

MONDAY 07TH DECEMBER 2009

The Speaker, Sir Peter Kenilorea took the Chair at 10.10 am.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of Minister for Rural Development & Indigenous Affairs; Foreign Affairs & External Trade; Environment, Conservation & Meteorology; Mines Energy & Rural Electrification; Provincial Government & Institutional Strengthening; Forestry; Home Affairs; and the Members for South Choiseul, East Are Are, Ngella, Central Honiara; Temotu Nende; East Makira and North West Guadalcanal.

SPEAKERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members, it is my pleasure to acknowledge the presence of the Speaker of Guadalcanal Provincial Assembly, the Speaker of the Isabel Provincial Assembly, and their respective clerks. They will be joined later by the Speaker of the Western Provincial Assembly and his clerk. The National Parliament together with UNDP Governance and Provincial Governance Strengthening Program of the Ministry of Provincial Government have organized these three days attachment for respective speakers and clerks over the next three days here at Parliament. I therefore would encourage Members to take time to speak to the Speakers and Clerks during the course of their attachment here at Parliament. Thank you very much indeed.

PRESENTATION OF PAPTERS AND OF REPORTS

- Ministry of Public Service 2008 Annual, (National Parliament Paper No.42 of 2009)
- Audit Report in respect of the Audit of Commodities Export Marketing Authority for the Years ended 31st December 2000 to 2007 (National Parliament Paper No. 43 of 2009)

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR PUBLIC SERVICE on the Code of Conduct of Solomon Islands Public Service

Hon. TOZAKA: Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to inform this Honorable House of the major development that has resulted from the hard work my ministry and staff of the Public Service together with the Public Service improvement program, through RAMSI has achieved in the course of implementing government policy. It is the Government's policy to ensure that we have a Public Service that exercises good governance. Since independence the Public Service has been striving for a standard of excellence in the provision of public service to all Solomon Islanders. Accordingly, I am pleased to inform this honorable House that my Ministry is contributing towards this aim with the release of a Code of Conduct for the Solomon Islands Public Service as premised in my Ministry's corporate plan.

The Code of Conduct, which I launched last week, provides a minimum standard of conduct and work performance for public officers and may be complemented by other professional codes which, as you all know, already existed in our government system. These include the police, prison officers, legal practitioners code, the doctors' nursing code, the teacher's code and others. The public service code should supplement these professional codes and will apply to all public officers, so whether an officer is on permanent employment, temporary and holds a public office, are all covered by this code. It will apply at all times in the work place and during off hours including while on training, during annual leave, suspension or unpaid leave. It will also be applied fairly and equitably in accordance to the principle of nation justice and in conjunction with relevant legislations.

The Code of Conduct has five key principles, and these you will find in the Code itself and also in the leaflet that is provided to all honorable Members. They are respect for law and government, respect for people integrity, diligence, economy and efficiency. The Code will act as a guide for ethical decision making and set a high standard for conduct and work performance. I am especially pleased to be able to make copies of the code available to all Members of Parliament.

Dissemination of the Code across the whole public service has commenced with Permanent Secretaries and Provincial secretaries to be the first ones who will be given copies this month. The rest of the officers should get their copies early in 2010, along with accompanying amendments to the General Orders and corresponding chapter in a human resources manual and an education material for the training of public officers. In order to enforce the Code of Conduct we must ensure that public officers read it and understand

what it means. So an information and dedication problem is an important part of the dissemination. It will not be another piece of document gathering dust in the shelves.

My Ministry will soon embark on an educational program through media outlets and also through induction courses run by the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM). Permanent Secretaries, Provincial Secretaries, Heads of Departments and supervisors will help the Public Service to ensure compliance. The consequences of breaching the Code include verbal warning, written warning, charge for misconduct, reprimand and dismissal. It is important to know that dismissal is a consequence for breaching these codes. This is an important step towards strengthening integrity and standard of conduct within the Service. The code is one element of a wider package of reform initiatives which are designed to earn public confidence. Let me give you some examples of what is in the Code. Public officers must uphold the laws of Solomon Islands and comply with reasonable and lawful instructions. They are expected to implement the relevant policies and decisions of elected government. Public officers must treat each other and members of the public honestly and fairly. They must treat each other and members of the public with respect and courtesy, even when the other person's views may differ from their own. Violent and aggressive behavior will not be tolerated. Supervisors need to ensure that their staff understands what standards of performance are expected of them and supervisors must avoid favoritism. Integrity is at the heart of this code of conduct. To gain public trust and confidence public officers must demonstrate integrity in the work place. Public officers are required to demonstrate integrity by properly exercising power, authority and by not allowing authority or position to be used improperly when pressured by wantoks. Public officers are required to demonstrate integrity by ensuring that any conflicts that arise between personal interest and official duties are resolved in favor of public interest. Public officers are required to demonstrate integrity by disclosing fraud and misconduct in a timely manner to responsible officer or other appropriate authority. Public officers are required to ensure that government resources are not misused and public officers must comply with all government instructions, policies and procedures relating to the use of final resources such as allowances and fares.

