

## FRIDAY 24<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2015

The Speaker, Hon Ajilon Nasiu took the chair at 9.55am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs & International Trade; Police, National Security & Correctional Services; Agriculture & Livestock Development; Mines & Energy; Education & Human Resources Development; Women & Youth Affairs and the Members for West Guadalcanal; West Kwara'ae; North Malaita; Rannogga/Simbo and West New Georgia.

### **SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Mr Speaker:** Honourable Members, as you know the Parliament library services is continuing and striving to improve its services to Members of Parliament. I therefore wish to inform you at this juncture that in its attempt to improve its services to Members, the library has provided a Research Kiosk Station for Members situated in the library for members who wish to do quick research for Parliament meetings. Please consult our librarians for assistance on this.

### **STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS** (*further statement*)

### **MOTIONS**

#### Motion No. 6 – Motion of Sine-die

**Hon MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*Prime Minister*): Mr Speaker, I rise to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the present meeting shall be concluded and Parliament shall then stand adjourn sine-die.

I note traditionally and normally announced by the Chair on the manner in which this motion is normally debated, and that is we can say anything we would like to say as this is the opportunity to do so, and normally the Chair allows a wide range of issues we can talk about. But it would also be important to note the rationale behind the expressed provisions of Standing Orders 8(4) which clearly requires that any debate on the motion shall be confined to the substance of the motion. And I take that to mean that Parliament's attention will be drawn to the substance of matters outlined by the mover. And in that regard, motions of sine die if properly structured could become an excellent opportunity for the

government of the day to seek the collective opinion of Parliament on any matters of national importance instead of using the occasion for us to score political points. And in that way, Parliament's time is better used to zero down on a selected subject matter that carries national significance. They could be either work in progress on major policies that needs the input of Parliament right from the beginning.

I am not saying I will be driving discussions in that way but having said that I also acknowledge that considering the varied and extensive coverage normally over issues that are normally allowed to be expressed by Members of Parliament during the debate on motions of sine-die, one could also argue that the government can take the opportunity to do that on matters raised.

I am saying that because so many good ideas, so many good thinking came out from Members of Parliament which over the years were just hot air because we say things and not follow them up. And some of these issues are about shaping up good policies; things like that. And I think to do justice to a lot of things that Members prepare for it, they have done their research and come here to Parliament and express them. To do justice to that, I think we need to take that into consideration. So that could be an excellent opportunity for the government to listen to what Members of Parliament are saying and if we need to polish up policies and so forth, it is a wonderful opportunity to hear elected Members of Parliament express their views.

But that is only a view and may be later on we could see how to properly structure the motion of sine-die so that we get something out of it. Right now we will be guided by the Chair on that matter **10.05** and we have two days to debate the motion. Not necessarily respond to what I will be saying but traditionally raise matters of national importance on the various sectors that you may want to raise and we will make all the attempts to do justice to what Members of Parliament are saying in this House.

This present sitting of Parliament was graced at its commencement by the presence of the representative of the country's Head of State, his Excellency the Governor General at the invitation of the Government to address Parliament from the Throne, a tradition of the Westminster system, which our system is modelled on. I can say that the Speech was well taken by Parliament as clearly demonstrated by Members of this Honourable House in the debate on the motion to thank His Excellency. I think if there is any message to be taken from the contribution of Members of Parliament during that debate, as far as the Government is concerned, it is the encouragement expressed that the Government must not fail the people of this country to deliver on its policy statements. I think that is a very powerful and a very important message that comes to us.

I want to assure this House that as leader of the Government that message does not fall on deaf ear. We are taking serious note. And why because it is concerned with the fundamental reason for the existence of any government and the DCC Government is no exception. If the Government exists for any other reasons than to address the needs of our people, it has no right to exist. That is how serious this Government is taking that advice.

That message must sink in the minds of all of us but more importantly to Members of Parliament who make up this Government.

