

THURSDAY 10TH DECEMBER 2009

The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Kengava took the Chair at 10.12 a.m.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Justice & Legal Affairs; Foreign Affairs & External Trade; Commerce, Industries & Employment; Women, Youth and Children's Affairs; Fisheries & Marine Resources; Environment, Conservation & Meteorology, Communication & Civil Aviation, lands, Housing and Survey, Agriculture & Livestock Development, Infrastructure & Development, Home Affairs, Education & Human Resources, and members for East Honiara, Central Makira, East Are Are, Mbaegu/Asifola, Central Honiara, West Are Are, Temotu Nende, Lau/Mbaelelea, North Guadalcanal, Shortlands, West Honiara, North West Guadalcanal, Malaita Outer Island and West Makira.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- Report on the Public Accounts Committee on its inquiry into the 2010 Appropriation Bill 2009 (National Parliament Paper No.45 of 2009)

BILLS

Bills – Second Reading

The 2010 Appropriation Bill 2009

Hon RINI: Mr Speaker, I rise to beg that the 2010 Appropriation Bill 2009 be now put to the second reading.

Mr Speaker, I am very privileged and most humbled as Minister for Finance and Treasury to present to this Honourable House the 2010 Budget on

behalf of the Government and the nation of Solomon Islands. This is a requirement under Section 102 of our National Constitution. This Budget is the third that I am presenting to this Honourable House and it is also the third Budget of this Government.

Mr Speaker, the 2010 Budget is being delivered in a challenging environment. The Global Economic Crisis (GEC) is affecting the growth prospects of both advanced and developing countries around the world. Sir, the Government has already taken strong and decisive actions to manage and minimise the impacts of the GEC on our country, ensuring that essential services and support continue to be delivered to our people. Thus far, government finances continue to remain very tight. Nonetheless, the Government has continued to act decisively and remains committed and confident to ensure that it is well placed to deliver on its promises and commitment to our people in these challenging times.

The economic outlook for 2010 remains uncertain. Hence, the Government must continue to be vigilant. This Budget continues these efforts by being fiscally responsible and focusing on delivering the key CNURA Government objectives, including:

- Promoting the development and construction of infrastructure in rural areas.
- Providing greater opportunities for economic development in rural areas.
- Providing access to education for the children of this nation.
- Improving and maintaining the health of all our people.
- Promoting sustainable peace throughout the nation through peace and reconciliation activities.
- Maintaining our democratic traditions by ensuring that the 2010 Election is free, fair and accessible to all eligible voters.

This Government is creating a stable and developing nation where resources flow to rural communities, allowing them to progress and advance economically and peacefully. The Government is committed to strengthening government institutions and structures ensuring the best use of resources available. Moreover, we are creating an environment where the people of this nation have

appropriate and equitable access to education and health resources. These are the essential building blocks for the sustained economic progress of our country.

The Budget is a fundamental instrument of Government policy in achieving its objective. The 2010 Budget continues our progress along the path we have charted in our Government's Policy Statements as well as our Translation and Implementation Framework. The Budget gets adequate resources to the ministries and offices so that they can deliver the goods and services to achieve our policies.

We are also focusing on working effectively with our donor partners as this Government recognises that only through partnerships and working together can great things be achieved. The Government is committed to developing strong, healthy and equal partnerships with our donor partners including other governments and organizations and our regional friends, particularly through the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands.

Before I outline the state of the economy and the 2010 Budget, let me first highlight to the House the approach the Government has taken to framing this Budget in the face of the Global Economic Crisis: First, this is a fiscally responsible and fully funded Budget that requires no additional borrowing. Funding comes from local revenue, donor budget support and cash reserves carried forward from 2009. Second, all available financial resources are utilised so that the Government's capacity to deliver on policy priorities is maximized.

- The Government has devoted \$375 million to development projects. This is an increase of \$2.8 million from the 2009 Budget.

Third, the 2010 Budget ensures that ministries are able to continue to maintain the same level of service to the people of this nation.

- The Recurrent Estimates will have an increase of \$41.1 million or 2.6 percent, to provide for rising operating costs.

Fourth, the Government is only funding filled establishment positions to ensure funding is directed to high priority service delivery areas and necessary development expenditure. Lastly, our donor partners continue to play an important role in the delivery of services and ongoing development of this country. Contributions from donors, particularly Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of China, European Union, World Bank and Asian Development Bank assist to secure the economic future of this nation.

This Budget includes several major measures to help place our country on a firm economic and financial footing. This is an essential ingredient to improving the future for all our people, including our rural people and communities.

Let me now outline the fundamentals of the 2010 Budget. The total consolidated budget funding for 2010 comprises of domestic revenue, cash reserves and budget support from development partners. The 2010 Budget is estimated at \$1.997 billion. This is an overall increase of \$43.9 million or 2.2 percent on the 2009 Budget. This will fund recurrent expenditure of \$1.622 billion and development expenditure of \$375 million. Recurrent expenditure to be appropriated in the 2010 Appropriation Act 2010 excluding Statutory Expenditure, will increase by 6 percent to \$1.469 billion.

In 2009, the economy slowed significantly from the high growth rates achieved from 2006 to 2008. In real terms, the economy is expected to grow by around 1.0 percent in 2009, compared to 6.9 percent in 2008. This is largely due to weakened external demand reducing log production and commodity prices, lower agricultural output due to floods in the first quarter of 2009 and slow growth in other sectors as government revenue became constrained.

The Government's preliminary estimate for the national economy in 2010 is for real economic growth rate of 2 percent. This increase is primarily due to the slight recovery in global activity, particularly among our Asian trading partners. Inflation is expected to remain relatively low in 2010 due to a slow return to global economic growth with moderate price increases.

While the economic outlook will be challenging, the Government has already shown its commitment to take strong and decisive actions to ensure the stability and prosperity of our national economy, and our resolve and will to continue to do so in the long term.

I would now like to give an overview of the 2010 Budget. This Government's medium to long term direction for our nation are clearly set out in a number of publicly available documents, the primary ones being our Policy Statements and the Translation and Implementation Framework documents. These are supplemented by our Medium Term Development Strategy as well as our regularly updated Medium Term Fiscal Strategy.

There are two fundamental objectives of the Government which are set out in these documents. The first is to pursue structural reform to make the Solomon Islands an easy and reliable place to do business and invest and for industries to thrive and grow. In addition, concerted actions to firm up key strategic public sector investments and to improve sector prospects more generally are being vigorously pursued. The second is maintaining an affordable and sustainable Government budget which limits national debt to a manageable

and sustainable level, improves Government decision making processes, and focuses on achieving our national development goals.

To be able to ensure that we can meet these objectives we need to progress towards a sovereign nation that is confident, has high ethical standards based on its values and traditions and with respected and sincere leadership. The Government's actions continue to focus on these values by empowering our people, growing the economy, providing stable law and order and delivering essential services more efficiently and effectively.

We need to continue to work in partnership with stakeholders as genuine economic, political and social transformation can only be achieved in a climate and environment of trust. Moreover, our programs can only be achieved in a stable economic and political environment. This Government has worked tirelessly and made the difficult, but necessary, decisions to ensure a stable economic environment was maintained despite the Global Economic Crisis.

We are ensuring that our healthy democracy is maintained by providing adequate funding and support for the 2010 National Election, Provincial Elections in Malaita, Isabel, Central, Guadalcanal, Temotu and Rennell/Bellona as well as the Honiara City Council election. Further, we are currently undertaking a National Population Census that will provide us with the information and data required to ensure that we can frame policies and service delivery that meet the needs of all our people. We continue our commitment to peace and reconciliation and we also continue to strive to ensure that all our people receive adequate income and fair return for the use of our natural resources.

Let me turn briefly to the Global Economic Crisis and its impact on our national economy. Following the deep global recession, global economic activity is expanding once again and financial market conditions have improved substantially. However, the recovery is likely to be slow particularly across developed countries. It is the emerging and developing economies, led by Asia that will lead the recovery prompting a gradual rebound in world trade and commodity prices. This will have positive effects for our national economy.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that after contracting by about one per cent in 2009 from over five percent growth in 2008, global economic activity is expected to expand by around three per cent in 2010.

Sir, the reduced global demand in 2009 resulted in falling commodity prices. By the end of third quarter of 2009, the world price of copra had fallen by 42 percent, fish by 10 percent and logs by 4 per cent. Conversely, cocoa price increased by 14 percent. Reduced global demand has also caused lower export volumes, with export of logs declining by 29 percent, copra declining by 42 per cent, fish (compounded by poor weather conditions) declining by 23 percent

while the export of palm products remained flat. Cocoa exports, on the other hand, rose by 83 percent in response to higher cocoa prices.

A positive outcome of the Global Economic Crisis, however, is the fall in world fuel and food prices. Reduction in the global price of fuel has filtered into our economy and benefited consumers. Incidentally, falls in world rice prices have not been matched by reduction in rice prices in the country. Against this backdrop of the Global Economic Crisis, our national economy in 2010 is expected to recover moderately.

In 2009, the national economy slowed significantly. In real terms, the national economy is expected to grow by around 1.0 percent. This is a decline from the high growth rates achieved in 2008 of 6.9 percent largely due to weakened external demand which reduced log production and commodity prices.

As I alluded to earlier, the growth outlook for 2010 is expected to recover moderately, with the real growth rate expected to be around 2 percent. This improvement in growth is primarily due to the slight recovery in global activity particularly among our Asian trading partners. However, the expected continuation of depressed commodity prices and the continuing fall in log production will remain a restraint on our economic growth prospects.

In 2009, inflation decreased significantly. Using the rebased index created in 2007 by the National Statistics Office, inflation has slowed down from the highest peak of 23.5 percent in September 2008 to 3.4 percent at the end of September 2009. This is due mainly to price declines in both imported items particularly fuel and rice and domestic items. However, as our national economy remains dependent on fuel and food imports, the absence of immediate substitutes means the economy remains vulnerable to future price changes should there be supply disruptions or economic growth picks up faster than expected. In 2010, inflation is expected to remain relatively low due to a slow return to global economic growth.

Our balance of trade deteriorated significantly in 2009, with the deficit increasing by 80 percent on the 2008 deficit of around \$750 million in 2009. A key cause has been the significant drop in commodity export volumes coupled with lower prices that were not offset by the high volumes of imports, particularly fuel.

At the beginning of 2009 our level of foreign reserves provided for less than 3 months import cover, which is below the international benchmark. I am pleased to inform the Honorable House that our gross international reserves have risen significantly to \$1.041 billion, or 5.2 months of import cover. This increase reflects an additional SDR allocation of 9.2 million from the IMF,

increased donor inflows and revaluation gains, reflecting movements in foreign exchange rates.

While the national economy is now in a comfortable position, the need for strong Central Bank action must continue as foreign reserves are expected to decline over the medium term due to a decline in logging export receipts. The Central Bank will continue to monitor the situation and take measures if and when necessary.

The state of the economy is the key driver of government revenue and hence of the overall funding capacity. Our economy is being impacted by the Global Economic Crisis, but this Government is determined to maintain confidence during these challenging times. Sir, we will continue to take strong and decisive actions to manage the economy and ensure that the Government continues to meet its commitments to delivering services to our people.

As I have already mentioned, the 2010 Budget has been prepared in a challenging environment where every country in the world is still feeling the impacts of the Global Economic Crisis. Despite this, I am pleased to note that the 2010 Budget, consisting of the Recurrent and Development Estimates, is fully funded and requires no additional borrowing by the Government. Funding is provided through a combination of domestic revenue, external budget support and cash reserves.

A full listing of all initiatives funded by the 2010 Budget, broken down into the six priority policy areas of this Government, are provided in the 2010 Budget Strategy and Outlook document. This document is also being released in conjunction with the 2010 Budget.

Let me now outline the broad 2010 Budget. The 2010 Budget is fiscally responsible and despite the impacts of the Global Economic Crisis, ensures services continue to be provided to our people of our nation. Despite growth slowing in 2009 due to the Global Economic Crisis, domestically sourced revenue is expected to grow moderately from the revised estimate of \$1.420 billion in 2009 to \$1.664 billion in 2010. This is an increase of 17 percent. With development partner's Budget support included, total revenue will increase by 18 percent.

Total Recurrent Estimates expenditure, including statutory expenditure and donor contributions, will increase to \$1.622 billion. This is an increase of \$300 million or 23 percent on 2009 revised estimates. This will allow maintenance of existing services and meet higher payroll costs and increasing overheads such as utilities and fuel. But the Recurrent Estimates is only part of the picture. The Solomon Islands Government contribution to the 2010 Development Estimates will be \$295million. This is an increase of \$95 million on revised 2009 estimates.

In addition to the Solomon Islands Government development project funding, there are a broad range of donor-funded development projects. In this respect we are extremely grateful to our development partners for their continued support to our nation.

In terms of Recurrent Estimates initiatives, I am pleased to be able to report that despite the Global Economic Crisis the Government will ensure existing services continue to be provided for our people. The Government has also ensured funding for our Fee Free Education policy, for the 2010 National Election, for essential infrastructure maintenance and for the purchase of medical equipment.

