection

Sir, also as we go towards the rainy season, one of the issues that we need to resolve quickly is the tailings dam issue at Gold Ridge. That area belongs to my colleague, the Minister for Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification. It is important that we address the tailings dam issue because as we go through this rainy season there would be no spill over, leakage or dam burst so that our people living downstream are safe.

Also, the continuous sale of Lungga/Tenaru land by RIPEL needs to be properly addressed. I believe that when RIPEL took the land at Lungga and Tenaru, it was purposely for agriculture and cattle. It was not meant for real estate. As landowners we believe that there must be an answer from the Government. Now that we are in Government we could probably find out what the answer is. With the good capacity of the Prime Minister we will be able to address some of these issues that I am alluding to.

Central Guadalcanal has a lot to contribute to this country. Much has been given to us by the Almighty and we have given much back to the country as well. The only problem is that very little is coming to landowners and that is something I would like to see reversed in this Government.

In our drive to try and address some of the issues which the Leader of Opposition has said concerning the Millennium Development Goal, our policies and our work documentations plastered with the budget has to be realistic. I think over the years our budget and some of our implementation documents and policies are not

realistic and they are scattered so thinly that the budget cannot cope with the needs of our people. Having heard from the Prime Minister I am sure that that is something we need to change.

We have new ministers in our Cabinet, some of which are new in Parliament so we need to support them and give them guidance. The ministries, permanent secretaries and directors are there to assist them. I know that new ministers will be given good advices on how to run ministries, not only in the ministries but also here in Parliament. There are new Members of Parliament who are here that we need to guide them too. I am sure the induction course that will be held sometimes next week or the week after will be able to assist on knowing what their roles are as Members of Parliament and ministers of the crown. As you know there are three arms of Government; the legislator which you head, the Executive which the Prime Minister heads and the Judiciary which the Chief Justice heads.

I know there are a lot of speakers who wish to speak. Some of us often talk and I think we often repeat ourselves. Like my good friend the Minister of Education and Human Resources Development; I do campaign for him. When we are having problems we do campaign for each other and that is why we are back here in Parliament.

But coming back to Honiara, landowners of Honiara received nothing at all in terms of being the host of the capital of Solomon Islands. I am sure that my good Prime Minister and this Government will take note of that so that in good faith this Government or any future government will recognize the indigenous landowners of Honiara by way of good will payment or a way of just to say thank you to landowners. That will be good enough, whatever way.

But I am raising this issue here so that we know that there is a need to address some of these issues about the capital being here, and the people of Guadalcanal being host of the capital of Solomon Islands. In our good will, we in return also expect some good will. There needs to be proper planning as Honiara grows. The Minister for

Ministry of Infrastructural Development (MID) is not here, but I am sure he will take note of it.

Now that we are in the rainy season, drainage system is a must so that our people can drive and walk safely without fear of being hit by another truck. There must be proper planning for our roads and bridges. The Minister for Foreign Affairs is not here, but it will be good to have him to hear what I am saying so that he can ask help from our foreign friends, so that we make proper roads. We should cement our roads instead of tar sealed. Cities in countries around the world are going into cement rather than tarsealing. This will enable us to have proper roads that our people can enjoy without fear of having accidents, and also some traffic lights. I am sure those will be all in our plans as a government. I am just merely alluding to this because it is something that we need to address as we go into government.

Our health sector needs to be looked at as well. We have our doctors that came back from Cuba. I was fortunate to be in a restaurant while they were celebrating their return from Cuba. I think we need to upgrade our hospitals. Gizo is now alright, Honiara is here, but if you go to Lata, Kirakira and some of the hospitals around the country, they need to be upgraded, staffed and equipped properly. The provision of health services must be provided for our people in the rural areas.