We must not allow any room for petty politics to cloud our minds that we become overwhelmed by the little agendas and we forget that we are here to serve our people. That is the message we must continue to remind ourselves with. I am only repeating the call made by many colleagues who have expressed that. And I fully concur with that kind of view. This also goes to my friends on the other side, the Opposition who must also live up to the dignified title of loyal and responsible Opposition. And, of course, the Independent Group led by the Member for East Malaita.

At this juncture, I would like to acknowledge the very responsible and mature manner in which the Leader of the official Opposition and the Leader of the Independent Group have exercised their leadership responsibility over their respective groups. I would like to thank these two leaders and would like to acknowledge the maturity that is displayed by these two leaders and followed through by members of those two groups in the way they conduct themselves in parliament so far.

This country, and I want to repeat it again has had enough of political instability engendered by concern over issues that have nothing really to do with the fundamental reason why the Government exists. That is the importance of my acknowledgement of the mature manner in which we conduct ourselves in Parliament. As a matter of fact a good number of **10.10** motions of no confidence on Prime Ministers so far in this House have been entertained by this Parliament purely on narrow political reasons. And some of us who have gone through some of these bitter experiences can testify to this. My point in raising this issue is we have a collective responsibility to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past, all of us, including me.

Political instability is top amongst the list of causes of the sluggish nature of our progress as a nation. Whilst I agree that no confidence motion has a role to play in ensuring disciplining government, my point is, it must not be used as a tool only for expediency as we have been seeing in the past.

Good governance has been torn down by this agenda. The real victims of attitudes like that are people that we profess to represent in this House and for whom we pass budgets and laws in their names. In this regard, I also acknowledge my responsibility as a third time Prime Minister of our beloved country not to unduly place the reputation of the government in a position that will be unduly questioned by our people and Members of Parliament. That is a tough calling and I will need all the support of the DCC Group to live up to that expectation. That is a commitment I make to this Parliament.

Indeed, it is my desire to continue forge an effective working relationship with both groups on the other side of the House and the people of this country, a relationship that is premised on the principles that underlie the workings of our parliamentary democracy. I leave that issue there.

The other business that went through this sitting is the 2015 Appropriation Bill. It is the biggest budget in the history of our country. We take note of the 47 recommendations

made by the Public Accounts Committee. Parliament will also note that the Minister of Finance and ministers responsible for portfolios have outlined the Government's position on a lot of issues raised during the debate and I would like to endorse those positions. I thank the ministers for doing this.

In fact, I was really encouraged by the level and quality of debate by Honourable Members on both sides of the House. The points and concerns raised on budget management are not new. We have heard them before, and as a matter of fact we also raised them when we were on the other side of the House. I think that raises a very interesting observation on the manner in which we Members of Parliament relate to issues of good governance, and it depends really on which side of the House we are on. When we are on the Opposition we become good governance warriors and we will pull down heaven and earth to point issues to the government. When we are in Government the attitudes change. That is an interesting observation, and you can see them; it is really happening in this House. We say things not because we believe in them but because we are either in the Government or in the Opposition. Issues of implementation, budget accountability and fiscal responsibility, 10.15 we have heard them before. But grant it, it is something we need to continue to hear. But the fact that they are raised again and again shows they remain issues that any government must take serious note of. They will remain issues that we must continue to discuss and be concerned about in this House. I want to assure the House that the Democratic Coalition for Change Government is taking these issues very, very seriously. Sometimes it is very easy to say we are taking things very seriously too. (Man talem duim). But that is another matter because we really need the support of everyone to take things seriously.

Besides the issue of proper management of the budget, of course, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and many other colleagues also made useful contributions and echoed the points raised in the report by the Public Accounts Committee as regards the structure, emphasis, inadequacies and what the PAC believes to be failures of the budget. Many policy issues were raised during the debates, during the Second Reading and the Committee of Supply. I took serious note of those things. In fact, I list them down. There were a lot of interesting policy discussions taking place during the debate, for example, culling of dogs and other things. Some very interesting things that we did not even think about and therefore are not in the policy statements. But they are things that make a difference to the lives of the people in Honiara, for example. We take note of those policy issues and I have taken them down. What I will do is I will be writing to the appropriate portfolio ministers to look at whether they are in our policies or not. If not then a policy paper needs to come to Cabinet to discuss and if it needs to be adopted it is adopted formally into our policy statement and embrace them. Because that is what parliament is for. If we do not use the wisdom that comes out from Parliament, then we are not making of the highest executive decision making body of the land. That is a commitment I have made. I take note of the issues raised in the committee of supply and I will direct them to the minister responsible to follow them up.