I would like again to highlight that this is a responsible Budget in that it is fully funded. Moreover, it will provide for a further reduction in national debt. As a responsible Government, we will continue to repay both our foreign and domestic debts. As a result, national debts are expected to decline to around \$1.55 billion at the end of 2009. Further reductions are expected in 2010 and beyond with the Government intending to continue its practice of responsible debt management. This demonstrates that the Government is committed to meet its international and domestic debt obligations.

The increased expenditure in the Budget will address areas where funding pressures risk impacting on capacity to maintain service levels and government assets. In addition, the Government has identified key areas where funding is allocated to support the six priority policy areas identified in the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement Government Policy Statements, namely:

- Reconciliation and Rehabilitation
- National Security and Foreign Relations
- Infrastructure Development
- Social Services
- Economic and Productive Sector and
- Civic Affairs.

Given my particular responsibilities for the state of the economy, the collection of revenue and the operations of government, let me with your permission, outline major initiatives in these critical areas of Government policy.

Reconciliation and rehabilitation is fundamental to our future social and economic progress, especially given the broad-ranging and diverse interests in our society and in our cultures. This Government continues to act in addressing these objectives and hence allocates a total of around \$19.3 million in both the Recurrent and Development Estimates. Of this amount, an additional \$1.6

million is allocated to support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and \$5 million is appropriated for the National Reconciliation Program.

Reconciliation and rehabilitation is not just a function of Government action. It is a process which is about the healing of hearts and it relies on what we feel in our hearts and what we must do for our people. Reconciliation will happen with the goodwill of our own people. In addition to the Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation, there are a range of other ministries and functions that are expected to continue making significant contributions to this work. It is paramount that we must all work together to ensure the unity of all our people. Reconciliation and rehabilitation is a responsibility for all of us and it is fundamental to our future social and economic progress.

The Government acknowledges the critical role of the Solomon Islands Police in maintaining national security. We also acknowledge the assistance of the Pacific Forum Countries in providing policing services to our nation and we must thank them most sincerely for their continued assistance. However, we cannot rely on their assistance indefinitely. We must now take over from development partners and build the infrastructure needed to provide a more effective policing service, especially a marked presence in the provinces. Hence, around \$135.3 million is allocated to the Ministry of Police, National Security and Correctional Services. Of these amounts, an additional \$3.9 million is allocated for repair of police housing and an additional \$1.7 million for maintenance of correctional services buildings.

Sir, in addition, over \$3.5 million is provided for Tetere Prison and Naha Correctional housing. Over \$6.2 million is allocated for police housing in Tetere, Gizo, Buala, Marau and Auki.

Since our Prime Minister's meeting with his counterparts from Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand at the Pacific Islands Forum in Cairns earlier on this year, we have made significant progress in our country's relationships with these nations. Hence, we will continue with the significant enhancements of around \$30 million for our Chancellery in Canberra. The upgraded facilities will allow us to strengthen and deepen our relationships with Australia and will enable us to provide better services to our citizens there as well as promote trade and explore investment opportunities.

Infrastructure developments include expenditures on new urgent rehabilitation of infrastructure and on building new infrastructure which is essential to stimulate economic growth, enhance rural advancement and foster national unity.

In the 2010 Budget the Government is committed to provide a sum total of \$77.2 million to infrastructure development including:

- \$13.4 million for Water supply systems in Honiara and Auki;
- \$10 million for Rural Road Development;
- Development of airfields and airport infrastructure with \$5 million provided for provincial airfields;
- The Malaita provincial housing project with funding of \$1.5 million, and the Choiseul Township Development with funding of \$3 million;
- Improving electricity supply, particularly through continued funding for the hydro electric scheme with funding of \$1 million, and \$1 million for the rural electrification project for hospitals and schools in Provincial centres;
- The Noro Industrial Development with funding of \$4 million and the Bina Industrial and Harbour Development project with funding of \$3 million, along with the Suafa Port Development, which will also receive \$2 million; and
- \$4.5 million to implement land reform and acquisition programs.

In addition, donor funded and support programmes and projects in the infrastructure sector mainly in roads and maritime in the 2010 Budget is very significant.

The Social Services sector, comprising Education and Health and Medical Services, are the largest centres of expenditure in the 2010 Budget. It is the right of every citizen to receive basic education and access to health care. This Government has allocated around \$400 million to the education sector. Of this, over \$26 million has been allocated for Recurrent and Development Estimates to cover the costs of our Fee Free Education Policy. And \$1.8 million is allocated to provide Financial Management Training for School Managers. In addition, \$16.7 million in scholarships and training awards will continue to be provided by the Republic of China. And the SICHE campus will be upgraded at a cost of \$3 million.

In respect to health services, over \$242 million has been allocated to this sector with major projects including:

- \$4 million for provincial rural water supplies and sanitation;

- \$2.5 million for the procurement of medical, pharmaceutical and consumables;
- the upgrade of the National Referral Hospital of \$3.0 million and \$1.5 million for renovations and improvements to rural health clinics; and
- additional funds for health officers' housing.

In addition, donor funded and support programmes and projects in the health sector including Japan funded Gizo Hospital in the 2010 Budget is very significant.

Our nation's economic and productive sectors have the potential to grow further, create more jobs, more business opportunities and raise the general standard of living for its citizens. We must, however, make more rapid progress to keep pace with our increasing population. We cannot expect donors to build our economy, and we cannot wait for overseas investors to come knocking at our door. We must take action ourselves.

Sir, in addition to laying the foundations for some of the large scale projects the Government continues its commitment to provide \$1 million per constituency for small projects. This is to be administered by Honourable Members of Parliament, their support committees and Constituency Development Officers. The Government also intends to provide \$10 million for the National Rice Program and \$8 million to complete the Cattle Development Project.

In other productive sectors, reforestation will be supported with \$8 million; \$5 million will be provided for Ecotourism Grants; and \$2 million for the Melanesian Festival of Arts.

The Civic Affairs sector comprises efforts to improve participation of women and youth in decision making, ensuring the rights of children are protected and assisting the nation to become a popular and competitive sporting nation in the region. These major areas of our society can contribute to reconciliation, to national security and to economic development.

Importantly, next year will see a number of elections take place, a vital component to ensuring the continuation of our robust democracy, allowing the people of our nation to have their say on who leads them and the policies that determine the future of this country. The Government provides \$30 million to

ensure that the 2010 National Election is well planned and executed in an open and fair manner.

In addition to the National Election, \$7 million is provided to ensure that Provincial Elections take place giving people the opportunity to determine who represents them in the Provinces of Malaita, Isabel, Central, Guadalcanal, Temotu, Rennell/Bellona and the Honiara City Council.

Other elements of Civic Affairs had not been omitted. The policy role of the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs will be strengthened to allow consideration of a wide range of policy issues relevant to these sections of our society so vital to our future progress. Work will also commence on a National Centre for Women, Youth and Children for completion in 2010. A special provision of \$1.2 million is also allocated to provide our youth and children access to music and suitable instruments.

These initiatives in the six priority policy areas demonstrate this Government's commitment to equitable and sustainable development aimed at improving the livelihoods and the social and economic integration of all our people, especially those in rural areas. They are built on a sound policy framework, a commitment to action and a genuine desire to become a good friend and neighbour in the Pacific region. The Government is committed to retaining our independence and our sovereignty in a community of friends and neighbours.

The Government has established its reform credentials, having progressed a wide range of reforms which leads to identifiable improvements in the economic and financial performance of the Solomon Islands. The Government reacted with strong and decisive action to the Global Economic Crisis and its impacts on the national economy through a combination of sound economic and financial decision making and the foundations established by previous reforms. This has, to date, enabled the Government to navigate these difficult times while still delivering core services to our people.

While it has managed the impact of the Global Economic Crisis so far, the Government recognises the need for and has reaffirmed its commitment to further financial management reform with budget reform a key objective. Throughout 2010 and going forward, the Government, through the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, is pursuing improved Budget processes, including:

- improved Cabinet review of policy proposals and their costs;
- a strategy to move the Budget towards multi-year budgeting;

- clearer linkages between the recurrent and development estimates and the Establishment.

Honourable Members will note that the 2010 Budget has provided for the maintenance of Government assets across all Ministries. This is a very deliberate decision. Government assets such as housing, vehicles, boats, outboard motors, IT equipment and office equipment belong to the people of this nation. They are used to support and provide services to our people. The Government, through the Ministries, is the guardian of these assets and we have an obligation to our people to ensure they are kept in good and safe working order and that their value is maintained.

The Government is working hard to minimise the impacts of the Global Economic Crisis on the economy and to ensure that vital services and support for our people are maintained. Now is not the time to have expenditure diverted to expensive replacement of assets due to insufficient maintenance. With this in mind, in early 2010 my Ministry will be requesting Ministries to develop Asset Management Plans. These plans will assist in getting better value for money over the life of our assets.

The Government will continue to improve revenue collections as we have done in 2010. These improved collections are critical to providing greater capacity to the Government to resource ministries to deliver improved services to our people.

Let me again stress that this Budget is implementing our policies for reform, using specifically our Medium Term Development Strategy and Medium Term Fiscal Strategy as the framework. These clearly shows the immediate need for serious efforts to both grow the economy and place government finances on a more sustainable footing.

Let me stress to this Honourable House that while the Global Economic Crisis still impacts on our economy, our economic outlook is promising. This is directly a result of the strong and decisive actions this Government has taken to date. But our job is by no means over. We must not rest. We must be vigilant and ensure our country remains on the path to sustainable economic growth.

Allow me again to assure this Honourable House that even in this challenging environment, the 2010 Budget is fiscally responsible, and fully funded. It provides clear directions and necessary resourcing to deliver our policies especially those which further the social and economic development of our country. In particular, we will deliver better health and education services, allowing our people and our country to prosper.

I have tabled today a Budget for 2010, which lays a firm foundation for the continued sustainable development of our country and brings benefit to all Solomon Islanders throughout all the provinces.

With this Budget and its focus on providing resources to support real action, it is our goal that our people will move forward together in the pursuit of success. As the Government of our nation, Sir, we continue to be humbled by the trust bestowed upon us by our people and this Honourable House- a trust with the best interests of our country and our people at heart.

Sir, together, as a nation we have faced and overcome every trial. Once again difficult times have been sent to try us and once again we must face these challenges, not as a Government alone or as Parliament alone, but as a nation of independent people with a strong vision of the bright future we dream of for our children and our children's children.

I commend this Bill to the House, and I beg to move.

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members, according to Standing Order 61(2) and I quote, “after second reading of an Appropriation Bill has been proposed the debate thereon shall be adjourned and shall be resumed not earlier than the day following, .” . The debate on the Second Reading of the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2009 is therefore adjourned.

Debate on the second reading of the 2010 Appropriation Bill 2009 adjourned.

MOTIONS

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members, on Monday 7th December the Honorable Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee moved a motion that Parliament resolves itself into a committee of the whole house to consider National Paper No. 37 of 2009, Report of the Foreign Relations Committee on the Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI Intervention.

The debate was subsequently adjourned to allow Members more time to prepare for the debate. Today the debate continues. Members may now speak on the general principles of the report under discussion. In doing so, I kindly remind Members to comply with the rules of debate set out in our Standing Orders and the rulings I have just made. The floor is now open for debate.

Hon SOGAVARE: Thank you for allowing me to participate in the debate of the motion moved by the Member for Vona Vona that Parliament resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House to consider the Report of the Foreign

Relations Committee on the Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI Intervention.

Mr Speaker, you will note that some of us are quoted extensively in the Report, and that is because we made written submissions. As a matter of fact, I submitted a 69 page comprehensive submission that was very focused on important aspects of the legal framework, of course, fully explaining why I believe they ought to be reviewed. I do not intend to stand here and defend everything I said in that submission, although I am perfectly entitled to. I will only be focusing on some of them in this debate and leave the others when the report is discussed at the committee of the whole house.

But as for the motion before the House I have no problem supporting it, which should also be taken as my support for RAMSI. In doing so, however, I would like to begin by clearing misleading conclusions drawn about some of us, who made very strong positions at times about certain aspects of the Intervention that we consider could be better organized to reflect the true intentions of the Mission. We were branded as anti-RAMSI and wanting to see RAMSI out of the country. This is very cheap argument by people who are unfortunate to think they are living in the ideal world where everything is rosy and what you see is indeed the true reflection of reality. With due respect to these people, this is not always the case. I guess the problem with some of us is that we would rather be who we are and not what we would want people to think who we are when it comes to matters of national interest. This is the position that I will continue to take.

As a matter of fact, the issue to some of us is not the presence of RAMSI in this country, but rather the way they are organized and conduct themselves under a legal framework that gives them unfettered powers, of course, constitutionality and legality aside. I was part of the Parliament that approved the RAMSI arrangement to come into the country when the government led by the Member for Savo/Russells who is just going out, whom I believe must be congratulated and commended, agreed to make that invitation, of course, not without sounding the same concerns that I continue to hold about the whole arrangement when the debate on that matter was placed before Parliament in 2003. I have not changed my views.