On education, I am pleased that my good brother will be the Minister for Education. I just want to ask him to look at the Report of the Education and Human Resource Training (EHRTC) Committee. There are a lot of good recommendations; some of them are not new to you. You are well equipped with the issues of education in our country. As you know, teacher absenteeism is just the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot of underlying issues under the words 'teacher absenteeism'. I am pleased that the Minister for Education and Human Resource Development can address some of the recommendations that my Committee at that time has made.

We as the government will work on some of the issues I am saying here. We will do our best and we will work hard. I promise to work hard. To my people of Central Guadalcanal, I promise to work more harder. We have learned over the eight

years that I have been here the things that had not worked right. So we need to prioritise things for our constituency so that we utilise the funds that are available to us effectively for the good of our people.

My good people of Central Guadalcanal, I want us to work together. We will form a new committee that will effectively run projects and proposals from our people. Let us unite instead of dividing ourselves. Like my good colleague had said, to the other eight candidates who stood against me, I thank you for standing. Now you know your number. I also know my number. But there can be only be one winner, but thank you very much for the challenges that you have given me and we end up as it is now.

To the 50 Members here, I would like to congratulate those that retain their seats and congratulations to the new ones. I can hear some very different views coming up. I think the Leader of Opposition is a very experience person in the Public Services, having gone through the ranks right up the permanent secretary level and now as Member of Parliament. There is a lot of experience, wisdom and knowledge in him. I think the opposition will make the government really stand on its toe. We have a good opposition.

With these few remarks, I would like to wish my people of Central Guadalcanal and people all over Solomon Islands, including NGOs, private sectors a very merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. With this, I support the Motion. Thank you.

**Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA** (*Small Malaita*): I would like to firstly thank the honourable Prime Minister for moving the motion. I think it is most appropriate timing given that this is also the end of the year, it is a good time to talk to our people and maybe do a little bit more of campaigning. I thank everybody that contributed for the wellbeing of this country.

Sir, at the outset, let me congratulate you and your deputy on your election to this office for the oversight of this legislature. I am confident that you will be bringing

to the chair a wealth of knowledge that will no doubt be beneficial to the House and its deliberations.

Also, while I have the opportunity, let me on behalf of my people of Small Malaita Constituency, also congratulate the honourable Prime Minister on his successful election to head the executive. I would like to say that we are pleased with this. If we believe the media, this is truly a choice in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the people of this nation. That to me is an important reminder of the call on all of us. It is a call that comes with awesome responsibility and a sense of duty, which I am absolutely confident that in the person of the current Prime Minister, not only that he is more than capable to perform those duties, but I am sure he is totally cognisant of what this call means. I and my people congratulate the Prime Minister for taking up the position of heading the executive.

I would also like to congratulate all of you colleague Members. You have done well to be in the 10<sup>th</sup> house, I think according to my count there are 35 of us who have returned from the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament and 15 new members. I think the statistics are up to any body's reasoning, but it shows that the 35 Members of Parliament must have done even better that ensure you return to the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. Like the Prime Minister, during the campaign I myself felt sorry on how certain things which were advanced by certain candidates and groups, for instance, in my case there were 12 of us and it appeared that 11 were only targeting one person; I think this is the bad side of being the sitting member. During my campaign it seems like what the Prime Minister had already mentioned was very true. That everybody were focusing on how RCDF was managed and what people did with it, as if RCDF is what the country should be mindful of, of course we should be mindful of what we did with the RCDF, but it is sad that we have this very narrow focus, people are not looking at policies or quality that we bring to this house. But I sure people are learning to look for those qualities, this is why I would like to congratulate you all because you all have those qualities, that is why the 35 members have returned including the new 15 new members. So our style of campaign is not about any policy matters and not of national interest. Some

people when they did they campaign, for example , they said if they win the election there will be no CDO or no committee, everything will be channeled from me down to you.

As some of the provinces have already taken their provincial election and in this case Malaita province also concluded their provincial election, I wish to extend my congratulations to the three members for wards 21, 22, 23 of Malaita Province. I am informed that three of the members are also using my strategies and likewise my symbol as well. So I thank they won because of that, thus, I am really looking forward to working with you my three members of the provincial government. I think they wanted us to work together so I'm really looking forward to work together with you.