The strength of any government system lies in the extent to which it earns and upholds respect of its citizens. That respect comes from the confidence that people have in the integrity of the government and services it provides. Solomon Islanders have high expectations of staff and government agencies. We would expect that public servants are honest, fair and loyal. Solomon Islanders always expect that public officers abide to the law, decisions are made fairly, public

money and resources are spent wisely and public assets are cared for. We also expect public officers to act ethically and perform competently. This Code is trying to make sure these standards are met by public officers.

Leadership is all about gaining and maintaining confidence to those whom we are responsible to and also to those we are responsible for. As much as the code of conduct is important for public officers, I strongly believe that one should also be tailored for Members of Parliament so that those who are interested to follow the political career in the future, have a code to remind them of how they should conduct themselves in the course of performing their public duties, and to this I am pleased that this has already been recommended to the Special Select Committee on privileges, powers and immunities of Parliament.

To conclude, managing people and processes which includes the code of conduct underpins the effective and efficient delivery of services. The Public Service Code of Conduct serves a profound purpose. It is central to ensuring Solomon Islanders trust in government and maintaining their confidence in the public service. Finally, thank you for the opportunity extended to me to make this brief statement in this honorable House and may God bless Solomon Islands.

(applause)

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members are, of course, aware that statements by Ministers are not subject for debate, but opportunity can be granted for some short questions if any Member wishes to raise some questions to the Minister at this point in time.

Hon. Sogavare: Before I ask the questions, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ministry and the Minister for coming up with this Code of Conduct. It is something that should be welcomed by Parliament, and so I would like to take this opportunity to register my congratulation to the Minister.

I only have three questions here to ask for the Minister to take note of and answer them. The first one is that the Minister mentioned that the Code of Conduct also applies to temporary employees. I think he needs to define that and the question I am leading to is whether TA's engaged under the various ministries are also required to abide by this Code of Conduct. That is the first one. The second question is, how is the government going to enforce this code of conduct? Thirdly, and I think most importantly are integrity and issues in corruption are quite serious issues and the question is what are we doing to improve the environment within which public servants are expected to comply with the code of conduct. It is another thing to enforce and require public servants to abide by the Code of Conduct and it is quite another thing to improve

environment within which public servants are expected to carry out their duties and in doing so abide by the code of conduct.

Hon. Tozaka: Thank you Leader of Opposition. The answer to your first question is in the affirmative. Temporary employees refer to advisors and our TAs in the public service. Your second question is on compliance and enforcement which are very important. On compliance, as I have already mentioned in the speech the first thing that needs to be done is for the public officers to understand and know what is in the code of conduct. We need to distribute this code to them so that all public officers have access to the code of conduct, starting with Permanent Secretaries and Provincial Secretaries. We also have induction courses at the Institute of Public Administration, and so we are going to feed this code into training programs there.

Honorable Members will also be aware that we already have a code of conduct in the General Orders and this one is to improve those codes of conducts in the General Orders. The enforcement will be the same as the enforcement of misconducts in the General Orders and also Public Service Regulations. To make it much stronger, we are going to change the General Orders as well as the Public Service Act next year so that the code is incorporated in the Act itself. Those are the processes that we are going to do to make enforcement and so as compliance.

The other thing is that it is important that members of the public also know about this code so that members of the public will act as checks on public officers. Therefore, we are going to carry out some awareness of this code for the public. We are going to provide, and this is why we have this leaflet here. We are going to make this leaflet available to them so that they will be able to check on these things when they visit government offices so that they will be able to say, according to this code of conduct on diligence, maintaining a high level of work attendance and punctuality. And so they are going to check on public officers because this is their code and you are supposed to be in the office but why are you here. It is a double check thing, and that is why we came up with this. The purpose of I am introducing this to make statement to Parliament this morning is basically to invite all my honorable colleagues, all of us to try and have ownership of this code. We own it and we work together with the Public Service so that we can enforce it together collectively.

Mr Waipora: Like my boss, I would also like to congratulate the Minister and his Ministry and the Government as a whole for coming up with this very important policy or something that we have been looking for, for quite some time. I would like to thank them for the good work. Whoever is involved in this task, take it from me that I am very thankful for them.

My question, may be is similar to the question raised by the Honorable Leader of Opposition, but my question is something to do with provincial governments. In this country, we have two employing authorities within the whole government system. We have public servants seconded to provincial governments and provincial governments also have their own direct employees. I think it is common sense that direct employees of provincial governments fall inside the same code as the Solomon Islands Public Service, but they are appointed by their provincial executives. How would direct employees of provincial governments be classified under? Will they abide to this code of conduct or abide to their own staff instructions within their own organizations or provincial governments set up by provincial executives themselves?

I asked this question because if you count the nine provinces and the number of direct employees, it must have been a very good number of direct employees throughout the whole country within the nine provinces. How are we going to cater for these direct employees? Will this code also apply to them? Commonsense has it that yes, but how would provincial executives see it?