Intervention is what the country badly needed well before 2003, and I believe and I continue to believe it was possible to get it under the Defense Cooperation that Australia had with all Pacific Island Countries. The former late Prime Minister sums it very well when he said he wants an operation and he was given an aspirin.

Sir, this apparent negligence and with due respect, Australia as a party to the Defense Cooperation still haunts some of us and affects the way some of us are relating to the RAMSI arrangement. It would therefore be incorrect to argue that intervention was only possible after the Forum Leaders agreed on a strategy under the Biketawa Declaration in 2000. It maybe true for a RAMSI-style arrangement but certainly not for other forms of intervention, which should be possible under the Defense Cooperation. I would therefore, be a hypocrite to even try to think about scheming arrangements to get rid of RAMSI as some people think I am, whilst at the same time believing an intervention. There is a vast difference between trying to get an arrangement that is acceptable to all parties and scheming arrangements to undermine RAMSI. The former, although may appear and sound unfriendly at times, it is trying to get people to see things through the eyes of concerned Solomon Islanders and understanding the true feelings of Solomon Islanders. I think we will all agree that Parliament had no option then in 2003, but I believe it does so now after six years of allowing the Mission to operate in this country. In other words, we are now in a better position to make sound judgment, and I was hoping that the review would provide that opportunity. But I am disappointed as I will elaborate in the course of this debate.

Having said that, however, I would like to take this opportunity before I proceed further to appropriately acknowledge the great work undertaken by RAMSI since its arrival in 2003 in returning this country to normalcy. I think this country is forever grateful. Despite the differing views we may have on how RAMSI is to be organized, we agree that this country is enjoying peace and normalcy that can be directly attributed to the selfless service of the fine young men and women of all the regional countries that are and have been engaged by the Mission since its arrival in 2003. But having said that I also believe that it is not inappropriate to question the way RAMSI conduct its duty. Indeed, that is the whole purpose of this review, and I would like to be understood in that context.

The report before us is a product of the very first comprehensive review of the Mission since the arrival of the Visiting Contingent in the country in 2003. Whilst this is a requirement of the law, as a country I believe we must have a clear objective in undertaking such reviews. I say this whilst fully appreciating the terms of reference under which this report is produced which explains why some of us believe, is out of tune with reality and this calls for the need to start from a common understanding. I will come back and develop that point, but at the outset I would also like to acknowledge the effort put into the process of getting this report to Parliament by the Foreign Relations Committee. We

appreciate that this is not a simple task, but the Committee has successfully completed the duty assigned to it by this very Parliament and, of course the Chairman of the Committee has a duty to present a report of that finding. The green volume before us fulfills that requirement.

I need to explain before I proceed on further why I raised a point of order at the beginning of this debate. You may remember that I seek the ruling of the Chair on how Parliament should approach the debate where the mover includes, as the substance of the motion a protracted defensive stance against the views expressed by a journalist who is a not a member of this House in a round up manner. It has to be understood that the views expressed by the journalist concerned was not carried in the report and therefore it is most inappropriate for the Chairman to incorporate his defense as a substance for debate in the motion. Remember what is presented in any motion is inviting debate on the issues raised. It follows therefore that these statements, sentiments and practical examples cited in the article and commented on by the Chairman are subject to debate.

As a matter of fact the article becomes an issue for debate in order to put the arguments raised in context. The first ruling by the Chair seems to confirm this understanding, and I would like to believe however that this House wants to move on and find solutions to the concerns raised by our people during the consultations and not to cry over spilt milk. I note that approach in the report with deep respect. The report is careful not to use examples that may only resurrect arguments that will only expose the carelessness of governments. This is a tactical approach which is admirable. But it needs to be emphasized that the appropriate way of handling issues or statements made by members of the public that any Member of Parliament considers as affecting him or her as a member of this Honorable House or chairman of any of its committee is by way of a matter of privilege statement. Indeed the manner in which the chairman approached the introduction of the motion is preempting debate or assuming that this Honorable House is prepared to undermine its integrity or to be influenced by private view on the issues carried in this report. That is not to say however that the article did not highlight issues that are pertinent to the principles and issues carried in the report. As a matter of fact I find the writer's defense of the country's sovereignty as a foreigner admirable. And I think a position that all leaders of this country should respectively take note of.

I still believe that if the article, which the Chairman referred to should not be a subject or debate as ruled then the most appropriate

action for the mover to do is to withdraw any reference made to that article. It is not fair for the House to be restricted when the mover was allowed to rubbish the views expressed in defense of the report. Having said that, however, I respect the ruling of the chair, and in keeping with that ruling I will only politely make reference to the sentiments raised by the writer of the article when the relevant issues are discussed to provide the other side of the coin. I thought I need to make that clarification to leave no room for misunderstanding and unnecessary interjections.

Sir, the report also start by trying to justify the approach taken by the present review and how it is different from the review suggested by the Grand Coalition for Change Government which the report brand as an executive review. The motion I moved did not ask for an executive review as claimed. The wording of the motion was clear, it required Parliament to review because that is in keeping with the provision of Section 23, which expressly required Parliament to review, and not the people of Solomon Islands. I am not sure what the Chairman is referring to here but it was our intention in line with the resolution passed by Parliament in 2007 to adopt the following processes to affect the parliamentary review. First a joint workshop of all Members of Parliament was to be organized in October of that year to fully discuss the content of the resolution made by Parliament, which sets the direction and substance of the review. Secondly, the workshop was to allow the Government to fully brief Members of Parliament on the justification of the approach taken by government in the review and to allow Members of Parliament with the assistance of the Attorney General's Chambers to make a comprehensive detailed analysis of all aspect of the legal frame work and arrangement to appreciate amongst other things, its legality, how it undermines constitutionally established systems and institutions and whether it is still necessary after the four years at that time, given the environment has changed tremendously since the arrival of RAMSI. Thirdly, the Government would then use the outcome of the workshop to further refine the review agenda. Fourthly, the review agenda would then be fully explained to the people of Solomon Islands to an extensive nationwide awareness program through appropriate avenues. Fifth, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would then engage in a comprehensive regional consultation with his counterparts basically informing them of what the people and the Government of Solomon Islands have decided on the areas that needed review. Sixth, we made it very clear that where the area of concern requires the amendment of law to rectify questions of breaches of the Solomon Islands Constitution and any other laws, that responsibility is the sole prerogative of the Solomon Islands Parliament to rectify because no amount of consultation will change the legal and constitutional obligation of the National Parliament to exercise that

responsibility. Seventh, any amendments would be referred to Parliament after all stake holders have been fully informed. This approach was suggested to address the issue of engaging a fully informed population of the country in the review and to engage the regional countries in the final outcome where changes are required to be made on the FIA Act.

I earlier on stated that there has to be a clear objective as to why this review is undertaken and desired outcome expected. If we are really serious about the review in the strictest sense of the word then in my view it should be guided by a number of pertinent questions as follows: Firstly, would it be fair to say that after six years of operation in the country and given the changing environment, RAMSI is now stuck with powers, privileges and immunities it does not need and therefore there is now a need to review them and realign the activities of RAMSI with the normal operations of the government subjecting them to prevailing rules, procedures, regulations and laws. If this position is accepted how should RAMSI be reorganized? That is the first.

Secondly, should RAMSI be now formally considered as an aid agency and coordinator of all development assistance to Solomon Islands by the different donor countries that Solomon Islands has bilateral ties with, effectively taking over the roles of the aid coordinating Ministry and the existing aid agencies. If that proposition is adopted what do we do with the powers, immunities and privileges they are accorded under the FIA Act and the regional agreement which effectively place them beyond the control and direction of the government.

Thirdly, since the underlying reasons for the intervention is to ensure that lasting peace returns to Solomon Islands, should the financial assistance available under a reorganized RAMSI be now applied to address the issues that drove the country to the ethnic unrest effectively addressing the causes of the tension directly. Fourthly, in fact there is no clear distinction as to who under RAMSI is entitled to the privileges, immunities and powers provided under RAMSI legal framework. There is a need to clarify this issue. It is generally perceived that the components of RAMSI include the military and police, the non military TAs and advisors, the Australian companies and businesses that are contracted by RAMSI and the locally recruited Solomon Islanders who work for RAMSI. Who is entitled to immunities, privileges and powers under the FIA Act and the Regional Agreement? Fifthly, should RAMSI remain the domain of Australia and the Regional countries? Those are five serious questions, I believe, that should be asked right at the outset to guide the review.

These issues are not addressed in an organized way in the report and I am disappointed, this is rather unfortunate. The report as presented is an incomplete record of debates collected by the committee during its tours of the

country. I am saying this because the views expressed by many Solomon Islanders in the rural areas were hardly taken up in the report. It would be interesting to note that the report heavily focuses on Honiara based well informed submissions and heavily bias towards defenders of RAMSI. Very little is taken up from the views expressed by the ordinary men and women in the provinces. As a matter of fact, the views expressed by ordinary Solomon Islanders in the villages have very little or no effect whatsoever in influencing the final outcome of this report. I am not surprised because the bulk of Solomon Islanders who are purported to be the beneficiary of the Mission's engagement in Solomon Islands have no clue whatsoever about the mandate of RAMSI, how it is structured and whether it is achieving results as expected by Solomon Islanders. This was clearly manifested in the uncoordinated, lack of objectivity and uninformed rural based submissions to the Committee. What the Committee got were perceptions of RAMSI and what it should do. There were clear expressions of dislikes and support for RAMSI based on reasons that have very little to do with the mandate of RAMSI. These were not taken seriously because they are clearly contrary to the objectives of the review which was to justify why things should be done the way it was designed. My question is why wasting public funds to window dress the real intention of the review?

The review was coordinated, (and I have to speak my mind) at the backdrop of a predetermined position of the present government, RAMSI and the Forum leaders without seriously considering the views of Solomon Islanders, which this report hypocritically intends to do. Again, why waste public funds in this window dressing exercise when you can easily get the outcomes presented in this report without getting the views of the people?

The formalization of the new partnership framework is a case in point. It is nothing short of "we know better what is best for you approach" to the whole arrangement. As a matter of fact when asked why the framework was to be done quickly, the response was it has to comply with the request of the Forum leaders. With due respect to the views and convenience of the Forum leaders what about the views of Solomon Islanders who should be benefit from the assistance and how they would want the International Assistance to be redirected to address what really matters to achieving sustainable development in Solomon Islands. The Forum leaders had six years of virtual monopoly over the direction and emphasis of the Assistance, so it is time that the views of Solomon Islanders are taken seriously.

The question is how can you get a well informed view in a structured review conducted on an ill informed population? Very difficult, and I am sure the Committee knows that very well. I consider it hypocritical of the report to simply reject the need for the review to be conducted from a well informed

population. That is the issue; a well informed population, not what is alleged in the report. And I take particular interest and exception to the Committee's reason for this rejection. The report had this to say, "Throughout the inquiry and in this report, the Committee has attempted accurately and fairly to reflect the evidence of parties to the inquiry and to draw from that evidence an impartial conclusions and recommendations. The Committee has taken this responsibility very seriously". Very interesting! Obviously, it has to be done that way. It has to be a structured review based on preconceived benchmarks that the Committee is trying to get the people's view to align to. This is dialectical thinking at its best, where you cover up the real intention of the review by resorting to the avert actions that appeal to the approval of the ignorant. I am amused by the trend of thinking and reasoning transpiring in this report about this matter. We are not asking, well, I am not asking the Committee to take on task of educating the people. No. The issue here is it would have been more objective and informative in reflective the views of Solomon Islanders if the review was conducted on a well informed population. Hypocritically, on the very next sub item the Committee reported the following: "*Parliamentary education and community engagement services will facilitate citizen engagement with and develop their knowledge of the National Parliament and representative democracy. Reduce resistance to women's candidacy and to assist citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities in free and fair manner according to the Constitution*". Mr. Speaker, what is this nonsense has to do with the review of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI Intervention, as far as getting a well informed view of the people is concerned? I find it very difficult to understand the reasoning advanced here.

A fact that the Committee cannot deny is the ignorance of the majority of Solomon Islanders about the role of RAMSI in the country. Those who think they know something about RAMSI associate it merely as an organization charged with the responsibility of returning law and order in the country. This is a pertinent view and is consistent with the core objective of RAMSI. What intrigues me is that on one hand the Committee argues that the nationwide awareness is unnecessary but on the other hand they recognized the importance of getting people to understand the roles of RAMSI. Confirming the above the committee reported that the awareness workshop conducted in schools reveals, and I quote: "*the lack of understanding of mandates of RAMSI and the belief that RAMSI is only involved in addressing law and order*". I think the pertinent question here is how do you address the problem of misunderstanding of the roles of RAMSI? Of course, by conducting awareness, and that is exactly what we are saying. If cost was the issue then the so called nationwide consultation should never have taken place because it has very little or no influence on the content and objective of this report; it is a blatant misrepresentation.