Let me also congratulate all the new cabinet ministers for their successful bidding and turning up as ministers in the respective portfolio that you have taken, I said that they were successful in their bids, because as I look across and I have said already there is no shortage of talents, the experience of business, commerce, wealth of knowledge we have in the academia and in terms of maturity as well in terms of physical age, we have few of our elder state person are on the government side at this present time and in terms of political experience, that is unquestionable because some are already serving their three terms or four terms.

The point I am making is that with these wealth of talent available to the disposal of the Prime Minister I can appreciate how difficult it must have been for him to choose his cabinet line-up. Hence, I think that adds on to the difficulty of appointing the Minister of Finance and treasury but he said this morning he will appoint the substantive minister of Finance and treasury by next week, so that the weight that is currently on your shoulder is a bit lighter when you appoint the Finance Minister.

But more importantly with such a pool of talent it is truly my hope that the Democratic Coalition for Change government (DCC) will actually live up to its name. This morning the Prime Minister said that in this line up of Ministers that is a signal or sign that this is Not business as usual, which is good and it is also the Name of the

Government of the Prime Minister that he can be sure to rely on to work through the announcements and pronouncements that you have done.

It is worth noting as well that the office of the Prime Minister will deal differently with the appointment of the officials in that office and for that, I totally agree with the Prime Minister for that and to ensure that the office is properly supported. That is people that are appointed to that office must be above board, people of integrity and people who pass the proper and fit test in terms of their personal integrity, professional qualifications, technical ability and background to deal with issues of national interests.

Since the election of the Prime Minister, he has promised that his government, the DCC government will take action to address areas. For example, the national economy, gender balance in terms of national decision making, strengthening the current unstable political landscape and refocusing the economic development approach to the supply side strategy. While it is still too early to say, these pronouncements by the Prime Minister have already instilled positive change at least in me. These announcements have given a breath of fresh air and as he puts hope to the nation, these and many other actions promised by the DCC in the past week are in the very important areas that could spire this country forward. I personally very encouraged and would like to see the government is one that will not sit around and wait for things to happen rather I see the DCC as one that it will make things happen. I am very hopeful that the DCC government will live up to these promises and intentions, indeed I am confident that the DCC government will take those important decision as early as possible to make positive changes to the national economy, improve the livelihood of our people and ensure we have a stronger and effective framework for political stability in the Solomon Islands. However, as the saying goes, "it is easier said than done", this is also have been fully appreciated by the Prime Minister. In fact this morning he have said, that not long ago there was a local news paper that used to run a cartoon under the heading, Man talem duim, I don't know

whether that news paper is still around. But the main target audience was the government and especially national leaders. A lot of the issues raised through those cartoons were matters that could not be dealt with by Leaders or even the Government alone. Many of these issues required strong collaborative action and efforts by all sectors of our society.

Of course as we are all too aware, the best place to lay the blame when things go wrong is the government and politicians but the underlying message of those cartoons remain, "Man talem duim". Yes, it is good to talk about what actions and policies to take but what is really required is to follow through with actions and decisions that is the challenge I want to bring to this Tenth Parliament but more particularly the DCC Government.

I want to date the DCC government at its word, the bold decisions and actions announced by the Prime Minister to tackle the economy must be taken. However, I am anxious and concerned that there may be strong under currents that might compromise these very strong and good policy intentions.

In the area of public financial management for example, we have made huge advances in addressing past lax regulatory environment, we brought significant improvements in the public financial management resulting in confident and stronger fiscal policy than ever before.

On this front, it is of great concern that there are people who have made their intentions public to change the public financial management act, I hope this does not happen otherwise the country will revert to past practices again.

I urge, the government to continue the reforms already afoot in the ministry of Finance that ensures sound financial and a strong fiscal policy regime.