Hon Tozaka: Thank you Mr Speaker and thank the Deputy Leader of Opposition for his question. According to the Provincial Government Act of 1981 we have delegated functions to the Provincial Government Assembly for them to employ their own people and so they are covered under the 1981 Act. Therefore, this code is going to help them come up with another code at the provincial level so that they can have their own code like what we have. Those who are covered by this code are public servants. All public officers seconded to the provinces are covered by this code. They will be trained on how to use it, and it will also help them to come up with their own code of conduct.

The question by the Leader of Opposition was not well covered by me when I answered his question earlier on about the environment in the Public Service, creating an environment in the Public Service, but we have a program in place, which I also made a statement about it here called the Public Service Improvement Program (PSIP) is also looking into this. It looks at all the schemes of service of Public Service. We have conducted a survey throughout the public service and they have come up with their reports on strong points and weak points in the public service, and one of which is the inconsistencies that we have in the schemes of services, allowances and things like that, and I am happy to inform the House that we are directly addressing them now. Thank you.

Hon Tosika: Thank you for allowing me to ask a few questions. I understand that there is the Public Service Regulations, the GO, the Financial Instructions and some organization have their codes of conduct like the Police and others.

When you look at the five points raised here, which I do appreciate the hard work and the efforts in putting together this code, the question is that these five points are already in the Financial Instruction, the GOs or the Public Service Regulations. The Public Service Regulations are more detailed as well as the GOs encompassing things like attitudes, behavior, work attendance, sick leave and so forth.

When we look at this code of conduct, the Minister stated very clearly that they will work to improve instruments that are already in place. My question is why do you not review those regulations with the view of updating them to meet circumstances and standards that we want now. Secondly, I would like to know how many discipline cases have you had this year and how many terminations to show to us that those Acts of before are effective.

When I look at this book it is a very thin book and maybe you would refer back to those instruments to guide you on these five points. I think that reprimand, termination and so forth is lacking in the Public Service even when it is a place that is transforming policies of the government and yet it has that result. Because it is transformation and results brings that brings about whether an organization is efficient or not. Government policy is only a mere policy unless the Public Service, as it is, is carrying out those policies in a way that will create an effective and efficient result of those policies.

I would like to know how many officers have you disciplined, how many have you terminated and why do you not create an input inside instruments that are already in place to bring them up to today's standards or expectations?

Hon Tozaka: I thank the Leader of Independent for those questions. In regards to the General Orders, as I have said we have a code of ethics already there in the General Orders. General Orders, as we understand, are rules about the conditions of service of the Public Service. And we found out that a lot of the rules in the General Orders are out of date and only caters for our colonial administration. And so we need to now update it, and what we have in this code of conduct is that although it is not a book like the General Orders but it represents everything that the General Order and Financial Instructions cover. It is something that is easy to read where public officers can go straight to it, something they can understand and follow.

The General Orders is also being reviewed. I am pleased to inform the honorable House that the Public Service is reviewing the General Orders and this review is expected to be completed next year. What this code is addressing is updating the General Orders. It updates the General Orders targeting five areas or key ethical principles in the code of conduct.

Changing the attitude and behavior of public officers is most important so that they provide a good delivery of public service to the public. These rules, we are working together with other public service that we have relations with in coming up with this code of conduct. What I am saying is that the General Orders are there, the Financial instructions are there and work in updating the General Orders is going on at this time and we come up with this code of conduct which is also in the General Orders but we have taken it out so that it becomes a code of conduct of itself and not inside the GO but it becomes a booklet of itself. This is the first one we have developed and it is going to be developed as time goes on.

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

BILLS

Bills – First Reading

The 2009 Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) Bill 2009

The 2010 Appropriation Bill 2010

MOTIONS

Motion No. 12

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members, the Foreign Relations Committee's Report was tabled on 12th November 2009 and today the Chairman is moving the motion according to Standing Orders 17 and 18. I will now call on the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and Member for West New Georgia/Vona Vona to move the motion standing in his name on today's Order Paper.

Hon. BOYERS: Mr Speaker I beg to move that Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament 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.

In moving the motion, I wish to first of all thank you for allowing me the opportunity to ask this honorable House to consider in greater detail the report of the Foreign Relations Committee (FRC) on the RAMSI inquiry. That report, as Members are aware, was tabled on Thursday the 12th November 2009. On that day I acknowledged and thanked everyone who assisted our Committee whether through a written submission, participation in public hearings or some other

form of assistance. I do not propose to repeat that today, however, since then it has come to my attention that our report did not acknowledge some contributions. As I indicated when the report was tabled, it is inevitable that the report made some omissions and that oversight occurred when we put together that report. Like I explained earlier, the RAMSI inquiry was the first of its kind and even without much external assistance our committee and its secretariat attempted that nationwide inquiry with no expertise or experience on the administrative side of a complex inquiry. Inevitably, some submissions and contributions were not managed as well as they could have been. For those whose views or contributions may have been omitted or not adequately acknowledged because of our administrative issues, I sincerely apologize and ask for your understanding. We certainly tried our best within the very short time so I can only hope that other committees learn from our shortfalls on the conduct of an inquiry and improve on future inquiries.