There are people who cast doubts on the ability of the government to deliver. That is fair. There were raising concerns about lack of capacity. I agree that that will be a biggest challenge the government will face, and we are not ignorant of it. But we are taking note of these concerns seriously as it is about government, and the way the special arrangement to deliver in policies and who delivers the best and the best way. It is about competition. We are competing with the other side of the House. We say that we have the best way of delivery - we must stick to that garb. So we take seriously the issue of delivery.

All I can say at this point in time in response to that is that that is precisely the reason why the government sees it pertinent to strengthen the coordinating ministry and that is the Office of the Prime Minister. I do not have any other portfolio. My portfolio is to ensure that ministers deliver, and I need the understanding of my ministers on that. We will be talking and calling each other, we will be calling people into Cabinet and into my office to discuss why, why, why things do not happen this way. That is my role as Prime Minister and that is to coordinate government's work program.

In that regard, the government makes no secret about the recruitment of political appointees in the Prime Minister's Office at the number that was a subject of criticism by some people. Fair enough! But we made no secret about it. Government decisions must rightfully be scrutinised by people. My concern is that we have just begun to sharpen our knives and have not used them yet and people are starting to criticise us. We have not used those knives as yet. Allow us to use the knives to cut. **10:20** If we do not cut with them properly or they cannot work then okay, we are not working. It is for that reason that these people are on serious one year performance contract and they must deliver because if they do not deliver then we will need to talk whether they are fit to continue in office or not. We have already availed their names to the media and so we know who they are.

They are recruited to ensure that the government's machinery delivers on our election promises. Yes, we have line ministries, permanent secretaries and so forth. But there are two levels of government - the political government and the administrative government. Just make sure they are singing the same tune.

As minister responsible for the coordination of ministries, it is my responsibility to ensure the government delivers, and in this regard I call on the cooperation of all responsible authorities and personnel from government ministries, statutory authorities, state owned enterprises and even private sector to be in tune with the government. Government is about making policy and directions, these are the delivery machineries, and if they are not in tune then we will have problem as well.

We also call on the understanding of our development partners, non-government organisations, churches, business organizations and members of the public. We welcome constructive criticisms against the government. That is something the government must accept. It must not be defensive and so forth. I have been trying to do that. We hear criticisms and if we need to call people into the Prime Minister's Office to discuss their concerns, we will do it so that we can understand what we are not seeing eye to eye on what the government is trying to do.

The government takes note of the comments on the economic assumptions upon which the budget is formulated. The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee makes mention, for example, of the projected growth of real GDP of 3percent in 2015, strong growth in the regional economy, recovery after the flash flood attributed to the resilience of SMEs in this country and smallholders, 10 months import covering debt to GDP on a ratio of 11% and the potential of external reserves to grow in a big way as the significant economic environment in which the 2015 Budget is to be implemented. We are encouraged and he encouraged the government to take advantage of this positive outlook and strength to drive growth. What better measures do we need as the government.

In other words, what the Chairman is saying in his debate on the Budget is that there is no better time to resort to an agenda of driving growth than under the economic environment as described. Let me assure the House that the advice does not fall on deaf ear. We have heard it and the government is determined. We cannot just sit and watch when the opportunity to drive growth is offering itself. We are here and if this situation just passes by, we would be really, really irresponsible if we do not take advantage of the environment that is offering itself. And as a matter of fact that is precisely the reason why the government under the 2015 Budget decided to increase public expenditure, although risky and there are red lights everywhere in the strategic area and where the strength of the country's economy really lies.