In this connection I would like to reiterate again the point I made earlier about the appointment of the substantive minister, this is a ministry that we cannot afford to live it hanging in the balance. As noted before the government has the immediate task and duty to bring the 2015 Budget to Parliament and for that alone the ministry cannot be without it for far too long.

In this connection it is gratifying to note that the Prime Minister is already moving ahead on this matter as early or even before next week.

I am also encouraged by the government's announcement to address the desirable situation in our political landscape to stop the ping pong activities before the election of the Prime Minister for example; to stop candidates jumping from one party to another, to stop people allowing themselves to be bribed and all these actions that make Parliament national leaders a mockery, we have to stop this. So Mr Prime Minister, you can count on me to support those intentions that you have announced because I feel that it is sad and this is with hindsight that the period leading up to the recent election of the Prime Minister, is still rife with this practices.

The worse thing is that some people did not want to comply with the law, I believe that we on this side we lost because we complied with the law- tried very hard at least to comply with the law.

I urge the DCC government to ensure we get rid of these activities that tarnish the image of parliament and indeed all of us who sits here and in the country. So, I agree with the Prime Minister's intentions to strengthen the Political Party Integrity Act 2014 as the means to achieve that.

While it is heartening to know that the government will address this lingering problem in Solomon Islands political landscape by improving the existing political party integrity Act. I know at the same time that this may be impossible to carry out. I want to believe the Prime Minister's stands but at the same time there strong tendencies in Government who are bent on taking actions not to even repeal this Act.

The recent elections have proved to me that we have not changed from past practices least of all our attitudes. To repeal that Act would make it abundantly clear to Solomon Islands public that the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament wants this country to slide back into the past practices of bribery, grass hopping, ping pong politics, more corruption, uncertainty and political instability. If we do not take those actions announced by the Prime Minister this is the message we will if not already bring to the people.

I am saying these are tendencies in Government to undermine the DCC's good intentions. I want to encourage and urge especially the Prime Minister and his Cabinet not to let our people down. You are the popular choice and what you said you will do is what the people want to see happen.

I firmly believe that the Prime Minister's recent announcements reiterated again this morning have hit the nail on the head so to speak. This is why we all want the Prime Minister to succeed in what he promised the nation. If the DCC Government succeeded in their economic and development policy intention it will be a win, win for all of us and Solomon Islands.

I would like to acknowledge you and your deputy as well as the Clerk to Parliament in the staff. Your officers have been exemplary in your duties to Parliament in ensuring the effective delivery of services to our people. I am confident in your leadership of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament will likewise be efficient and effective in its work. I would also like to thank our public servants who have served this country, especially during times when Parliament dissolved for the formation of the new Government.

Sir, more particularly in my case I would like to mention the staff of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. I want to acknowledge the professional leadership of the Permanent Secretary, under Secretaries and Advisors for their support to me in the three years since 2012. I could not have asked for a better group.

Sir, this is now the end of the year and let me also take the opportunity to acknowledge the great assistance and support by development partners. Over the years our bilateral and multilateral friends have provided much needed assistance in the social infrastructure and commercial sectors. In the last three years that assistance had persisted.

Sir, it would be remiss of me not to mention and acknowledge my chiefs, community leaders, church leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, men and women, boys and girls in small Malaita constituency. I would like to acknowledge all my

village agents and pray groups and supporters across the island that has made history in outcome of the recent general election.

Aside from the result themselves I want to emphasize that they have done extremely well in taking their duty and responsibility to polls very seriously. The voter turnout in Small Malaita constituency was almost 89percent. Of the 8500 registered voters, more than 7500 people turned up to cast their ballots. The 11 percent that did not cast their ballots was due to reasons beyond their control. Most were involved as election officials, many have passed away since the registration and a good number could not reach their respective polling stations on election day due to transport difficulties. Only 18 ballots were considered spoilt and not countered.