On that note, I wish to make special mention of two outside contributions that our Committee received that were inadvertently overlooked when the report was prepared. I acknowledge with gratitude that our Committee received written submissions, together with publications from Professor Clive Moore of the University of Queensland; and a publication from Dr Elsinia Wainwright, now with the New York University. We sought the views of these two academics because Dr Wainwright was involved in the pre-RAMSI policy assessment and Professor Moore has written extensively on RAMSI since its deployment. On behalf of our Committee and Secretariat I apologize for our oversight and hope that our report nevertheless incorporated your views.

That said, I now turn to the subject of my motion, the report. Before I comment on the key findings of the report, Members need to understand the background of our Report. In July 2008, when the review was referred to our Committee, our nation had been struggling for unity amongst the very diverse cultures for 30 years; the last five years of which was with the guidance of an intervening force, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). During this 30 year period our country unfortunately saw a number of ethnic based tensions, culminating in what we now called the ethnic tension between 1998 and 2003. I need not repeat what we went through during the ethnic tension. We all know, as outlined in the early chapters of our report that the ethnic tension crippled our nation economically and otherwise and saw the rule of militancy.

On the 24th July 2003, at the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government, RAMSI was deployed to Solomon Islands by other member states of the Pacific Islands Forum with the mandate to restore law and order, stabilize

finances of the SIG, promote economic recovery and rebuild the machinery of government.

The deployment of RAMSI under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum was unprecedented regional response to the crisis in Solomon Islands. It was based on the Forum's principles of regional cooperation and assistance set out in the Biketawa Declaration of 2000. The RAMSI deployment was immediately effective. On its arrival RAMSI moved successfully to restore law and order and put in place long term security arrangements, to stabilize government finances and balance the budget, to rebuild infrastructure and to reform the institutions of government. For these achievements, RAMSI has been rightly praised and continues to have the ongoing appreciation of the people of Solomon Islands.

However, six years on from its initial deployment there have also been criticisms of RAMSI and about the institutions and legal frameworks it works within, together with the capacity of the government to provide these essential services. I will return to these further on. Here, suffice it is to note that the fact that unlike the early years of the intervention in which RAMSI was generally welcomed without question, the fact that criticisms were increasing by 2008 was a clear indication that perhaps it was time to re-look at the SIG/RAMSI partnership.

This inquiry therefore, came at an opportune time, and I commend the CNURA Government for seeing it appropriate and timely to initiate the review, which this honorable House in its wisdom sanctioned and referred to our Committee. It is the first domestic inquiry conducted into RAMSI and the broader framework within which RAMSI operates since the 2004 report of the Solomon Islands Intervention Task Force. The Committee interpreted its terms of reference broadly as encompassing the work and functions of RAMSI and all associated institutions and programs in their entirety.

At this stage, I wish to clarify some allegations that have been raised in the media by one Patrick O'Connor, writing from a socialist website regarding the origins and nature of our inquiry. It has been argued that a parliamentary review was proposed by the Grand Coalition for Change Government but did not commence because of an alleged regime change campaign waged by Canberra which resulted in the overthrow of the GCC Government. It was further suggested that it was this very review that our Committee eventually undertook but with direct interference by the current CNURA Government.

Let me make this very clear for the public. There was indeed an attempt to review RAMSI in 2007. Our comments on that can be found on pages 56 to 58 of the Report. It should be understood that review of the FIA Notice envisaged by Section 23 of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act is essentially a

general debate of a motion that Parliament reviews the Notice. That is what took place in 2007. The then Prime Minister moved the motion and Parliament debated it and subsequently passed the same. That was the review, full stop. I am aware that the GCC Government was also thinking of a more substantive review but had that occurred it would have been an executive review of RAMSI and definitely not a parliamentary Review. A review by Parliament can only take place in the House as a general debate of a motion to review or by one of Parliament's standing or special select committees. What was proposed in 2007 but never eventuated was an executive review by the government at that time.

As far as a review under Section 23 of the FIA Act was concerned, that took place and concluded during the debate of the then Prime Minister's motion in August 2007. No executive review of RAMSI followed because the GCC Government fell a few months later. The review by our Committee, however, was initiated by a separate motion by the current Prime Minister on the 23rd July 2008, quite distinct from the 2007 motion or the proposed GCCG executive review.

The motion of July 2008 was made pursuant to Section 23 of the FIA Act and instead of undertaking a one-off review of the Notice as it did in 2007, Parliament opted to refer that review to our Committee, which is an extension of Parliament. Our review was therefore one under the Act and was a parliamentary review. It was not an executive review and the CNURA Government had no influence whatsoever over it.