The argument that will be advanced internationally, you know what, oh yes, the report carried the views of the people based on the nationwide consultation. This is nonsense. I still hold the view that the report is an expensive endorsement of a predetermined position on RAMSI by the CNURA Government and the Forum countries.

Let me now turn to the content of the report. I will structure my intervention in line with the issues raised in the 14 chapters of the report, but not necessarily in the order they are presented and making reference to the five questions raised in the very beginning of my submission. Chapters 1 to 4 of the report as read with Chapter 13, I lump all these chapters together, which outline the root causes of the tension set the arrival and the establishment of RAMSI in the context of the conflict that ravaged the country and the historical setting and development of the issues that fueled the dissatisfaction of the people of Guadalcanal.

Interestingly, the same kinds of sentiments were raised by the people of Western Solomons, and might I add, the people of this country. I am saying this because if you take the demands expressed and show them to any Solomon Islander he or she will agree that the issues are worthy of government's attention. I thought this is a good starting point to develop the basis for the argument to reconsider the emphasis and direction of RAMSI operation to reflect its true intention to assist Solomon Islands as a friend to come out of the long term negative effects of years of neglect of the real issues.

This concern is carried in the question I raised earlier whether we should now insist that as a condition for RAMSI to continue in this country, their assistance should now be redirected to address the root causes of our problem, which are developmental in nature. I am terribly disappointed that the Committee cannot see this point, instead gave into the position taken by RAMSI on this matter. The report on page 209 presents the Committee's position on this matter beyond all shadow of doubt, and I quote: "*The Committee feels strongly that it is not RAMSI's role to be directly involved in seeking to address the root causes of the conflict*". We must be joking! Either we do not appreciate the effectiveness of such a strategy or simply fail to understand what they are and why they are important to arrive at a lasting solution to our problems. We are concerned about lasting solution. The Committee instead said that the duty to address the root causes of the ethnic tension is the responsibility of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I am not sure whether we are serious and understand what we are talking about. If this is the strategy then it is nothing more than a delaying tactic and excuse to sidetrack the issues that really matter to consolidating the peace process. This country does not need the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to tell us what our problems are. It is common

knowledge. You only need analytical minds and political will to appreciate our problems and to address them. That is what is needed. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission should confine its role as the ultimate venue of reconciliation and forgiveness. That should be the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

I made the point that this country needs to be clear about how it wants to achieve lasting peace. We are still confused. We must choose whether to pursue the path of forgiveness, acceptance and tolerance and move forward or pursue the confrontational path of hunting and prosecuting the so called perpetrators of the tension and send them to prison. I am surprised that we pride ourselves as a Christian country and yet we find it difficult to forgive one another. There are people who advocate that forgiveness should not put the perpetrators beyond the reach of the law. I do not buy that argument. So much for that.

Sir, this country has a long term interest to protect and we have a duty as leaders of this country to take on that responsibility. We are now struggling to maintain the unity of our country, and the only way to keep us together is to address what drove this country into the crisis. If we cannot appreciate that simple fact then something is really wrong with us. As observed earlier, these issues are development in nature, as I will bring to the notice of this Parliament later on. This is the heart of the problem. In other words, the key to addressing the problems of this country and to sustain the fragile peace we now experience is to put more emphasis on finding lasting solution to the issues that sparked the dissatisfaction in the beginning. We failed miserably to do that. How can we continue to say that we are concerned about our country when we flatly deny these issues?

As can be clearly seen in the report, the review has no interest whatsoever in doing this. This is disappointing and clearly demonstrates the fixed agenda that influenced the review, which is totally unacceptable. It shows that Solomon Islanders themselves have no interest whatsoever in attending to the real issues. In doing that we continue to condone the heavily institutional strengthening focused intervention that will do very little to setting this country on a sustainable path. I would have thought that this is a powerful and pertinent point to make to support a more realistic approach to addressing the real problem of this country. After all, this is a review and it is not just about going to compile the debates of people.

This position is influenced by the outdated argument that RAMSI is just here to provide the right environment for Solomon Islands and its traditional development partners to address the economic problems of the country. Well, I have four observations to make on that line of thinking before I review the analysis made by the UNDP and direct Government's attention to what we

should be doing in order to address the root causes of our problems. And I am saying this because the review has a wide coverage and therefore should include the review and redirection, redirection of the mandates of RAMSI. If it is not intended to include that purpose then we are wasting our time. However, that proposition is not possible now because the Government has unilaterally finalized the framework with RAMSI without regard to the outcome of the nationwide review now under consideration. In any case, I think it is a dead document. In any case, this report could not possibly be used to justify the reasoning advanced because of its selective nature. After reviewing the report, however, I am disappointed to discover that the reason why the CNURA Government and the Forum Leaders place no weight whatsoever in the outcome of the review, in finalizing the framework is because the review is nothing more than an endorsement of what the CNURA Government and the Forum Leaders think is good for this country.

What I am effectively saying here is that RAMSI's mandate is not sacrosanct as it seems to be driven by this line of thinking. As a matter of fact, I would like to believe that the extension of the review to include the people of Solomon Islands is an endorsement by Parliament that the real partners in RAMSI are the people of this country as represented by Parliament, not the government of the day. It must follow, therefore, that the government **astute** of the people's mandate in discussing the framework has a duty to respect the views of the real partners on how they would like to see RAMSI assistance utilize. Unfortunately, what is presented is the outcome of a structured review that seeks to justify the views of RAMSI, the CNURA Government and the Forum Leaders on what they think is good for us.

My second observation to that position is that there is all the indication from the extended framework that RAMSI intends to do more than just returning law and order and security. On whose authority? The people? Well, they are ill informed about the mandate, objective and purpose of RAMSI.

What I am getting at here is the relevant and the most appropriate reasoning here is, if RAMSI is to be seen as partnership with the people of Solomon Islands as argued then the people should have a say in the redirection and emphasis of RAMSI's extended framework. But you need well informed Solomon Islanders to make useful contribution in that regard. Unfortunately, that was not the intention of the review right from the very beginning. Instead the inquiry was structured to test the knowledge of the people about RAMSI.

The logical argument that must follow and the implications drawn from the intention to extend RAMSI's mandate to other areas is to take seriously the suggestions made by a number of witnesses who appeared before the review committee insisting that the Mission must immediately withdraw because the

country is now enjoying peaceful environment. In other words, according to these people, RAMSI has accomplished its core-function, which cannot be assigned to other arrangements because of logistics reasons. Is that what we are talking about?

It is disappointing to note that the report did not fully explore the thinking behind the proposition of why Solomon Islanders are ignorant, though they maybe. Take that line of thinking. Is it because they do not understand the mandate of RAMSI? Is there wisdom to be drawn from that line of thinking? What really should be the new role of RAMSI? These are pertinent questions that we have not fully explored?

Of course, while appreciating the views expressed by the people, we all know that early withdrawal may not be advisable for a number of strategic reasons based on the core objective of RAMSI, for example, if this line of thinking must be accepted then RAMSI must fast track the key activities to return the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force to its pre-crisis standard. I must admit that there is a lot to be done in this area because the Force suffered two major blows. First, from the effects of the crisis, and secondly from the deliberate action of RAMSI to demolish the Force before they could build it up. The time frame of this program must be reviewed if early withdrawal is to be entertained. There was hardly any thinking along that line. Moreover, there are Solomon Islanders who believe that RAMSI assistance must include assisting the national reconciliation programme. The report is not clear on this matter. In fact, it simply brushed it aside as unimportant. I am not sure, whether we are serious.

The third observation is that the areas covered in the extended framework identified as three pillars are areas that can be effectively achieved through the normal bilateral arrangement with the existing development partners. There is no need for the continuation of a military style intervention operating on an emergency mode under a framework that granted unfettered powers and privileges. That is the issue, and not hatred of RAMSI. In leaving matters as they are, is exactly what the report is telling this Parliament. That is in order to deliver the required outcomes in the law and justice, economic governance and growth in machinery of government programs in an environment that is no longer considered dangerous or amount to dealing in unfamiliar territory, the technical assistance must be immune from prosecution and enjoy other privileges specified by law that is ranked next to the Constitution in order to deliver the programme. It does not make any sense.

There is another serious related issue of concern, and that is the international image of this country as regards to security and safety is dependent entirely on what RAMSI says to the international community. As long as we have a military style arrangement in the country, we will still be considered

dangerous. What we are effectively saying here is that under the scenario just described, whether we will be trusted depends on the country meeting pre-determined criteria.

The fourth observation is the level of resources and logistics that Solomon Islands would need to address the issues that really matter to addressing long term stability in Solomon Islands. In other words, the country simply does not have the resources to make a genuine and meaningful public investment into the areas concerned. What some of us are advocating here is that the country has a wonderful opportunity with the presence of RAMSI to do that. The country simply does not have the financial and logistics to undertake key activities in the productive sectors in a big way. In other words, what Solomon Islanders are saying is that addressing the root causes of the ethnic crisis including the nationwide reconciliation programs are crucial to achieving the objective of returning the country to normalcy and sustaining that outcome in the long run. That deserves the attention of Parliament. Therefore, the direct involvement of RAMSI in this activity is crucial. It is disappointing that the Committee does not see things that way.

On the issue of the level of assistance to Solomon Islands under RAMSI arrangement, I expect the Committee to insist on full disclosure by RAMSI in the spirit of transparency and accountability the very principles and good governance issues that RAMSI is here in the country to promote. The Committee chose not to venture into that area.

On reconciliation, the Committee outlined CNURA policies as follows: reconciliation amongst and between individuals, families, tribes, communities and constituency wards in Guadalcanal and Malaita Provinces; reconciliation between Malaita and Guadalcanal Provinces; reconciliation between Malaita, Guadalcanal and the rest of the provinces in the country including Honiara City Council; and reconciliation between Malaita Province, Guadalcanal Province and the National Government. This is the country's priority to retain peace and normalcy in Solomon Islands, and at least deserves a position by the Committee to endorse RAMSI's direct involvement in it. I am disappointed that the Committee does not share that view.

What we are saying here is that reconciliation is a very compressive program that the Solomon Islands Government is really struggling to implement because of budgetary and logistics constraints. Should RAMSI assistance be directed to implement this program, is the pertinent question. There are Solomon Islanders who believe that RAMSI must assist Solomon Islands to reconcile. The Committee adopted a buck-passing approach to this question. As a matter of fact the Committee made no recommendation under Chapter 13, to address the root causes of the ethnic tension. This is after going through the pain

of identifying what the Committee accepted as the root causes in pages 193, 194, and 195, let alone the issues raised in the entire Chapter 13. The UNDP analysis lists a broad range of issues, while the Committee reproduced the issues put to the Government by the people of Guadalcanal as way back as 1988 and repeated in 1990. You see what the world needs to know is that it was the negligence of the Solomon Islands Governments to address the issues that led to dissatisfaction by the people of Guadalcanal, which eventually led to the revolt.

It is interesting to note the Committee's view on the matter on page 198. And I quote: "*The Committee notes that the Malaitan groups did not, and still do not identify themselves with any particular set of root causes. By contrast the Guadalcanal groups express their demands very clearly in as early as 1988 in what are known as the bona fide demands of the indigenous people of Guadalcanal*". And a list of the bona fide demands is then produced.

We are talking about addressing the root causes, not whether or not there was counter demands by the Malaitan groups. What we need to appreciate here is that the Malaitan groups were acting in self defense as innocent targets. I am saying this because if you look at the bona fide demands, they are issues rightfully the responsibility of the Solomon Islands Government to address. It was the Solomon Islands Government that neglected the issues, not the people of Malaita. Be that as it may, this country has a duty to address the issues that started the tension. I do not agree with any views that attempt to downplay the importance of these demands. We forget very easily that the country was brought to its knees, neglecting them. How can we dare to neglect these issues and still call ourselves responsible leaders?

As a matter of fact I am totally disappointed that the Committee approached this matter by way of merely reporting the views expressed by those who made submissions without really establishing what the country should be addressing. I expected a firm recommendation by the Committee on this matter. I am disappointed. I believe there has to be a perking order as a strategic approach to dealing with this matter. Logically, of course, we should start by establishing the reason why the people of Guadalcanal revolted. There is no better place to find this than the log of demands submitted to successive Solomon Islands Government since 1988 by the people of Guadalcanal.

It is interesting to note that the analysis carried in the UNDP report categorized the same issues in a slightly different way but supporting the need to address them. You can analyze the demands and issues highlighted in any way you like, but one powerful message comes out forcefully in almost all the demands and issues is decentralization. It is easy for anyone to be bogged down in the demands as presented and draw a wrong conclusion, and this is what the Committee has done. In fact, the Committee falls victim to this wrong

conclusion by saying that this country should not address all the demands because most of them are unreasonable and difficult to achieve. Are we serious? We must be joking. We have to be strategic in our thinking; that is what it calls for. Unfortunately, I am seeing very little of that coming out of this report.