The good thing about it is that we do not have to increase taxation to do it or without having to worry about the revenue hole created by the non-performance of the mining sector. A lot of question for 2016, we are not ignorant of that too. We take seriously note of the advice tendered 10.25 to the government by the other side of the house. The bulk of the additional spending is in the development of strategic sectors, as you would see in the 2015 Budget.

The government is also taking the opportunity to drive serious reforms in strategic sectors, reforms to address what the Chairman referred to as impediments to growth agenda. We take full note of that and the government is quite clear about the direction it is intending to lead this country. Our ultimate goal is to set a foundation where together we can pull this country out of our self created economic inferiority and place it on a sustainable path to graduate it eventually from the undesirable and insulting least developing countries status and dependency on aid. This is a slap on our face as leaders. And if we continue to be like that for another 20 years, then we should bury ourselves. That is not right. We take full note of what is said.

In this agenda, the government would like to fully utilize the public/private sector participation strategy, which the member for Aoke/Langalanga also mentioned. This is a very good strategy. Under this strategy the government with the support of our development partners will be addressing the basic infrastructure needs of investors and sort out land issues in the proposed locations of major developments. I cannot see any other way of doing this. The government must do its part; it has to do its part well before it can attract

investors coming in. That has been on the agenda, on our plate for quite a while but I think we must be serious about it now.

The government also on its part will be introducing legislation to our FTI attraction strategy to provide more predictability of investment outcomes by removing the discretionary powers of responsible ministers in terms of incentives for investors who would be attracted into special economic zones. A tough one but when this legislation comes we will discuss it properly. The legislation is being prepared now and we are bringing in some technical experts from outside places that have experience over these things to give advice to the government. This should make long term projection of investment outcome right from the very beginning possible. People may say they want to put in USD\$10million here, but if they are not sure about what kind of incentives they will get, they cannot make a long term projection to the outcome of the investment. If they know right from the very beginning, investors can do that, they can almost say 'yes, this investment is viable for me' and they will come. So let us make it easy for our investors. This is a move to provide a conducive environment for new FTI into the country.

The Government also fully appreciates the concern raised about the high level of taxation to GDP in the country. That is very true, and which is reflected in the high rate of tax paid by tax payers. That is very true. This is further reflected in the high cost of living and cost of doing business in Solomon Islands. That is very true. As a matter of fact, all the investors we have been talking with have expressed that concern. They have asked us to reduce it. So it is something the government must take serious note of. And as expressed many times in this House, note of in the design and in the implementation of our fiscal, and I drag in monetary policies inside here. Okay, it is under the purview of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands but if we are concerned about the future of this country, it is about time we sit down and talk about these two major tools.

I am saying that because imported inflation has been seen to be the main contributor to the high cost of living and doing business in Solomon Islands. Reducing the cost of government must be handled very carefully because **10.30** the big budget might just fizzle down. That is the reason why we have a narrow base tax system. It has to be noted that only major restructure of the country's taxation system was carried out in the early 1990s and that restructure shows a major trade-off between direct and indirect taxation and the introduction of the Goods Tax saw the reduction of the level of tax paid by tax payers who pay tax under the individual right. But it is worth noting that taxation is only one aspect of the investment environment issue that the country should be concerned about. There are also issues of immigration, labour, employment and streamlining of administrative procedures to look into as well. These are challenges the government is facing and it is determined to face them head on and this needs a comprehensive approach to reforming our investment strategy.

The current ad hoc and piece meal approach to reforming our FDI attraction strategy has not worked for us for donkey years and we would be simply irresponsible to continue down that path. Let us learn from our mistakes in the past. It is that policy approach that

continues to hold this country down and we will continue to be listed as a least developing highly aid dependant country if we do not change our attitudes. The time is come for us to open up this country. If we want to take this country out from its current path of not knowing where we are going, we must open the country up to opportunities that are presenting themselves in the regional and global investment market by addressing the inherent weaknesses in our strategies. Whether they be structural, cultural, institutional, attitudinal and may be legal as well. Failing this, we will continue to live in poverty amidst plenty.