Having said that, I cannot comment further on plans regarding an alleged campaign by Australia to oust the previous government. I believe most Solomon Islanders have heard these acquisitions and these were indeed mentioned even in the provinces during our inquiry. However, not a single person was able to substantiate such accusations to our Committee or to a court of law for that matter. As such, our Committee left these accusations out as political issues that we as a parliamentary committee cannot comment on. Perhaps anyone who has hard evidence of the plot by Canberra in 2007 should take up the matter with the International Court of Justice as a direct contravention of Solomon Islands sovereignty under international law. Such issues, however, should not be used to question the impartiality of our inquiry and our report.

In that regard, I also wish to respond to comments made by my own position as Chair of the Foreign Relations Committee and the preparation of our report. It has been suggested that our report was influenced by Australian officials, and that since I was at one point supposedly Australia's preferred Finance Minister I somehow favored Australia and RAMSI in the report. I categorically reject the suggestion that Australian officials played a major behind-the-scenes role in the Foreign Relations Committee Report. The report

was drafted by a team of seven staff members of the Parliamentary Secretariat. As part of the preparation we engaged two technical assistants from the New South Wales Legislative Council to assist our local staff. One technical assistant had extensive experience in committee report writing whilst the other deals with the administrative side of an inquiry such as compiling documents to be tabled and witness lists. These two technical assistants were engaged through the UNDP Parliamentary Strengthening Project to ensure that the final report adhered to processes and methods common to other Commonwealth parliaments, in line with Westminster traditions. There was absolutely no involvement from RAMSI officers or anyone from the Australian Federal Government or Parliament.

The team which prepared the Chair's report or my report relied entirely on evidence from submissions and hearings. That was submitted to me and I went through it and made changes based on my understanding of the outcomes of our long inquiry, which were very minimal. Following that, I presented the Chair's report to the Committee and we went through the report page by page. At the end of the process, the Committee adopted the report as its own, after scrutinizing it from front to back and front to back. This report was not just produced outside and given to us for endorsement. This is our Committee's report and we were involved in it from day one.

I also reject the suggestion that the government ensured that the Foreign Relations Committee had pro-RAMSI Members on it. That is a wild shot in the dark coming from someone who is absolutely clueless on the internal procedures of our Parliament. As Members are aware, the Speaker of Parliament appoints members and the Chair of every standing committee of Parliament. The Speaker does not act on the advice of the government or any other authority in this regard. The former Chair, Hon Laurie Chan and a few others, myself included, were members of the Foreign Relations long before the inquiry was referred to the Committee. Following referral of the inquiry, the Speaker appointed a few other members to the Committee in order to have a balance. We had 11 members when we commenced our inquiry and some were backbenchers while others were from the Opposition. The Leader of the Independent Group was and still is a member of the Committee. The Government, however, had nothing to do with membership of the Committee so anyone who suggests otherwise does so based on conspiracy theories and not proper procedures for committees.

On my part as Chairman of the Committee, as indicated earlier, I have been a member of the Committee since 2007. I remained a member throughout the inquiry and was appointed by the Speaker as chairman towards the end of the inquiry when Hon Laurie Chan, then Chairman, was appointed a Minister of the Crown and had to leave the Committee. As such, I was not the Chairman

from day one to suggest that I was somehow put in there by the Government or by Canberra specifically to lead the inquiry.

Recognition by the Australian Government and by the World Bank, I might add, of my contribution to the economic situation of the country as Finance Minister is a completely separate matter that only a paranoid socialist can draw innuendos from. Such recognition perhaps stemmed from the fact that in my time as Finance Minister in 2006, we recorded a surplus of SBD\$105.4 million (see page 149 of the report). Given that the next two years ended up with massive deficits, I believe I did a good job as Minister of Finance and I was not surprised when our donors expressed that I was their preference. While I am flattered with donor confidence in me at that time, that does not in any way mean that I would be so overwhelmed that I would become Canberra's puppet. Anyone who draws that kind of innuendo is simply paranoid and reads our report with pre-conceived conclusions and prejudices, and not with an open mind.

I hope that by now, Members accept that our inquiry was a review under the FIA Act, validly referred to our Committee and conducted in an impartial manner, independent of the Solomon Islands Government or any other government. Our report reflects that. Our Committee and its Secretariat put the report together, scrutinized it and adopted it as our own. I certainly hope that Members will bear that in mind during this debate and the ensuing consideration of the report in detail.

Against that backdrop, I now turn to the key findings of our report in relation to the RAMSI deployment. In the report, chapters 1 to 3 set out the background to our inquiry so our key findings actually start from Chapter 4. I outline our findings in terms of each chapter.

Chapter 4

In Chapter 4, the report considers two key judicial precedents relating to RAMSI and the FIA Act. In the first case, *Nori's Case*, the High Court considered the application of the powers and immunities of RAMSI personnel under the Act. The Court acknowledged that there are two distinct forces operating in Solomon Islands - the RISPF and the PPF, but held that this set up is not a breach of the Constitution or any other written law. In fact, even before the FIA Act was passed, our laws already allowed external forces to enter and operate in this country in certain circumstances.