We need to appreciate that it is normal human response to an unreasonable, undesirable situation to make demands as a way of expressing dislike of perceived attitudes and behaviors in order to get attention. That is a normal human behavior. The way to look at the issues and demands is to ask the reason why a normal rationale human being would make such demands. Let us take some of these demands and look at them: State government; repatriation of illegal squatters; shifting major developments away from Guadalcanal; relocation of prisoners from Guadalcanal; reducing internal migration and its pressures; land reform; exclusive rights over 12 miles exclusive zone; reintroduction of capital punishment; review of fundamental rights; review of land laws to prevent people from other islands owning land in another island; rent for Honiara; relocation of Honiara; relocation of the capital; control internal migration; proper acquisition of the Honiara foreshore from its customary owners. You can look at these demands anywhere you like and analyze them but they all boil down to the fact that because Honiara is the only well developed urban centre in Solomon Islands, coupled with the fact that all major economic development activities happen on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islanders from other provinces migrated to Honiara in search for economic opportunities. You do not have to be a university graduate to see that logic. It is an old story we continue to remind ourselves, but unfortunately it is yet to sink. The issue here is to reduce the pressure that give rise to actions and behaviors that undermine the customary rights and privileges of the indigenous people of Guadalcanal, which ultimately led to the making of the demands. There is only one way, and that is to create the required environment in other provinces. That is why it is important that the country's development strategy post ethnic tension must be cognizant of the reasons why the country collapsed in year 2000. Politically, we are saying the right things but this is not reflected in the policies and actions of politicians and leaders.

Rural advancement, is nothing more than a centrally driven service-delivery strategy of the CNURA government. Bottom up peace conscience development strategy of the Grand Coalition, which was not given the opportunity to fully develop, rural development, and the list goes on. Strategically we are pathetic. We have yet to arrive at a workable formula. Even the foreign driven legislative reforms in commerce and investment related laws which saw the passage of a number of bills by the CNURA Government are totally hopeless and failed to provide the public and private investment

environment in the rural areas. What are all of these have to do with RAMSI? A lot!

What I am saying here is, if our friends are really serious about helping us in the long run, then the simple strategy is to aggressively address economic opportunities in other locations outside of Honiara and Guadalcanal. It is just simple logic. This, I believe, should be the second most important objective of the review. The recommendation is to shift the emphasis and focus of RAMSI assistance from good governance to development in the rural areas, but not under the present arrangement. I submit that RAMSI is not a development agency of any organization. Rather it is an interventionist organization set up under the Biketawa Declaration with a specific mandate to restore normalcy, return law and order and strengthen weak institutions of Government.

What I am saying is that it should only be relevant at the restoration stage. In fact, the Chairman made the point that any suggestion to undermine the immunities and privileges would be akin to asking RAMSI to disengage under the present arrangement. Well, what is wrong with that? What I am effectively saying is that the so called \$800million assistance can do a lot for this country, if it is redirected to address tourism, agriculture, fisheries and other economic opportunities in the rural areas. Of course, the legal framework preempted this argument by trying to suggest that RAMSI assistance is going towards that direction. I am not talking about dribs and drubs, but real meaningful redirection of this assistance to addressing the long term capacity of the country to sustain a much improved level of service that is pegged beyond the ability of the Solomon Islands Government to provide in the event of the withdrawal of RAMSI. That to me, is the real concern than the self made fear about uncontrolled retribution and payback if RAMSI leaves.

Let me move on to other pertinent issues because the Prime Minister is becoming very itchy, and this is sovereignty. You see, the Chairman discussed sovereignty in some detailed, and rightly so. As a matter of fact, the discussion and concerns are all from Solomon Islanders. There are those who argue that we should not be concerned about our sovereignty. There are those, of course, who argue that it is an issue that we should take seriously. Taken in isolation, the two line of thinking are all justified on reasons upon which they are taken. In others words, the debate will go on forever because they are not premised on a common ground.

Sovereignty, in the context of this debate, is the exclusive right to exercise supreme political, and that is legislative, judicial or an executive authority over a geographic region, group of people or oneself. This includes the responsibility of the government to protect the integrity of our laws. Sovereignty can also be defined as he who decides the exemptions. The question here is; would it make

any difference to the views of those who are adamant that as a country we must continue to sacrifice our sovereignty after six years when the environment in which the Mission is operating is vastly different from what it was in 2003 when the Mission first arrived?

The point here is not so much the fact that the Mission is granted special treatment under the legal framework that effectively placed the Mission in a position where the only law that governs its conduct in Solomon Islands is the 'FIA Act' 2003, but the fear of the powers being abused because they were indeed abused. Secondly, the decision of the CNURA Government and the Pacific Islands Forum to extend the mandate of RAMSI under the partnership agreement effectively allowing RAMSI to perform as another aid donor in the same kind of areas with unfettered powers that are not available to members of other aid donors, and under a law that is effectively ranked above the laws of this country, every other law, second only to the National Constitution. That does not make sense.

The FIA Act says it itself. If any other laws of this country go against it, the FIA Act is supreme. It places it above all other laws in this country.

It needs to be appreciated that Parliament was unanimous in its decision in 2003 to grant such powers because of the situation then prevailing. That is a crucial point to be taken note of in this matter. The indisputable fact is that this is no longer the case in 2009, six years after the arrival of RAMSI. The question, of course, that an inquiry mind may have is, what is all the fuss about sovereignty? In fact, the proponents of the open door policy are advancing the argument that we are living in the globalized world and therefore we should not be bothered about sovereignty. How can people be so naïve? Globalization does not give powerful developed countries to do whatever they like in the jurisdiction of another country unless it is absolutely necessary. To act otherwise would amount to a state of unwarranted subjugation which would be contrary to the spirit of freedom and peaceful coexistence of nations.

I want to believe that RAMSI is not an occupying force, rather a regional response to a friend in need and operates on the spirit of mutual respect. Therefore, there is a point beyond which the accessibility of any foreign regime is out of bounds, especially when it comes to state secrets and apparatus. In the case of RAMSI, Parliament was quite clear about the premise of such accessibility as couched in the immunities, privileges and powers granted they are confined to and in relation to the Mission carrying out this mandate and nothing more in light of the situation then prevailing in 2003. For example, I am really, really surprised to learn that secret internal government memorandum between my office and the office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs including secret Cabinet Meeting minutes during the Grand Coalition for Change Government time is

with the Australian authority. They are made available under a Court Order for the full disclosure of information relating to a case in Australia that Solomon Islands Government has direct vested interest. Somebody is selling state secrets, possibly at the request of foreign powers, in whose interest? Under which mandate is this power vested? I can go on and cite examples where good intentions were clearly abused for purposes other than what is agreed upon. But I am civilized and obliged to abide by the ruling of the chair.

It is interesting to note that the Committee cites the lack of evidence by those who made adverse claims about RAMSI as the reason to disregard the complaints made. I can produce affidavits on secret meetings organized by people who have no right to meddle in Solomon Islands politics to plan the ousting of Members of Parliament that they consider as not towing the line. I have letters here with me, right here from Solomon Islanders complaining that their rights are violated. What sort of evidence do we want?

Looking at this issue of sovereignty from another angle, only sovereign government has the right to exempt people from paying tax as a sovereign right. I made a point in my submission to the Committee that Solomon Islands Government need to relook at who should be entitled to tax exemptions under that legal framework. International tax practice is quite clear on this matter. Tax exemption to private companies who are contracted to do work for RAMSI should not be entitled to tax exemptions. But who gave them tax exemptions? Who has the sovereign right to do that? Is it the Solomon Islands Government or who? You are complaining about revenue, but that is the revenue to pay for your budget. If they do then it is a clear case of usurping the sovereign right of the government to decide on that issue. We can go on and discuss the effects of the immunities, privileges and powers granted under the FIA Act to members of the Visiting Contingent.

It is interesting to note that the Committee failed miserably to understand the reasoning behind the submission on this issue; instead the Committee swallowed the explanation of RAMSI on the matter. The core of the argument advanced by the Committee on this matter is that it is consistent with International Practices and International Treaties. What International Treaties and Practices? In a report of this nature it is not sufficient just to refer to International Treaties and Practices without actually laying the Treaties and International Practices on the floor of this Parliament. You lay it here so that we can see the Treaties you are talking about. It cannot be the United Nations Treaty because RAMSI was never a United Nations mandated intervention. It was only taken note of by the relevant United Nations authority.

There is a big difference between taking note of and mandating a mission. What I am saying here is that the Committee has a duty to lay copies of the

relevant United Nations Treaties and Practices when this Parliament resolves itself into the Committee of the Whole House. What this Parliament needs to appreciate is that the concern for sovereignty transcends the obligation of Parliament to facilitate the narrow interest of RAMSI as an internationalist mission to embracing the concern for our national security. That is my concern as a leader of this country.

I guess what I am saying is that as national leaders we have a duty to protect this country against undue and unnecessary violation of our sovereign rights as a sovereign nation. Is that too much and unreasonable to ask? This is not about pulling the plug on RAMSI. It is about this Parliament deciding whether it is sensible to allow the Mission to continue to operate in a peaceful and predictable and environment, performing as any aid agency with unfettered powers, which simply does not make any sense.

In my submission I made the point that Solomon Islands fully, fully acknowledges its responsibility as a member of the region on issues of regional security. This is what I said to the Committee on this matter: "Despite the nationalistic stand taken in this paper, I referred to the submission I made, on our relationship with Australia, it has to be appreciated that Solomon Islands has no real problem with the military agenda of Australia in the Pacific. In fact, as a member of the region, Solomon Islands has an obligation to support its regional neighbors in advancing issues of common interest. In the case of Australia's military agenda in the Pacific, the broader issue is security and safety of the region against the infiltration of extreme organizations. This is right within the common interest of the region and Solomon Islands is obliged to support Australia's initiative on behalf of the region". But I said, as long as we are respected as a country with a sovereign right to exist, Solomon Islands has a duty to cooperate in the effort to make the Pacific a better place for all.

I would now like to touch briefly on the issue of the legality and constitutionality of the legal framework. I must make my position very clear on this matter because I was accused of trying to undermine the Mission. Such thinking can only be advanced by people who, I guess, are sick in the mind. My concern about the legality and constitutionality of the legal framework is in the interest of establishing the status of the framework with the view to rectifying it. It is never the intention of anyone to use this argument to remove RAMSI from Solomon Islands. I need to make that position very clear. My only and indeed major concern in this area, as far as the report is concerned is that the Committee acts as a mediator, and to a certain extent as a court to adjudicate between the different legal views and positions submitted and merely report on these positions. I do not blame the Committee.

I made the point in my submission to the Committee that the terms of reference missed a very important question that needs to be resolved at the outset, and that is the legality and constitutionality of the legal framework. I made this point with due respect to all who expressed their views on this matter and the court ruling on Nori's case that was discussed widely as the constitutional authority to put this argument away. I will come to that case in just a second. Legal opinions are legal opinions until the court rules on the matter. Since they questioned a fundamental issue about the whole arrangement, it is in the interest of the country that legal opinions are properly contested in court to get the court's advice on how we will fix it.

As observed above, the Committee depends on the Nori and Makasi case to make the conclusion about the legality and constitutionality of every aspect of the legal framework. With due respect to the Committee, I am afraid we could be depending on a judgment that does not exist. The 30 page court ruling on the Nori case is a public document and any Member of this House can have access to it. The court made declaration on specific questions put to it by the learned Mr Nori as opposed to the entire Visiting Contingent, which is also made up of non military and police component. In other words, the ruling was on the constitutionality of the specific actions of the Participating Police Force. The Committee, therefore, may be right in taking it as ratio-*descedendi* for the specific question but *albeit* everything else. As a matter of fact, there was no counter or competing declarations sought by RAMSI, and therefore, the constitutionality question is still left very, very open.

On the legal questions, the Committee merely took the explanations provided by RAMSI as the legal authority; and that is it, this is what it said, full stop. This is irresponsible. I am surprised and indeed gravely concerned about the degree of protectionism that overshadowed the manner in which the Committee handled the legal and constitutional issues, which did very little justice to the concerns raised and it left the Mission very vulnerable to future ill intentioned institutional or constitutional and legal challenges. This Parliament has the duty to protect RAMSI.

Sir, it is 12.30pm and I respect the sugar level as dropping as the Prime Minister said. I have more things to say but I will stop here, and we will use the committee time for us to talk about these issues more because as I said was quoted very widely in this report because I think some of us are making submissions. I think I have said enough here and so we go out and fill up the sugar level and we take up the issues later on.

As I have said already in this motion, I have no problem supporting this report because it must go to the committee stage so that we look at it. As I have said in the beginning as well, we express serious views as leaders on this issue,

and we have the right and this is the time for it because it is a review and should be taken on that note. I support the motion and thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk.

Sitting suspended for lunch break at 12.30 pm

Hon. PACHA: Thank you for allowing me to contribute to the motion moved by the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee on the Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI Intervention.