I guess the opportunity is now in the hands of this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament to do it. We will also do injustice to the thousands of Solomon Islanders who placed so much trust and confidence on the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, and I am not talking about the DCC Government but the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament, to tackle the issues that continue to hold this country down so that our future generations can truly enjoy peace, progress and prosperity that men should brothers be let nation see. Thirty seven years of travelling on no man's land is enough. Let us have our focus right and live up to a status as a country that is blessed with economic opportunities.

The Government will also take the forthcoming Australia/Solomon Islands business conference that will be held here to take advantage and take a serious look at our investment strategy. Let us take some of their ideas and apply it here. It is a big one and we are all invited to it. It used to be held in Brisbane, Australia and now they are kind enough to bring it here to us in Solomon Islands in Honiara for us to meet with them. This is a wonderful opportunity.

The Democratic Coalition for Change Government's position is that we need to achieve an annual growth of at least 5 percent in the short to medium term to cope with the rising demands associated with our population growth. That is a challenging one. Projection is about 3 percent but if we put more effort, I do not think this 5 percent is not achievable but rather it is achievable if we put our heads right. On the economic front, the DCCG's position is also clear and that is we will continue to place greater emphasis on the development of our fisheries, agriculture, forestry and tourism sectors and of course to tread the mining sector very, very carefully. This is a sector that is bringing so heartache and so it is a wonderful opportunity for us to use that sector to develop our country as it brings us more heartache and headache. **10.35** Let us tread that sector very carefully.

Of course, job creation is very much on the agenda of the Democratic Coalition for Change Government and this will have to be addressed on two levels. At the formal level, our aggressive attitude towards attracting large investment in tourism, fisheries and agriculture is sure to guarantee more employment in the formal sector over the medium and long term. The Mamara Resort is going to commence this year. They are now starting to load ships and coming over. With spinoffs that would see more jobs created in the supporting industries like agriculture, housing and construction. They are talking about buying five thousand eggs a day, vegetables and so forth when this investment is fully

setup. This is on 100 hectares land right there in West Honiara. The opportunity is right there and so job creation is there.

The government is currently working with an investor that is proposing to invest more than SBD\$2billion in tourism, fisheries, bird farming and infrastructure development. We were actually talking and some memorandums of understanding have been signed. Talks are actively going on.

We are determined to help investor to achieve their objectives in Solomon Islands. The Government is currently holding serious consultations with groups of genuine investors from the Peoples Republic of China to invest in tourism again, energy and the infrastructural development sector. It is clear from these consultations that one of the major stumbling blocks to the development of our tourism sector is the cost of getting to Solomon Islands and the proper packaging of tourism product. We need to do it. There are people here to help us do that. There is so much to see in this country.

**Mr. Rick Houenipwela** (*interjecting*): Some of them are now in the gallery.

**Hon. Manasseh Sogavare**: Oh yeah and we welcome them.

The Iron Bottom Sound is the grave of more than 1,000 Allied ships sunk there during the Second World War. This is the turning point of the Second World War. We have the longest lagoon in the world. We have the biggest high rise lake in the region - Rennell/Bellona. And we are some of 'the, the' of the world. It is just that we are not packaging them properly; we did not. This is a giant that is sleeping and we really need to do something to make sure we take advantage of them.

One thing they were saying is the cost of getting to Solomon Islands to see these wonderful things if we can package them. We can package them but the cost of arriving here is too much. The need to upgrade our international airport to cater for bigger aircrafts from Asia is a pressing issue for the country right now. The Government is seriously looking at these issues and will undertake serious actions to address these hurdles head on. This may include reconsidering the open sky policy of this country. Why run an International Airline when we are incompetent? The way things are going now is we are unnecessarily starving our tourism sector of tourists from Asia who want to come to this country in great numbers.

The opening of the Mamara tourism establishment will put this pressure on us more. We need to get in these people here.