The High Court also held that there was nothing unconstitutional about the powers and immunities of RAMSI personnel. In making that ruling, the his Lordship, the Chief Justice, considered submissions based on a PNG case that

Patrick O'Connor referred to in his article, but in the end his lordship dismissed such submissions because the PNG ruling was premised on certain provisions in the PNG Constitution that we do not have equivalents of in this country. In fact, as I recall, during the hearings, our Committee asked the Chief Justice about the PNG case and in his response advised that the PNG case is very different from arguments relating to RAMSI's partial immunity from legal proceedings.

The High Court's ruling on the immunity was clearly meant to cover all RAMSI personnel and not limited to the PPF. Anyone who argues otherwise should read that judgment in detail before embarking on a "bushman lawyer" attempt to re-interpret the case.

The second case that our Committee considered was *Makasi's Case* which simply confirmed that the Court of Appeal levels the ruling in *Nori's Case*. If there is any further doubt, one should note that even Mr Nori himself, the first Solomon Islander to challenge the legality of RAMSI's powers and immunity, acknowledged when he appeared before the Committee earlier this year that these are perfectly constitutional and appropriate. After our Committee considered the two cases, we were convinced that as far as powers, privileges and immunities of RAMSI personnel are concerned, legality or constitutionality were not the issue. The real issue was whether these are still appropriate or not.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 looks into the legal framework of RAMSI. The legal framework establishing RAMSI is based on three closely related and interlinked documents called the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003, the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003 and the RAMSI Treaty. While these documents were of necessity drafted and in some cases passed into law as a matter of urgency prior to the RAMSI intervention in 2003, on the whole they continue to serve RAMSI and the Solomon Islands well. While there are areas in which the legal framework could be improved through minor amendments, although this will require the concurrence of all members of the Pacific Islands Forum, our Committee is not convinced that there is any reason for wholesale review or reform of the legal framework. The legal framework is appropriate and effective, and has been found to be constitutional by the High Court.

Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 of the report the issue of powers and privileges of RAMSI under the FIA Act are considered. Under that Act RAMSI personnel operate in Solomon Islands with various powers and privileges – notably partial immunity from legal proceedings in Solomon Islands courts and the tax-free and duty-free

status. While it has been suggested that these powers and immunities are excessive, or at least no longer necessary in 2009, our Committee found that these are consistent with similar arrangements in both international and domestic law. Indeed it may be argued that the powers and privileges afforded to RAMSI personnel are less generous than those afforded to visiting contingents in similar situations elsewhere. Again, the High Court has found the powers and privileges of RAMSI personnel to be constitutional. While there is public concern about the powers and privileges held by RAMSI personnel, this reflects the lack of public understanding of those powers and privileges, rather than their inappropriateness.

Some outside commentators, such as Patrick O'Connor, still claim even now after reading our report that there are inconsistencies between the FIA Act (especially in respect of the powers and privileges of RAMSI personnel) and our local laws. I find such comments over-simplistic and without any supporting evidence. I wonder whether Mr O'Connor or any of his socialist colleagues have ever studied our local laws before they start criticizing. Our Committee certainly attempted to take evidence from all ministries administering immigration, customs and excise, taxation and employment laws. To draw our conclusions, we relied on their assessments and comparisons to other foreign persons and organizations with the same privileges. We can support such views and in that regard, I ask anyone who questions our conclusions to go to the Parliament website and read the transcripts of our discussions with Ministries and other legal experts. Members, however, should not take any view or advice from a website that appears to champion socialism; an ideology that we in this country keep a wide berth of.

I also note that in his article, Mr O'Connor argues that comparing RAMSI privileges to peace-keeping operations in other parts of the world is "absurd". He believes that RAMSI is no longer playing any "peace-keeping" role in Solomon Islands six years after the ethnic tension ended. In saying this, he obviously downplayed the underlying tension that resulted in the ethnic conflict, and which continues to exist today, as indicated throughout the report. Again, in his eagerness to denounce Australia and our Committee's report, Mr O'Connor drew conclusions from external assessments of the ethnic tension, perhaps from excellent Internet research skills. In so doing, however, he missed the bulk of the evidence that we gathered, particularly from the provinces such as comments made in Auki on Malaita and Tetere and Kuma on Guadalcanal. There is absolutely no doubt in most Solomon Islanders' minds that if RAMSI leaves before the root causes of the ethnic tension are addressed, frustrated groups will take up arms again and this time, it would be a bigger conflict. The Committee is

convinced that this is an accurate assessment coming from the very people who will, if forced to, carry out that threat.

In light of the people's prediction, the ethnic tension should never be taken lightly as a "low level civil conflict" but as the first sign of worse to come if the underlying causes of the inter-ethnic tensions and other frustrations in Solomon Islands are not addressed. While RAMSI's success and the positive response of a majority of Solomon Islanders may give off to outsiders the impression that everything is back to normal, it would not take much for certain factions of Solomon Islands communities to revert right back to ethnic tension mentalities if nothing is done by the government. Indications of this may be seen in the shooting of a PPF officer in 2006, the brief disturbance caused by the unlawful Malaita Separatist Movement, the April 2006 riots, and more recently, the small riot during the 2009 Solomon Cup.