At the outset, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of my people and chiefs of South Guadalcanal to express my appreciation and thanks to the former chairman who is the Member of West Guadalcanal and my colleague Minister of Justice and the present Chairman and Member of Parliament for West New Georgia/Vona Vona and the Committee for their good work in producing this report. I have read the report and would like to make some comments representing my people of South Guadalcanal or the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal, as it is well known.

As you would remember during the ethnic tension the hot spot of the ethnic tension is on Guadalcanal, and specifically in my constituency. The place was called during those dark days, the doom of darkness and a no-go zone for government. I am most grateful and proud to inform the Honorable House, especially during this event of Christmas that things have indeed greatly changed in my constituency since RAMSI came and work together in implementing government policies and programs in restoring law and order and development. That is to say that peace and harmony has returned and consolidated in my constituency.

I want to say to this honorable House that the Weather Coast is quiet and peaceful than Honiara. It is in Honiara that we continue to burn houses, however, in the Weather Coast such practices no longer exist. I am also happy that the Committee recognizes the situation of my constituency and has given it preferential treatment by conducting a hearing at Kuma village. I and my people of South Guadalcanal recognize the very good work of the Committee, and on behalf of my people would like to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation accordingly.

I would like to inform the house that my people are now fully and wholly committed to peace and reconciliation in the country. My people who, during the ethnic tension, did not see eye to eye with their friends and neighbors are now back to normal relationships. They have put the past behind and are moving forward by rebuilding their families, communities and government relationship and development. They do not want to return to the days when

people with guns intimidate and threaten others at will. My people do not want to talk about the rights and the wrongs of the ethnic tension any more, but rather talk about economic, social and political developments. Thus, in my view, sustainable and long term peace in our country depends on us leaders in the country.

This brings me to the point in Chapter 9, pillar 1 - law and justice on prosecution versus reconciliation of the report. My people support the role of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which ultimately aims to achieve lasting peace in the country. It is the desire and hope of my people that everybody in the village, men and women should be immediately assured of their freedom as citizens of the country. This means that they should be cleared of any doubts in their minds of any allegations whatsoever of the past as having any connections to the ethnic tension. Should my people have been blacklisted as perpetrators of any events in the past, their names should be removed from such a list and given their normal status as free citizens of the country. I see this task towards lasting peace as the key immediate task of the Commission to be addressed, especially for my people of Weather Coast. My people, in thanking the very good work of RAMSI for establishing a post in Isuna Village, would like this post to be now moved to a much better location known as Palaghati. This is a justifiable intention because it has served its purpose already in Isuna and needs to move to another area to continue with its very good work.

Finally, I would like to thank RAMSI for the very good work it is doing to my constituency and the country as a whole. Contrary to what my good friend, the Deputy Leader of opposition and MP for Central Makira said that his Constituency does not require RAMSI anymore, my constituency would like RAMSI to stay and continue to help us in rebuilding our nation. I say this because as we are all aware in this House things can derail to our disadvantage very quickly if we are not yet ready if our partnership development relationship with RAMSI is terminated prematurely. With these comments I support the motion.

Mr. TANEKO: Thank you for allowing me to comment briefly on this very important report. The motion is that Parliament resolves itself into a committee of the whole house to consider National Parliament Paper No. 37 of 2009, Report on the Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI Intervention.

In reading this very important report I cannot help but think of the scripture in Psalms 119 vs 105, which says it is a lamp unto our path and a light unto our path. This report, we might see it in many angles. Many speakers have mentioned many valid points. But before doing so I would like to thank the

Chairman and his committee members for this very important report that is now in front of us here in this house. I said it is important because there is evidence that we can see the weaknesses as mentioned in the report. I would like to thank the previous government on Chapter 3 of this report for inviting RAMSI to come into our country under an agreement passed called the Biketawa Declaration to come and support the nation of Solomon Islands on what it is going through. The report tells us that it is about time that we as leaders can identify the strengths and weaknesses of our country. History tells us about previous crises we have had in our nation. In the report we can see the history of crises that have taken place. The Western Province, from 1975 to 1979 was trying to break away from Solomon Islands. If I can ask the question, what was the reason for that? Why did they want to breakaway? Under Chapter 2 of the Constitution of Solomon Islands there should be no discrimination; there should be nothing of such under our Constitution so that we bridge these islands as one nation. But in 1975-1979 the Western Province wanted to break away from Solomon Islands. The leaders of that province must have reasons for wanting to do that. They must have a vision as to why they did that. That is an evidence of a breakaway.

In this report, the Committee came up with 15 recommendations. On behalf of my people I can say that one recommendation is missing there, and this is identifying the root causes of the tension. It should be there as well to address the problem that happened. A sore must heal by getting proper medication and treatment. We must look carefully at this. Do not cover it but let us uncover it. We must see the reason for it. That is valid point that we must see to it. That is what I have identified. I fully agree with the 15 recommendations in the report.

On the achievements of RAMSI, I want to thank RAMSI for restoring peace because during the height of the tension when I was Minister for Police and Justice I had a hard time when I was gun pointed in my office and my office was broken by stones hurled at me. However, law and order has been achieved and we have seen it. The achievement is already there and we have seen it.

One thing I want to mention here is the development part of it. We have achieved those things, but there are still a lot of gaps to be filled in the economic part of the development. The infrastructure that has been mentioned, we must, as a nation indirectly, when that is strengthened more of our people will participate in economic development in the rural sectors. Currently, this is missing. Lots of funds were spent at the bottom of it. The policy of the CNURA Government is bottom up approach, so we must look at this. We have to strengthen that part. The majority of the population of Solomon Islands lives in the rural areas, 80% of the population; we have to strengthen these people so that we put a stop to urban drifting. They come to the urban areas to look for jobs.

The more these people come to the city the more problems we will have here because of no jobs.

This report informs us where we can see our weaknesses and where we need to strengthen. It tells us where we can fill in the valley and which areas we can be able to address. So I thank the Chairman for the report because the report as I have mentioned is like our lamp to our feet showing us where the nation has to go in future. We do not have to look far to see the impact of urban drift. One such example is the provincial soccer tournament where our children and people burn buildings. That incident speaks louder that we have to work much harder as leaders to put our people in the right path. We must look at this because it is an evidence of a problem.

I want to mention another incident that has happened, and this is the music show at the weekend. That is another evidence of this report that we need to do more preparation, the message has to go down well to our people. This book itself told us about that message. We must take this report by the Committee seriously. It is not just another book that we read but we must take it seriously as leaders in leading our nation into the future. Some of us might come back or not after the election but this report is evidence that somebody has to implement under the policy of the government of the day what needs to be done to correct our nation. This is a message to each constituency and province. It is a message that tells us where how failures are. It is a message that we have to prepare, and how can we manage our province, how can we strengthen our province. It is a message. This is really a good report that we must take seriously. We must not put it away or when another government comes in this book is done away with. Many reports were tabled in here and we just forget about them, we stored them away in files and then forgotten. This report, as I see it is a report that national leaders have to take onboard so that leaders in the future look at it because it shows us our strengths and our weaknesses. There is a lot of opportunity but there is threat still in our country.

We do not have to look far because people are still running around with alcohol in the streets. Why is that allowed? Why do we still see people sitting down with cans in their hands? Why do we still see people drinking kwaso on the streets? This is message to us for the future. How can we uplift this country that has been turned down and broken into pieces? We have to build peace. The Truth and Reconciliation Act has already being passed.

The future of this nation totally lies on us leaders to be sensitive to our own people who are the beneficiaries of legislations we pass in this place. So I would like to thank the Committee for this wonderful report. On behalf of my people I see this report that it is about time we remind ourselves as leaders on what sort of Solomon Islands we want.

Solomon Islands, as many claimed is a Christian country. This is the Christmas season and it is time for preparation to fill those valleys and mountains and all the crooked ways. That is what Luke Chapter 3:4 & 6 says. This is the season and this is the book that tells us to straighten our behaviors that are not right in Solomon Islands. This is what this book is telling us. It tells us what sort of character we have. This book when you look at it is like a mirror that reflects your picture or not. This is a picture. Are you one of those leaders that have the character fit enough to lead this nation of Solomon Islands? This is not only speaking about those criminals or whoever, but it is speaking to us as well. It is just like a mirror. Are we a leader who can cause problems and cause tensions? This report is a beacon for you and me to see how we are going to lead our people for the betterment and peace of this nation. So this book is very important and we must take it seriously. That is part of the social problems that we have. There is a lot, and it is the Christmas season now. We do not have to wait for the tension but we should keep on talking to our people. The best place to settle problems is at home, in our villages. If they come here then we should start to question ourselves. We are going to debate the 2010 Appropriation Bill and so we must look at strengthening this nation. Indirectly, we have to push our people to the rural sectors where they will be governed by the chiefs and the elders so that they look after their own people. If we are not able to man our nation in the urban areas then we should start thinking about decentralizing, we have to detour and strengthen our rural sectors, and put our people to develop the rural sectors.

The economic development part of this speaks louder but we have to do it with action. Action speaks louder than the report. We must strengthen the infrastructure part of it. I mention this many times in here. Some of us here who continue to mention this in here are scorned at and ridiculed. Copra, cocoa, timber, fish are the resources we have, but when will we really put funds into these to really harvest the resources of Solomon Islands? What time? We are now asking donor partners to give us this and that but when you look carefully at it, we can strengthen our rural part. We have the resources but we have to strengthen them. The economic part of this report must be taken serious note of. Push those donor partners to put more of their money where their mouth is, and that is on rural development. They have to do by providing funds and action. The budget does not have enough funds for rural development. You can see this in the report. We have a lot of problem. On infrastructure, one of the problems you can see is shipping. You people complain about Christmas overloading, but iron cannot expand because it is not rubber. Put more money and buy more ships.

Today I got a call from the Renbel Manager saying that there is overloading, and so he needs more life rafts. When are we going to give extra money to buy more life rafts for life saving to be given to ship owners? What time? This is the message. We are here to please who? We are here to, first, please the Almighty God above and moreover our people. We may say many things in here but if our people do not feel the things we are debating in here, if our people do not feel our policy, if our people do not feel the action part of the budget then the budget is just a waste. That is reality. We can write all the speeches in here but who are we to please? We talk about policies in here but we do not do it. We have to put more action in this House. This report is a serious report.

You take this report during Christmas and tell your people to stop being criminals, stop manufacturing kwaso but live in peace because your time will come when God calls you home in peace. It is not by your criminality, not by your gun points, not by your hatred; not all those things but by peace. You can have all the reports but if there is no action to those reports then I am sorry Chairman of the Committee because it is a good report. The question is that are we going to file it away and forget about it. It is a beacon as I have told you to look at Psalms 119 vs. 105 where it is a lamp and a light unto our feet". It is a lamp to our feet and a light to show us the path and the way we are going to behave. Tell our boys that this is the report and so please my people give them this report, give it to the chiefs to help you and me. Give it to them so that the chief ring the bell and tell the people that this is how our nation has been going in the last 30 years and so please do not go to Honiara just because you have nothing to do at home. Tell them this is what it speaks. If we keep them at home and looked after by their fathers and mothers and earn money the rural areas, there will be urban free trouble in future. There will be no trouble here in the urban areas in future.

I am always sorry that we claim Solomon Islands is a Christian country but when all sorts of fundraisings are held and music is played, our people will drink and get drunk and go to such an occasion, and the Police cannot handle them. But when an evangelist comes to preach in Solomon Islands, it is empty. I must say this. When an evangelist comes to talk about the good news, talk about love, talks about something good, the playing field is empty. All of you here during Christmas will go celebrate and where your heart is there your treasure will be. How about if you are celebrating and there are criminal activities taking place like fighting, swearing, hatred of people and when God comes back and picks Solomon Islands we will all miss; we will miss the mark. That is the message in this book. This book is a beacon. If you go to the Western Province now there is a new beacon there. I thank the Ministry of Infrastructure for that.

Now, it flashes and all sorts of colored lights to show the way to ships. This book is like that. It reminds leaders that we have to behave as good leaders in leading our people whom we represent by showing the true light for them to follow our characters, behaviors and attitude. All of us in here were saying that people from Malaita are criminals. Man, they are human beings. I am now old but I visit these people every time. Some of you never visit these people. But you should talk to them telling them to behave this way or tell them that this is the way we should live with our neighbors. We do not have to wait as it is every body's business. You do not have to be a minister for peace to tell your neighbors on the street about peace. You do not have to be a pastor to tell people that what they are doing is wrong. Every citizen of Solomon Islands needs to talk about peace to everyone in the streets, in every corner of Solomon Islands. If you see someone doing something wrong, go to him and touch him and say 'son what you are doing is wrong'.