Of course, the other area of employment the Government is pushing is in our comprehensive rural development strategy, which is now supported by an improved budgetary allocation. This is the area that mainstream economists are not taking into consideration, but it is a very important sector as far as employment is concerned in the setting of Solomon Islands.

Aggressive empowerment of our people in this setting where the majority is still relying on subsistence activities is our only guarantee against absolute poverty in this

country. We must be careful not to quickly push our people away from the subsistence economy. We must do it very carefully. This is a recipe for disaster as it can amount to forcing this country into poverty through direct Government intervention. **10.40** Let us be careful on how we handle it. That is where the government pushing funds where it should happen. The strategy is to empower our people where they are so that we curb unnecessary migration to the urban centres, but at the same time we empower our people to participate in economic development by relating straight to the strength of the country which lies in our natural resources - land, sea, forestry and others because they are the ones owning those things. It is not like other places where land is owned by the government. In the setting of Solomon Islands, these things are owned by our people and this is another area where jobs can be created and the government is actually pursuing that now to help our people to have jobs in their places or on their own land. I will leave this discussion here.

The Government's commitment to address corruption is well documented. The policy on corruption which will see the eventual establishment of the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) is currently being canvassed with relevant stakeholders, and it will go before Cabinet as soon as these consultations are completed. It is my desire to see the framework completed in 2015. In the meantime, the Government will cause investigations and enquiries into reported cases of corruption. And there is already a good number of them with the government. We cannot continue to allow people who are bent on serving themselves and their cronies to tarnish the image of the government. We will not allow that to happen. And I must encourage members of the public to report cases of inappropriate actions by public officers or anyone to the Prime Minister's Office. Right now I am in the process of taking appropriate actions on a number of cases that have been reported to me. I will not hesitate to cause the removal of people from the Public Service who are bent on serving themselves. I leave that issue there.

The other important business that came before the House during this sitting is the Fisheries Management Bill 2015, which Parliament just passed, and I must congratulate the Minister for Fisheries and Marine Resources and all of you because he singlehandedly all of you. We were just around to support him. But thank you for all the questions that were raised yesterday on that Bill which was passed yesterday. Thank you very much for the support of Parliament.

But captured in that Bill as highlighted in the objects and principles are legal provisions and processes that will empower the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources to take sufficient measures in the international fight against illegal fishing and unsustainable utilisation of our fisheries resources. Because of the weaknesses in the current legislation, Solomon Islands has not been able to be an effective party in the fight against illegal fishing. As a result, we have fallen short of the standard required for our fish products to enter the European Union market. I hope what the Ministry has been doing, a lot of it is taken up by other administrative arrangements and the ministry is doing it now. But the law that was just passed has really added strength to Solomon Islands. We have been yellow carded and I hope that yellow card will be lifted as soon as a review is done on what we have done so

far. Solomon Islands has direct vested interest in ensuring that we address these weaknesses and this is because fish stands high in the least of the strength of our country, which if strategically developed has huge potential to address our development needs in the medium to long term. This has been expressed widely in this Parliament. And for that to happen, our stock of fish must be sustainably harvested.

The European Union data revealed that between 11 to 26million tonnes of fish, which is 15percent of the world catches are caught illegally every year. This is not good and that is worth between \$8 to \$19billion Euros 10.45 and so we have an obligation to join the fight against this illegal fishing, and in order for Solomon Islands to be effective in this fight, our fisheries laws must be up to the standards approved by the European Union.

I take the views expressed by some of our colleagues here and have all the right to make those comments, but I do not think they want to make us subservient to them. No! I think what they are trying to tell us is something is good for us and we will do it anyway. What they are telling us is something we are going to do to make sure we sustainably harvest our resources. They are just reminding us. The European Union is the biggest importer of every fish in the world so let us not play around with them. We need to comply with what they are telling us to do because it is good for us.

But even with that objective in mind, we have a duty to improve our fisheries for important national reasons. It is important to note that whatever we do in the management of our sea resources, we must be cognisant of its potential effect on the livelihoods of our people. And it is for that reason that anything we do in this regard must get the approval and the consent of our people through our provincial governments. This Government is fully satisfied that the Bill that was passed by Parliament is really addressing all aspects of it.