People watching from outside who have no real grasp of the anguish and frustrations of Solomon Islanders living in the provinces should not be fooled into thinking that the ethnic tension is well and truly put behind. Six years on, the same issues remain and the same option remains attractive to criminal elements; and the only deterrent to that becoming a reality is the presence of RAMSI. Mr O'Connor should read the personal views and testimonies of people from all the nine provinces which say as much. These are available on the transcripts on the Parliament's website, as I have said.

If he understands the root causes of the ethnic tension and the passion with which the people consider this issue, Mr O'Connor might appreciate that RAMSI, as the one deterrent force, still needs the privileges and powers set out in the FIA Act. Otherwise, people from the participating countries would not be so willing to come to Solomon Islands under RAMSI because without their powers and privileges they would be susceptible to external forces and attacks, and perhaps even to another conflict if people stop fearing RAMSI and take matters into their own hands. Mr O'Connor also commented on our conclusions regarding the appropriateness of RAMSI personnel's powers and privileges. He appears to disagree that the issue is one of lack of public understanding. From his article, I cannot tell the basis for his disagreement.

On our part, the Committee reached that conclusion after asking all the nine provinces during the provincial hearings on their views of the powers and privileges of RAMSI. If Mr O'Connor reads the transcripts of all provincial hearings, he would see why we concluded that there is widespread misunderstanding of the powers and privileges of RAMSI personnel out in the provinces. All sorts of reasons were advanced by villagers as to why privileges were given to RAMSI in the first place, many mere speculations. Various amounts in millions of dollars were cited to the Committee but with no

indication of the source of such information. Many witnesses who opposed privileges and immunities could not even explain fully what they understood those to be. Most only became aware of such privileges and immunities through the radio and other general discussions through the media. Because of such testimonies, the Committee concluded that a better approach would be for the government and RAMSI to first educate the people on the application and limitations of privileges and immunities. Only then could a proper assessment be made on what the majority of Solomon Islanders think in terms of appropriateness of the privileges and immunities. That has not taken place yet, hence our recommendation.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 of the report covers concerns about the relationship between RAMSI and the sovereignty of this country. The report notes that indeed there have been, in the past, justifiable concerns that the work of RAMSI has not been well coordinated with the policy objectives and priorities of the Solomon Islands Government. That is not to say that RAMSI deliberately sets out to operate as a parallel government in Solomon Islands, as some have alleged. Nevertheless, there have justifiably been sovereignty issues raised. However, since 2007, and the review undertaken by the Pacific Islands Forum RAMSI Review Task Force, this concern has been, to a large extent, addressed through the development of new mechanisms for coordinating engagement between RAMSI, the Solomon Islands Government and the Pacific Islands Forum. This has recently been cemented by the agreement of a Partnership Framework between RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government.

I hope the report addresses all the main arguments that have been raised thus far about RAMSI supposedly threading or disrespecting the sovereignty of the Solomon Islands Government. However, it appears that despite our attempt at a fair and balanced analysis and conclusions on these arguments, some still hold on to the same argument. In that regard, I note comments made by Mr Patrick O'Connor in his article about RAMSI advisors taking over key institutions of our government at the behest of Canberra. This argument is again old and tiresome. It has been around since 2005 and our Committee took note of these during the inquiry. However, if Mr O'Connor reads our report properly, he would realize that by 2008, the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI have made every effort to ensure that RAMSI's assistance do not interfere with the government's priorities and authority. In other words, since the arguments raised by Mr O'Connor were raised, much has changed and now, especially under the SIG-RAMSI Partnership Framework, both the government and RAMSI are much clearer on who should be doing what. Further, the Framework ensures

that RAMSI activities, together with personnel assigned with such activities, are in line with the government's priorities. I invite Mr O'Connor and any other who are still caught up in old conspiracy theories to read the Partnership Framework and its supporting instruments.

While there may have been grounds for perceptions of one-sided control by Australia of Solomon Islands institutions in the early years of RAMSI, the fact is that nowadays, given the increased interest in RAMSI both locally and abroad, all eyes are literally on RAMSI. The Forum is watching and has set up mechanisms to improve reporting from RAMSI. Each Minister and his officials are watching RAMSI personnel deployed in their Ministries. The Chief Justice, Director of Public Prosecutions and Public Solicitor are also watching every move that RAMSI personnel assigned to the judiciary make. Even the people from rural communities are watching and waiting for further awareness programs on RAMSI and its role, and of course, our Committee and Parliament will be watching too.