You can have a good report but if there is no action to it then I am sorry. This is a very good report. We from the Western Province, all the 9 national members, it is about time that we take this report and go and hold a conference in the Western Province telling our people that Western Province needs peace and let tourists to come if they have peace in their hearts. Do not wait for other provinces if they do not want peace but we want peace. That is the message here. Isabel Province now is saying that it has more tourists going there. Why? Maybe because they are peaceful people, I think. If you want to promote tourism then this is the paper. To all those people promoting tourism, this is the paper. This is how your nation looks like in the past and how it will look like in the future. This is the paper. Tourism development, this is your paper. You study your people. If your people misbehave in your community, in the urban areas, in towns, in the provinces or in the villages then you might as well tell them to slow down a bit because this book is telling us to do the right thing for the nation of Solomon Islands. But some of you want it for yourselves. Some of you only want it for your own province. No, there is no need for that. Ephesians 4 says there is unity and diversity in Christ. Some of you need this at this point in time.

We are leaders but when we go out from this house we forget about it. Just like a person who looks in the mirror in the morning, he dresses up very nicely but when he goes out from his house he forgets about himself. So we are reminded by this report. We are very much reminded as a leader of what our responsibility is to our children. This book is telling Honorable Taneko to go back and tell his Shortlands people to behave and change their characters so that you can have a good community there so that people can see we are good people. I do not want to talk much but my message is clear. I term this report according to Psalms 119:105 as a lamp unto my feet. Its light is not far, it is just

here, and this is the report. You look at it and you will see the areas we make mistakes, our past, how our nation has been in the last 30 years.

Hon Riumana (*interjecting*): We are in a ship. We are traveling in a ship.

Mr Taneko: Do not talk about ship because if there is no ship you will not be able to go to Isabel. Every one of you in here if there is no ship there is no bridge between the islands. So the person who has vision is this man.

You know what, Mr. Speaker and my good Prime Minister, the only ship that is making two trips weekly to the Western Province is Bikoi.

(hear, hear)

Why is that so? It is because of the visionary mind of this man. So even if you do not want him, you talk about him and criticize him but that is the reality of the faith, of the vision, of the action. It is faith and visionary in action. You can write a whole report of policies but if you do not implement those policies then I am sorry. We can write so many policies in the government but if those policies are not implemented, your vision is not implemented in action then you forget about it.

The reality is in the rural sector where you empower people in the village, indirectly your labor, you will increase the economy of the nation and the wealth of this nation will increase, not borrowing money from outside. I do not know how some people read, but this man here, I can tell you 100% I see that we can increase this nation by its own wealth by following the principles of the Almighty Supreme. I want to register this because the time will come when I exit and so I might as well put in the nest something that we can see. Oh, yes, the Member for Shortlands this is what he said, this is what he thinks, this is what he visualizes, and these are the actions he took and something happens.

The Minister for Agriculture is promoting rice every time in here but there is no funding for Shortlands. I do not have to submit an application for rice, and that is why we are in trouble here. There is unequal sharing because somebody is waiting for application. If I am the Minister for Agriculture I will give funding to every constituency their portion of rice. Why do we have to make submission? That is where corruption exists. We do not have to look for excuses why you did not budget for it. I do not have to ask for it. Some of us in here cannot put a proposal. It is faith in action. Thank you Deputy Speaker for saying that ask and you shall receive, knock and the door will be opened unto you, seek and you shall find. I went there two to three times already but there is nothing. Some of you Ministers here have written letters already. I asked for funding for

the vision that I have but there is no acknowledgment. Even to acknowledge a letter by saying thank you your letter has been received in such and such a date, thank you but at the moment we have nothing. Such response like that is not even given. What a leadership, just to acknowledge that is not forthcoming. We want an answer acknowledging our letter is needed because it is our vision, it is our dream that we want to come true that whether I succeed or not but at least I have to get an answer.

Do you know that the franchise shipping we approved in here, now they sent us a letter saying, round 1, round 2, we have to wait. Who are we waiting for? Vessels are there. Who are we waiting to fund uneconomical zone. This report is telling us the infrastructure and development so who are we waiting for. Sorry about this Minister for Infrastructure but I want to raise this so that he can hear what his people are doing and saying.

Hon. Sofu: Point of order. Just to put the records right, franchise shipping will be implemented in 2010. Thank you.

Mr. Taneko: Thank you and I salute the Minister for that but the letter is negative and he has to fix it. That is what I am saying here. Put the funds where our mouth is. We say one thing here in the policy of government, we debate it, so might as well we do it in action. Thank you for that.

Before I sit down, on behalf of my good people in Shortlands Constituency on this report, much has been said. I know most of you here because I speak the truth. What I am saying here comes out from my heart. I am not reading a speech, no, I do not write it. I do not have wishful thinking. I am getting it out from my heart and put it out straight to this house. It is reality and not wishful thinking, but it is from my heart, and I am telling it.

Anyway before I sit down I want to thank committee members, the secretariat, the Hansard, the Clerk of Parliament for your efforts for the hard work for this report. On behalf of my people, I want to thank you for this report as it is a very good report reminding us where we are as Solomon Islanders, what kind of characters and behavior we have. It is talking to you and to me. Whatever this report is, as leaders it is talking to us, telling us to do the right thing, telling us this is the way, this is your future, telling us do not do this and do not do that. That is how I analyze this report and so I am really happy with this report. Thank you and I support the motion.

Mr Speaker: Just to remind Members of Standing Order 37(d) that Members debate the principles of the report.

Mr. BOSETO: Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to make my very brief contribution to the report of the Foreign Relations Committee on its RAMSI inquiry.

I first of all would like to thank the Chairman.....

Mr. Huniehu: Point of order. For the last six months some of us, our lights never work and so we keep buying eyeglasses but I now realize that it is not to do with our eyeglasses but it is because we do not have this illuminative lighting. If the Clerk can make sure to fix these lights. This one here does not have lights and so as this one. We are just trying to read what we can, especially when we are coming to the committee of supply on this report you can hardly read the report with this kind of lighting system.

Mr Speaker: Thank you, I am sure the Clerk takes note of that concern as it is an administrative matter.

Mr. Boseto: I first of all thank the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for presenting this report in his opening speech to this honorable House. Above all, I thank the CNURA leadership who has been directing and facilitating these happenings.

I noted that the presenter of this report was trying to distinguish between the executive review of RAMSI as proposed by the former Grand Coalition for Change Government and the parliamentary review of the CNURA government through the Foreign Relations Committee. Hence the current CNURA administration has no influence over the production of this report which is now under our consideration.

Personally, differentiating between the executive review and the parliamentary review through the Foreign Relations Committee does not make any difference if the methodology of the approach followed by the reviewer or inquirer is still governed by a pyramid structure of our capitalistic democracy with its top down functions. Because this wider consultation which has been conducted by the Foreign Relations Committee, although commended for its goods and hard work, the question on how far the Committee has reached out beyond the minority English speaking audiences from whom the members of the Committee were hearing and interacting with, is still to be founded out from our different and diverse cultural context of the island nation of Solomon Islands.

I use the term namely “our pyramid structure of a capitalistic democracy”, which in my view is a structure ruled by top political executives and it usually lacks sensitivity and knowledge of who is above it for its accountability and who

are under it for its sustainability. The story of building the tower of Babel in Genesis Chapter 11: 1-9 explains what I meant by the pyramid structure of our capitalistic democracy which lacks sensitivity and understanding. Who of those are above it and who are under it?

Since our nation of Solomon Islands is a nation of the Holy Bible of God, let me read some of parts of what I referred to in Genesis. I quote: *“At first the people of the whole world had only one language and use the same words. As they wondered about in the East they came to a plain in Babylonia and settled there. They said to one another ‘come on, let us make bricks and bake them hard so they had bricks to build with and tar to hold them together. They said now let us build a city with a tower that reaches the sky so that we can make a name for ourselves and not to be scattered all over the earth. Then the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which they had built and he said, now then these are all one people and they speak one language. This is just the beginning of what they are going to do. Soon they will be able to do anything they want. Let us go down and mix up their language so that they will not understand each other. So the Lord scattered them all over the earth and they stop building the city. The city was called Babylon because there the Lord mixed up the language of all the people and from there He scattered them all over the earth”*. The Bible reading that I have just read tells as that God is not in favor of the pyramid structure as he is not aware of who is above it and who is under it. This is why I have alluded earlier that although the wider consultation that has been carried out by the Foreign Relations Committee has been commended for its well done and good work compiled in this one volume report, however, my question remains, and that is, how far is the spirit and the message of this nationwide consultation reach out beyond the minority English speaking audiences. Therefore, if the spirit of the message of the partnership framework between RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government to be a living document as it claims for its overall goal for a peaceful Solomon Islands, it must move beyond partnership between capitalistic institutions to relationship between people to people. It is for the sake of moving beyond the pyramid structure of partnership to people structure of relationship that God recognizes and affirms diversity of the nation and languages on the day of Pentecost to be filled with one spirit of the relationship to one living God and one another.

Pentecostal spirit is not talking about a system of partnership but a living spirit of caring and equal sharing of their belongings with the feeling of compassion and the rules of love. Saint Paul in his letter to the Galatians said freedom is what we have. Christ has set us free, stay then as free people and do not allow ourselves to become slaves again. Now the Lord’s spirit where the spirit of the Lord is present there is freedom. I believe the age of spoken words and written words have reached its limit. God expects all Solomon Islanders to

incarnate his word of grace, truth, love and sustainable peace with justice daily with our daily bread. There are the signs of the presence of his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Before I resume my seat, I take this opportunity to thank RAMSI, the presence of RAMSI at A time when our country was in anarchy fear and helplessness. The partnership framework to me is like an umbrella under which we move together from spoken and written words to incarnate words of grace, truth, love and sustainable peace with justice for our Lord's kingdom come in the nation of Solomon Islands. With these few remarks, I say God bless our people and God bless the nation of Solomon Islands. I support the motion. Thank you.

Hon. MAELANGA: First of all I would like to thank the Chairman of the Committee and members of the Committee for the report. I will be brief in my contribution to just point out what I see as missing from some parts of the report that I want to share as coming out from my heart.

The only one thing that all of us want from this report, which is the aim and objective of this report, is to bring about lasting peace to this country. The aim and objective of this report is for the country to return to normalcy. That is why all of us are searching around, looking around trying to find the solution for our country, all our island provinces to live peacefully and have good relationship with each other. That is the reason I stand up to contribute to this motion.

I would like to comment on the Committee's comment on 13.5 in the report. I can see there is one thing missing in that area. It is true that we talk about truth and reconciliation but one thing we must know is that truth and peace comes from God Himself. The only one thing is for all of us Members of Parliament, and all the people of this country to have a heart that has this true peace that is given to us by Christ then we would be able to achieve what this report and what this country wants.

We may talk about the peace process, we may talk about developments, especially projects to help those who have been involved in this ethnic tension. Yet these things do not bring lasting peace that we want for this country. We can talk about everything. Others were saying find the root causes. Even though we might find the root cause it will not solve anything in this country. We will even not find any prosperous settlement that this country wants. I will just be brief and say what is really from my heart. This House and people of this country need to know about true forgiveness. I think we all need to have true forgiveness. We as leaders and even our people as well must know about true forgiveness because only then we will have real lasting peace and this country

will go forward and then we will all stop talking about what is inside this report because we will put the past behind us.

I would like to say that there is only one thing that I see we could move this country forward. As I said earlier on, even though we may do a lot of things, without this one thing I do not think the problems of the tension will go out of our minds. The only thing I want to say here is if we have true forgiveness, let us think about those who are behind the bars. I think it is time that we leaders think of some other ways of how we can go forward. I think it is time for us to have true forgiveness, the real heart of forgiveness. I think it is time for our people to have the real heart of forgiveness. I believe this is what God has given me to say. This is a small brief statement that comes out from my heart to share in this Honorable House and to share to the people of this nation for them to hear. There is no other way forward if we do not have real forgiveness in our hearts for all our children who are behind bars. As leaders of this nation we must find ways forward for our children.

I want to say this again for leaders to think about and people of this nation to also think about. Jesus says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing". Others who have contributed to the debate, and the speaker who has just sat down said that we have to find the root causes. We can find the root causes, but even if we find the root causes what are we going to do about them. I think it is best, as I have said earlier on, my statement this afternoon is very simple and that is for all of us leaders and people of this nation to have the real heart of forgiveness and to think of our children who are behind bars. How should we deal with them? How can we bring peace to them so that we could find lasting peace to our beloved nation, Solomon Islands?

With those few remarks, thank you very much for allowing me to speak. I think what I have said is also the heart of my people too in my constituency. I would like to thank all Members for your views to share towards this motion. With those few remarks, I support the motion. Thank you.

Mr. NUAIASI: Thank you for allowing me to speak very briefly on this very important motion moved by the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee.

In front of us and with us in this Honorable house are three important reports; the committee report, the partnership framework and the motion moved by the Foreign Relations Chairman, which we are now debating. All of us talk about the ethnic tension, but if we look at it carefully how each of us in this House views the ethnic tension is more or less depends very much on how and where we live in Solomon Islands. There are no wrong or right views when presenting our views about the tension in this honorable House and we try to put across suggestions that this is the way forward in solving the ethnic tension.

The tension happened because of some fundamental flaws. The mistake is this, and today it is upon the shoulders of leaders of this House who mandated this Committee to look into this incident and come up with a report for us to debate and we come up with solutions or recommendations that would enhance everlasting peace in Solomon Islands.