I think this is unprecedented. This goes to show that my people take their duty and responsibility with great pride and seriousness. Not only that they made sure they were not denied their right to choose their Member of Parliament but also they all knew what to do by taking extra care to ensure their ballot papers were not wasted. This is a result of the public awareness programs I carried out during the last four years. You will also be glad to know that your office, the National Parliament Office through the Civic Education team has played an important part in this excellent outcome. As you know, my constituency was the first to request the team which they visited my constituency for a week, telling people about the role of Parliament and the role of Members of Parliament and what voters should be looking for in aspiring MPs. Besides that, my office has also been active in taking that message to our communities. Of course, this investment has paid off.

Sir, if this program still exists, if it is still going on, I am now going to register my interest and this time I am asking for four weeks for this group to visit my constituency to do this program again. I think it is good for the people to know the role of Parliament and the role of Members of Parliament.

During the inauguration and thanksgiving service after the election results, I said to my people that indeed that they have spoken loud and clear. During my campaign I promised to be their voice in this Parliament, their advocate in

government and to facilitate the achievements of our development aspiration in the constituency. But I also reiterated the sad truth that we cannot achieve our development goals without the full support, cooperation and commitment of our resource owners. We have to ask them to open up their resources.

As we all know, to do otherwise is to deny our communities, our children, our people of the much needed development in our rural areas. The government and our development partner can only do so much. If our land and resources are embroiled in disputes we can be sure that development programs and our aspirations will be held back.

Lastly but not the least let me thank our God Almighty. It has been a tough year this year for all of us in Solomon Islands, the government and the private sector. All of us have gone through a very tough year but our God has demonstrated that He is indeed a wonderful and faithful God. I joined the others to thank the many churches and friends who have not stopped making supplications to God on our behalf, on behalf of the Government and as national leaders.

Finally, may I now wish you all, the Honourable Prime Minister and your Cabinet Ministers all our colleagues, the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker and your good staff and your respective staff, and of course I would want to extend it to my chiefs, community leaders, church leaders, men and women, boys and girls in my constituency of Small Malaita. I want to wish all of you a very pleasant Christmas celebration and a very happy and prosperous New Year 2015. Thank you and I support the motion.

**Mr DUDDLEY KOPU** (*Minister for Provincial Government and Institutional Strengthening*): The constitution of Solomon Islands has spoken. The spirit of democracy has prevailed. The country has completed a long constitutional requirement of voting Members of Parliament, the election of the Prime Minister and the Speaker.

May I take the liberty to thank my people of Temotu Pele constituency for their trust and confidence in me to represent for the next four years in Parliament. I need your prayers and support. To those that I have contested, put aside all difference and let us work together for the good of our people and the nation as a whole. I would like to thank all political parties that have joint coalition in electing Honourable Manasseh Sogavare to be the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. Congratulations to you Prime Minister. On behalf of my people, I would like to assure you that we will pray and support you as you carry out your constitutional responsibilities. Our support will always be behind you.

Finally, on behalf of my constituency, I wish to congratulate the new Speaker and his Deputy Speaker of Parliament. Congratulations to both of you. May God bless as you oversee the affairs of Parliament and conduct the proceedings of the House for the next four years. We wish you well.

To all the people of Solomon Islands, let us work together with our MPs and support the Prime Minister for the good of our nation Solomon Islands. Long live Democratic Coalition for Change government. With those few remarks, I support the motion. May God bless Solomon Islands.

**Hon. DAVID DAY PACHA** (*Minister of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace*): Thank Mr Speaker. I rise to contribute briefly to this introductory session of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament of Solomon Islands.

On the outset, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate my 49 colleagues for being elected into this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I would also like to join you, Mr Speaker, to welcome our new colleague Members of Parliament, especially our only female Member of Parliament.

While on this subject, Mr Speaker, may I also congratulate you for your election and appointment as Speaker of the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament. I look forward to your guidance in all our future meetings. I have faith in your wisdom to guide this honourable House in all its sessions.