In recognition of this very important concern, the development of the Bill has taken meticulous process over a number of years. The process is fully cognisant of the fact that an effective fisheries management system must broaden the perspective beyond seeing fishery as simply fish in the sea and people in boats, beyond consideration only for commercially important species and beyond management efforts directed solely at the harvesting process. It looks beyond those and the Bill captures these very well.

The legal framework strives to balance the diverse societal objectives by taking count of knowledge and uncertainties of biotic and human components of ecosystems and their interactions and applying an integrated approach to fisheries. The Bill that will soon to become law after it is assented to, the Government is committed to see it fully implemented. And we take full note of the concerns raised by Members of Parliament.

I do not want to bore this Parliament any longer and so I take this opportunity to thank all Members of Parliament for making this meeting a very productive one, and I look forward to more productive meetings. It is my intention to recall Parliament as soon as important development bills are ready. As soon as bills that matters to getting things moving are ready, we will call Parliament.

But I think special mention has to be made to the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Independent Group for demonstrating maturity. Of course, not forgetting the

Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee and the Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee for their outstanding work in scrutinising government policy carried in the Budget and the Fisheries Management Bill. We also thank your colleagues as well on both sides of the House that have contributed to the debates that have brought food for thought to the government through the issues you have raised.

I would also like to thank my ministers, especially the first timers who have demonstrated high level of professionalism in their performance. We have only been yellow carded once in this meeting; a call for quorum. That is a yellow card, we call that yellow card but we learn as we go. We are reminding ourselves that we have the number and this is why we are in government and quorum should never, never be called against the government because we have the number. Let us remind ourselves about that but we are doing exceptionally well first timers and I am very pleased with your performance. They have done very well so give them two more meetings and they will be on top of the world.

Sir, you have done well too, and of course your deputy who sat right down here yesterday. I take this opportunity to thank you very much, Mr Speaker, your deputy and the Clerk for providing the leadership that saw the successful ending of this 10.50 meeting.

Also, I continue to acknowledge the prayers of thousands and thousands of Solomon Islanders who do not cease to petition God on behalf of the Government. I had calls from people who called up and said 'we are still praying for you', and this is not only for me but members of the government and Members of Parliament. We are in their prayers every day. We have to acknowledge that and so let us live up to people's prayers whose names are always referred to God every day. Let us live up to that. Let us not disappoint them. They are committing us to God every day. We thank these people so much. We can see evidence of God's leading in direct response to these petitions.

On behalf of this Parliament, we also acknowledge the continual support of our development partners. They are very important partners in getting this country forward and, of course, the untiring commitment of our business community who will be major financiers of the 2015 Budget of \$4.1billion. Some of them were saying 'are we going to pay that much to the government?' But that is how the assessment goes. So we thank them so much. These are the people that will matter to the implementation of the 2015 Budget and we thank them so much for that. I would also like to thank those that I may have forgotten to thank today.

If there is anything we say in this Parliament that hurts us; this is a more civilised Parliament because we can argue in here but when we go out we go and sit down together around one table, we eat and we chat. Unlike some other parliaments that we know of, they go out in different doors – the opposition through another door and the government through another door and never talk to each other and the only place they talk to each other is on the floor of parliament rubbishing each other. No, this is a more civilised parliament and we want to keep it that way. And if there is anything that we say to each other that may hurt our feelings, we all have our customs to deal with it. We also have chiefs here in

Parliament. There are chiefs sitting here and if there is anything we say that hurts another one and breaches our customs, we apologise.

With those introductory comments, I look forward to a lively debate over the next two days. We will start debate on Monday on this motion and so I look forward to a livelihood debate. I beg to move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the present Meeting shall be concluded and Parliament shall then stand adjourn sine die. I beg to move.

*Debate on the motion adjourned to the next sitting day.*

**Hon Manasseh Sogavare:** I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

*The House adjourned at 10.54am*