This country, as we know, is made up of a lot of scattered islands located a little bit distant from each other and we come to realize that because of development and urbanization we come to choose some places where developments can take place, which attracts us until today where today we are in this parliament to discuss it. These things happen because we want to adopt the systems that westernization attracts us with so that we too become part of this global world that we belong to.

I would like to thank the Committee for having come this far, for going to the provinces in taking the views of our people. Although the people interviewed or the people they collected information from may not have given the kind of information we need, but it all talks about RAMSI intervention in Solomon Islands. They told us how best they understand RAMSI when they come to rescue us and return peace to Solomon Islands.

This report, even if how good we talk about them in Parliament, once we do not implement them to the best of our ability to receive everlasting peace then they are just useless. They are just mere reports to be debated in Parliament and if we do not take them seriously they will be just shelved away in our offices, let alone this House is coming close to its mandatory period. And if a new government that comes in next year is not serious as we are serious today in addressing this issue, it will be another lengthy period before we come this far. However, being in a very serious situation and we want everlasting peace in Solomon Islands, I think it will not go that far.

As has been alluded to by the Minister for Provincial government, this is a Christian country that professes forgiveness, we profess love one another as you love yourselves, we profess acceptance of each other so that all of us can forgive each other and forget about the past. But one thing is clear; today the youth population is growing fast and it is upon our shoulders the shoulders of the leaders of today to address this issue now and not tomorrow. In my view, if this important issue is not addressed now, we are surely going to come across problems. That is how I see it. Having this report before us and the report is clear in recommending the conclusions or the steps that we should take. I think we should not only talk about them but start to do them now.

RAMSI being here is a good thing, and no one denies the fact that RAMSI has saved us and brought back peace to Solomon Islands. However, one thing we must realize is our sovereignty. We must make sure we have concern about

our sovereignty. Let alone Solomon Islands is an independent nation on its own, and let alone whatever decisions we draw out must come from this House so that it is good for our people and our nation.

As I have already said that I am going to be very brief because this report is very detailed and a lot of speakers who have spoken before me have said a lot of good things about this report, and so on behalf of my people of West Are Are we support this report. We think that its implementation should be a fundamental issue that should be given priority.

The presence of RAMSI is good but as one saying goes I would like to say let not RAMSI only give us fish but it must also teach us how to fish. What that means is that we cannot rely on RAMSI all the time. There should be a cutoff point so that Solomon Islands should learn from RAMSI about good governance and other good things we should learn from them and then it is ourselves who should carry them out for the betterment of our own country.

In addition to that, what I come to realize is that whatever we do in relation to the reports here, consultation with our chiefs is of paramount importance. We have not, I should say, been involved with them very much although we may for some who live in town, but that in itself does not reflect a fair representation of our people to contribute towards this important issue.

With those points, I support the report and I would like to thank the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for taking in writing up the report, going to the provinces and for presenting the report before the house. I would like to thank him and his Committee and with these few words, I resume my seat.

Hon. SIKUA: Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the debate by the Foreign Relations Committee on the Inquiry on the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and RAMSI intervention. At the outset I wish to, on behalf of the Government, express our sincere gratitude to the Chairman and members of the Foreign Relations Committee for a job well done in successfully concluding their work and hence the report before us. I also commend the staff of the National Parliament for the support services they afforded to the Committee during the course of its undertaking.

The Government or Cabinet is yet to consider the report, especially the recommendations therein, most of which are directed at the Government. Thus, I would not comment on how the Government will address each of the recommendations directed at it, but merely to make some general remarks on the report.

The Government will also take note of how Parliament would like us to address the recommendation in the report when we consider the report in the

committee of the whole house. Honorable colleagues would however note that the Government through Parliament has already implemented the recommendation on the flexibility to review the review date of RAMSI Notice when we enacted the Facilitation of International Assistance Amendment Bill 2009 a few weeks ago. I will not attempt to respond to the points raised by the Honorable Leader of Opposition in his debate before lunch break this afternoon. I will leave that to the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee in his reply speech. But I know too that during the committee of the whole house, I can and will respond to any issues raised at that stage.

That said, in my view, the Foreign Relations Committee's report is comprehensive, balanced and of good high quality of international standard. It provides the background and the basis for intervention vis-à-vis the vital issue of Solomon Islands' sovereignty, among other issues. I believe that the report also provides a fair and accurate summary of events leading up to and following the deployment of RAMSI to Solomon Islands in 2003.

The Committee has certainly conducted wide consultations throughout our country, had directly addressed a number of criticisms and concerns and considered most, if not all, viewpoints. It is also important to note that one or two recommendations in the report are outside the scope and terms of reference of the inquiry. This however is a matter that the Cabinet will look further into when we consider the report.

It should also be noted that the report finds the legal framework under which RAMSI operates to remain appropriate. It also concludes that the powers and privileges afforded to RAMSI personnel are consistent with international practice and endorses RAMSI's mandate and exit strategy as articulated by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI in the Partnership Framework. These are important observations on issues that are fundamental to RAMSI's presence and activities in the country. Nevertheless, it is equally important to bear in mind that RAMSI's activities in our country must continue to contribute to the enhancement of our nation's sovereignty rather than reducing it.

The 2004 Forum Leaders Auckland Declaration noted that RAMSI's presence must be to reinforce or rebuild the sovereignty of Solomon Islands and not to undermine it. It is also worth noting that the Committee refers to RAMSI in the report as an unprecedented regional response, noting that the success of RAMSI to date warrants the praise of all the people and the Governments of Solomon Islands, the member states of the Pacific Islands Forum and, of course, the officers of RAMSI.

Certainly, RAMSI has been a success and as I have said on a number of occasions, the people and the Government of Solomon Islands are greatly indebted to RAMSI for granting us the opportunity of rebuilding our country.

We must capitalize on this opportunity. In view of this, the comment from the distinguished Deputy Leader of Opposition and Member of Parliament for West Makira that his province or indeed his constituency does not need RAMSI is rather unfortunate and shallow. It is shallow because he fails to appreciate what RAMSI has done to restore law and order in this country. It is about our country as a whole and not about individual constituencies or indeed individual provinces. It is about this great nation of ours and our good people in Solomon Islands. I believe the Honorable Member missed the point that it was only because of restoration of law and order by RAMSI that subsequently gave each province the confidence to strive for self reliance. Now that some areas may feel self-reliant, it appears that they no longer need RAMSI.

I strongly believe that had RAMSI not come to Solomon Islands, had RAMSI not come to Honiara and to our other parts of the country and had the ethnic tension continued to worsen, not one province would feel so confident. Having said that, I wonder whether the people of Makira who the Foreign Relations Committee visited and consulted feel the same way as their Member of Parliament, but perhaps that is a question that the honorable Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee might wish to explore in his reply.

It is true that many people believe that RAMSI has only been addressing law and order issues. I believe the reason is twofold. First, law and order is the most visible aspect of the outcome of RAMSI's work in our government system. A lot of other work that RAMSI is doing is taking place and the results have yet to be seen. This is a matter we have taken into account in our joint monitoring and evaluation programs and projects. What the government would like to see is expected outcomes having an impact in client groups and communities. This is not easy because the government must continue to govern using the machinery in place. The machinery of governance is under reform and reconstruction itself and the capacity it should produce is slow in coming.

Secondly, our people do not fully understand RAMSI's mandate and that has been expressed by other colleague members in their debate. That is, on what it is supposed to do and what it is not expected to do. A lot of our people expect RAMSI to do everything for us. This is rather unfortunate because we must not expect RAMSI or the Government for that matter to do everything for us. The basic principle of helping one to help oneself equally applies to any form of assistance to our good people whether by RAMSI or by the government.

While it is true that many of our people find it difficult to fully understand RAMSI's mandate or to engage in the discussion on politics and governance, it is not true that they have no clue whatsoever and that they are ignorant of what is important to them in their lives. This few denigrates and belittles our people because they are acutely aware of what their own needs are. Our largest

communication system is our network of churches and probably the next is our education and health system, elements of which are present in our rural areas. The humble pastor, the humble teacher, the humble nurse is generally able to help people discuss what they need for their security and safety.

I acknowledge, however, that due to many factors that every government since independence have faced, my government has also been struggling to find the right formula to connect more meaningfully with our rural populace and masses. While this is an ongoing process with slow progress, my government is committed to keep at it, and I am pleased that the report indicates in certain areas how we might be able to improve. I am also open to other suggestions during this debate but, of course, subject to further deliberations of the Cabinet on this report.

The continuing success of RAMSI could also be determined when or after RAMSI finally leaves our shores. By that I mean when RAMSI departs, the big question will be whether we would be able to look after ourselves in terms of maintaining law and order, managing our finances and ensuring that the government machinery operates effectively to the benefit of all our people. It is therefore very important that we recognize the issue of sustainability of RAMSI programs, as well as the essence of capacity building both human and institutional especially in the police and judiciary.

On the area of policing, while RAMSI, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the Government certainly have much to do to put the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force back to its former state, this also depends very much on acceptance by our own good people. The people must learn to start trusting in and have confidence in our local Police Force before any of the good work of RAMSI could be put to good use. The people, therefore, have a big part to play in the sustainability of RAMSI's policing programs.

As I have alluded to earlier, the challenge is for us to seize this opportunity and build on the gains made thus far. I agree with the Committee that much work remains to be done. I believe the onus is on every Solomon Islander at all levels of our society to play our part in the search for sustainable peace and a prosperous future for all of us and our good country. In this regard, the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is vital in our search for peace and reconciliation in our country. Moreover, there is an urgent need to address social issues such as community policing, provincial service delivery, alcohol and drug abuse, theft and other criminal activities and social ills. This needs collective effort on the part of communities involved and not just RAMSI or the Government to act.

I wish to touch on the SIG/RAMSI Partnership Framework. I note that a number of colleagues who have contributed to the debated commented that the

Framework is not comprehensive enough. The Partnership Framework was jointly developed by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI. It is consistent with RAMSI's current mandate and does not seek to expand the scope of that mandate. It is essentially a forward looking plan that builds on existing RAMSI activities as well as on achievements made since RAMSI's inception such as restoring law and order and strengthening Solomon Islands institutions.

The Partnership Framework between the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI sets out the overall goal and objective of RAMSI's work with the Solomon Islands Government but clearly with the Solomon Islands Government taking the lead. It also outlines aspirational goals that are aligned with the Solomon Islands Government's policy objectives, and in particular that of our rural advancement policy. Honorable colleagues should note that the Partnership Framework is a living document. It will need to be adjusted to reflect changing priorities, conditions and developments in Solomon Islands. There is a Performance Oversight Group that is charged with the responsibility of monitoring and evaluating the Framework and to recommend the necessary adjustments if need be. I as Prime Minister chair the Performance Oversight Group and that we meet every six months. Our first meeting was held last month and our next meeting will be in the first quarter of next year 2010. If colleague Members of Parliament feels that there are areas that need to be reflected in the framework, then there is an opportunity to consider this during the evaluation process and can make submissions to the Office of the Prime Minister.

On the other hand, and as I have stressed earlier, it is also important to remember that what RAMSI can do or not, does depend on its current mandate. We cannot expect RAMSI to do things outside its current mandate or to do everything for us. RAMSI cannot be seen as a panacea for all our social, economic and political ills. RAMSI's mandate can only be amended through consultation with the contributing countries under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum. Any such change, if sanctioned by the Forum will be reflected in the legal framework of RAMSI. This is a core issue that the Forum considers carefully every time it meets regarding RAMSI.

The report also comments on the importance of constitutional reform. It is well known that a majority of our people want a devolved system of Government. My Government remains committed to achieving this objective. While I acknowledge the delay in the process, I wish to assure this Honorable House that the constitutional reform process is only being held up by our financial constraints, which, as you will appreciate, is brought about by the current global economic crises. Further, while my Government is working on turning this situation around, the very situation has made difficult for me to

make any accurate prediction as to the progress of the reform process. As such, I cannot as yet make any conclusive comments on our constitutional reform processes. But I can assure the House that I will make a statement on this process when we come back for our meeting in early 2010.

Looking at the bigger picture, I wish to assure my good people of Solomon Islands that the Government is committed to working closely with RAMSI, towards a secure and prosperous future for Solomon Islands. The Partnership Framework provides the details as to how the Government and RAMSI will work together towards this objective. The Government will also consider the recommendations of the report as well as suggestions as to how we should address or implement these recommendations.

With these remarks, I wish to commend the Committee once again for its report and for a job well done, and I support the motion.

Mr. Boyers: As yet again, more time is needed on this report so I moved that the debate that Parliament resolves itself into a committee of the whole house to consider National Parliament Paper No. 37 2009, Report on the Inquiry into the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and the RAMSI intervention be adjourned to the next sitting day.

Debate on the motion adjourned to the next sitting day.

Hon. Sikua: I move that Parliament do now adjourn.

The House adjourned until 4.11 am