Of utmost importance is now for me to say thank you to my good people of my constituency, South Guadalcanal Constituency for having the faith and trust to lead us once again and this is my third time in the parliament as your Member of Parliament. I sincerely thank you if you are listening right now in the weather coast; I sincerely thank you for your support and look forward to work closely with you. You have once again demonstrated your unwavering support for me and I do not intend to take your support lightly and therefore will do all I can to fulfill some of my aspiration of our constituency. It is therefore very important that we help and support one another to progress development in the Weather coast.

Sir, I must not forget to thank the other eight candidate who have contested with me on the election. I would like to join the North East and Central Guadalcanal and Small Malaita who have also thanked their contested rivals. So I would join to thank those eight candidates who have contested in the south Guadalcanal who tried to dethrone me from this seat. They have tried all their best but to realize that all their efforts and strategies are in vain. The scrolls are being used in the 50 constituencies and some of them you will think that it is a carpet, but actually it is a scroll. I saw it and they carried it around. Other constituencies are better because they travelled by vehicle, but for us in Weather coast you have to walk and carry it on your shoulders. Sometimes you think that they are carrying a carpet but in actual fact they are carrying these scrolls containing the structures of their campaigns. Most of them started their campaign six to nine months prior to the election day, but it only takes three days for me to do my campaign, I didn't apply any Political campaign but I just went and prayed with the people. I did it for only three days, 16, 17 and 18. 19 we cast our votes then we all came back to Honiara. In addition, most of the candidates were banking on my court case as their political gain, I faced court for eight years and they spread the news that I will be held in prison and there will be no Member for South Guadalcanal, that is the message. Mr Speaker, as far as my court case is concerned, recently the magistrate told me that I am innocent and he eventually acquitted me. So it is good that I take this time to commend the integrity of the Magistracy and call for move

support of the current Government towards the work of Magistrate and the Judges of this country.

I would like to thank and congratulate the new Prime Minister and would like to assure him the support of my people in South Guadalcanal. Thank you Honorable Prime Minister for your confidence in me and my appointment and assignment to the Portfolio of the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace. The challenge is to ensure that peace and unity is maintained in our country.

I would also like to dedicate my new appointment as a Minister of the crown to my good people of South Guadalcanal and to ask them for their continuous support in the peace building process in all of Guadalcanal and other provinces as well. At this stage, I wish not to bother you with the things that my ministry is currently doing but let me remind you that the name of my ministry says it all that is, unity and peace and so it does not need to dwell further on it or in other words, one people and peace.

As we are now in the festive season of Christmas, I wish to take this opportunity to extend to my people, my best wishes and merry Christmas and a prosperous new year 2015.

On the same note, on behalf of my people I would also like to extend to you the Speaker and your family, the Prime Minister and the family, the Leader of Opposition and colleague members a blessed Christmas and prosperous new year 2015. For now I do not have much to speak on but may be as the time goes on, I will have more things to speak on, with these few remarks I support the motion.

**Hon. JOHN MANENIARU** (*Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources*): At the outset, I want to sincerely thank the Honourable Prime Minister for moving this motion which is a traditional motion that allows the members to talk and share their views. On that note, I want to congratulate the Prime Minister on his successful election to lead the Democratic Coalition for Change government. I know that it is a big task but I trust

the Prime Minister to lead this nation as his third term as the Prime Minister of this nation. I also want to thank the people of this country for their prayers for our government; hence because of their prayers we now have the new government.

I want to thank the church leaders for their continuous prayer for our country and the government. Without their prayer, we will face problem and so we thank God to continue bless our country through the prayers of our people. I also want to say thank you as well to the community leaders throughout our 50 constituencies for their support in one way or the other towards the election which resulted in the 50 members coming to the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament. They have worked hard through able leadership to be elected, which they hope to make changes in their lives in this 10<sup>th</sup> parliament.

I want take this opportunity to thank the NCRA government to lead our Government in the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament, I want to thank the former Prime Minister, his Deputy Prime Minister and Ministers of the Government, back benchers who have taken us through the program in developing and advancing our country in the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament.

Sir, public Servants in particular –Permanent Secretaries that took leadership over the public offices in support of our Government and in the last house, to implement our Government policy hence delivering services to our people in our constituencies.

I want to thank your predecessor, the former speaker of parliament for the leadership that he takes in the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament over the legislature. I want to wish him and family as we approached Christmas, I want to wish him and his family Merry Christmas

On the same note, I want to thank the clerk and wish her and family festive season greetings. Sir, let me thank the Honourable Prime Minister to give the leadership and responsibility over the Ministry of Fisheries and Resources to me, I

thank the Prime Minister for the opportunity. Before I talk on the Ministry I want to thank the predecessor the hard working former Minister for fisheries for the work that he did in the Ministry. As he alluded in his speech, this is a dynamic Ministry that has the potential to continue to improve our economy, as well as the income of this country. And it is up to the Government of the day to actually recognize this opportunities and potential that is in this Ministry.

Sir taking up the Ministry I am happy to take the challenges. I want to thank the Prime Minister for that opportunity that he gave me to lead this challenging Ministry. The Ministry that has the greatest potential in this sector for our country and it has a lot of challenges. That is my joy in taking up this responsibility as the Minister of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources.

I hope the expert in the Ministry continues to support me, and we work as a team to better improve the dignity of this Ministry and better serve our government and our people through the Ministry.

Sir, I want to thank our development partners for their support and contribution which is very significant to the development of this country, without a lot of our services cannot function.

I wish to thank the fifty members of parliament that is elected into the 10<sup>th</sup> parliament, it is challenging for us to come but I congratulate you in this successful election to be a representative in this legislature on behalf of your people of the constituency. They trust you and they put you in as their representative.

Those in the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament I want to congratulate you. You have proved to your people , in particular the 35members of Parliament who retained their seats that you are worthy of continuing to serving your people through Parliament.

Sir, the challenge ahead as I alluded to earlier is for us to make 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament different from the 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament. It is the responsibility of the 50Members of

Parliament to recognize that we are here to make the difference. That is our challenge. So during Christmas we should ask our Lord for wisdom in pray so that we can further served him.

On that note I would also like to congratulate the Ministers of the DCC Government. You have a lot of responsibility ahead. The challenges we face will begin in very small things like work attendance, attitude and so forth. I would also like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition group and the Leader of the Independent group who took the responsibility as a watch dog for the Government.

Sir, I would like to thank God that the lobbying period is over. Now that it is over let us settle down to work. Lobbying is demanding and life threatening as well. When comparing lobbying with the previous 9<sup>th</sup> Parliament I think lobbying in the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament is increasing. When reflecting the trend in which lobbying has followed through is not quite right in my view. Sir, I wish not to dwell into that but I think it has challenged us. Let us normalise our lobbying so that the intention is the betterment of our people rather than involving in complications and other challenges.

Let me comment on the incident of the shooting at the island of Mbike which also related to the lobbying. The media has tried to portray it as a makeup but the fact is, that is real. I was one of the 17 members of parliament that live on that Island and it is because of that threat and lobbying intensity that we go through in forming a Government but then there are issues and threats and those of us in the group are looking at how best we can end up serving our people. And that is what made us go there and not for other reason. But that shooting is true, and I just praise God at this juncture that no one died because they used guns. But the public and those in the media who try to mislead the people, I want to confirm that it is true. And I pray that God will help us leaders to go back to our normal way of doing things. We are chiefs and we have a system that we can develop leadership in our own ethnic groups and society, therefore let us resort to that and continue to ask God to intervene and that is

our challenge. Because that comes from us leaders. And I want to challenge us, so that the 11<sup>th</sup> parliament go back to normal. Even camping in Hotels is strange to me, I do not want it but the custom in lobbying and forming our Government is like that. When I come in the 9<sup>th</sup> parliament I ended up sleeping in the hotels which I don't want.

So those are the issues that I saw and I want to register here that it is our responsibility as leaders and if anything that we can do to improve, I want to make this submission.

Let me touch on the campaigns and the candidates; I congratulate all of us, it is not easy as all the other colleagues shared already, we go through a tough fight, and situation. It is a challenging environment for us to come out as winners in the last election. I want to congratulate you all and God has helped us to come here. He still has a purpose for you that is why you come back and you to be a new member to this chamber. But that is not easy and all of you as our Prime Minister has already stated in his introduction to this motion, he received challenges too.

I want to share the case in West Are'Are, I do not expect it but it goes to an extreme. Five polling station in West Are'Are, I as a former member in West Are'Are cannot campaign there. Other candidates and their supporters prevented me to campaign in those places. As a former member of West Are'Are constituency could not even campaign in my own constituency in five polling station is an extreme. If you look at it, the attitudes and mentality of the rural people have been spoilt. Since just simple people there thinking and talking is so complicated. And for me, I am regarded as a criminal, that is what the candidates went and preached. They even pulled out documents from the Ministries and to say that is where all the money that the member for West Are'Are ate and have not done any work with it. That is what candidates did. I heard that some candidates from other constituencies also did that. Even public officers assist those candidates in West Are'Are constituency with documentations. There were staffs from three ministries that assisted candidates with documentations. The result in West Are'Are speaks for itself. That was the chorus just sung by the Member for South Guadalcanal- it speaks for itself. People will vote you back if you

look after their affairs. My candidates turn around and said that I bribed them and that is why majority of the people voted for me. I was surprised. Now they try to open a petition against the Member for West Are'Are.

I would just like to point to the mentality and attitude in politics that we have, which is not good for our people. There are public officers directly involved in this matter. This is how serious our politic is.

I thank my people of West Are'Are for the trust and confidence in me and putting me back for the second term. The result speaks for itself. I had the majority that put me back into the West Are'Are seat. This is not because of bribe. It is because of God's plan. I have been praying that if I am faithful to my people of West Are'Are, God will help them put their member back in Parliament. God has done that. Thank you God for doing that for West Are'Are constituency.

Our people need us to deliver. They voted me in because I served them for the four years. They will not vote you in if you do not serve them. I never think about corruption. I choose not to be one. I continue to claim as one of the advocators against corruption in this Parliament. I would like to thank my people for putting their confidence in me. I owe them what is due to them.

I would like to appeal to our people that were harassed and displaced and become victims of politics. I pray that God will help them. I also pray for the losing candidates and their supporters for restoring peace in the communities. Some families have been separated because of politics. I have few cases in West Are'Are. There are families separated because some voted for the Member for West Are'Are. I appeal to chiefs and church leaders in our constituencies, particularly, West Are'Are constituency to restore peace so that they can reunite. Politics is not bad it is us that made it look bad. It is something good for our people and for it to continue to recognize the needs of our people because of the government policies and delivery mechanisms.

I want to conclude with my Christmas greetings to you Sir and family and prosperous New Year 2015, to the Acting Clerk and staff of parliament. To the Prime

Minister and family and the Deputy, I want to also sincerely wish you Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year 2015.

Colleague Ministers and back bencher of DCC government, I wish you Merry Christmas to you and families and your constituents, prosperous New Year. We look forward for an interesting and enjoyable year as we have responsibility of leadership in Government for our people.

Leader of the Opposition, your colleague members and your families, the leader of the Independent group and colleague members and your families I also greet you with best wishes of this season to Christmas and happy prosperous new Year.

I want wish our donor partners and development partners, I want to wish them a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

To our churches and Christian throughout the country may the continue to celebrate this Christmas festivities with joy of Christ in their families and their lives. With that I support the motion.

*The House adjourned at 4.08pm*