In view of the high level of scrutiny that is now being leveled at RAMSI, it is very unlikely that its personnel or Australia could get away with blatantly disrespecting our sovereignty or directly controlling the government. If that were to occur, the outcry would probably be to such a huge extent that the government might be forced to consider asking RAMSI to withdraw under the RAMSI Treaty. That option is always open to the government and the people of Solomon Islands. The people, however, have spoken through our inquiry and almost 100% do not want RAMSI to leave yet. The government is thus left with one option, and that is to improve its working relationship with RAMSI and to continue to be vigilant against any ulterior moves that may be carried out under the guise of RAMSI. I note that in signing the Partnership Framework, it was RAMSI that made concessions and not the other way around. The Government made its priorities very clear and RAMSI had to readjust their activities accordingly. Clearly, this is not a sign of RAMSI and Australia controlling the development priorities and operations of the government. Anyone who nevertheless claims this is perhaps out of date and needs to catch up as our Committee realized and did.

Mr O'Connor also made some passing comments about our views on sovereignty issues in our report. He suggests that our Committee is simply taking the same line as that advanced by RAMSI. I have earlier explained our view of the relationship between the Government and RAMSI. It clearly started off shaky but through constructive criticism and increased levels of scrutiny both locally and regionally, that relationship has been, and continues to be, improving through cooperation between the two parties. Of course, RAMSI will always have the upper hand as the helping hand (financially) in this partnership, as is

the case for all other bilateral and multilateral donors, and Australia is the largest contributor to RAMSI. These are facts that we must accept and work with.

To hope that issues of sovereignty will be resolved easily is naïve. As a Third World country, Solomon Islands has been depending on aid for development since independence. Our dependency on Australia existed long before RAMSI was formed. The same goes for our relationship with other donors such as the European Union, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. RAMSI naturally joined the long list of donors that we are dependent on for many reasons. The major difference however is that RAMSI has a direct input on implementation of its own programs, hence the line positions that Mr O'Connor alluded to. This is where the issues of sovereignty and parallel governments arise. In other words, it is not so much an issue of dependency – that is given – but involvement in the actual running of the affairs of the country. In that regard, Mr O'Connor should read the rest of the report, especially the chapters on RAMSI pillars to see that in many government agencies or departments, the call is not for RAMSI personnel to withdraw but to realign their activities with that agency or department's priorities and plans. In the case of some, such as those in the judiciary, the call is for RAMSI to slow down withdrawal. To our Committee, this indicates that government institutions, agencies, ministries and departments do not want RAMSI personnel to leave but expect them to do things according to the expectations of such entities. This wish has been addressed (or at least partly) by the Partnership Framework and perhaps, by next year once the Framework is well underway, complaints relating to sovereignty may gradually die down.

The Committee's reading of the situation is that as long as RAMSI assists the government to achieve its key priorities as directed by the appropriate ministries and agencies, the issue of sovereignty does not arise. If, however, Mr O'Connor is basing his arguments on leftist 'neo-colonialism' theories then he is barking up the wrong tree. Solomon Islands, together with other South Pacific countries, never attained economic independence and the influence of donors through strings attached to aid packages will forever be an ongoing debate. That debate however had no place in our inquiry because we were more interested in the practicalities surrounding the SIG-RAMSI partnership.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 of the report considers RAMSI's aid program, as well as other key aid donors of this country. Let me explain why our Committee decided to hear from aid donors towards the end of our inquiry. Throughout our provincial tour, the people repeatedly called on RAMSI to assist them in terms of economic and infrastructure development. This led our Committee to start asking why people

are now turning to RAMSI for what is rightly the government's role, with the assistance of its bilateral and multilateral donors. To understand this, we asked the donors about their programs in this country so we could make an assessment of where service delivery and development in the provinces failed and why. I am glad and very grateful that the donors responded positively to our invitation to appear before the Committee.

On RAMSI's funding arrangement, perhaps the most notable issue was the argument that RAMSI's aid is effectively 'boomerang aid.' Our Committee heard this argument both in Honiara and even in the provinces. Whilst our Committee was unable to establish the exact figures of the total amounts that are spent offshore on RAMSI personnel and imported items, the fact that a significant amount leaves Solomon Islands was proven adequately. Addressing this issue, however, is not as easy as it sounds because unlike traditional aid donors, RAMSI was designed to be a hands-on aid package, thus seeing a significantly larger number of RAMSI personnel on the ground. Further, because RAMSI has to comply with certain basic minimum requirements for its goods and equipment, many such need to be brought in since our local equivalents do not meet such standards. Inevitably, a huge part of the RAMSI budget is spent offshore. To address this issue, our Committee considered four possibilities. First, RAMSI could handover implementation of its programs under the three pillars to the Solomon Islands Government. Second, RAMSI could drastically reduce the number of its personnel. Third, RAMSI could redirect most, if not all, of its programs to aid donors. Clearly, all three possibilities entail RAMSI giving up the very nature which makes it such a success. This in turn means redoing the legal framework of RAMSI or even its complete withdrawal whilst the government or donors take over RAMSI's current mandate. These are gigantic steps indeed and will require renegotiation at the Forum level. Besides, we feel that it is not the right time for such handover; otherwise we would be recommending the immediate withdrawal of RAMSI. For these reasons, our Committee settled on a fourth possibility, which is our recommendation that RAMSI actively increases employment of Solomon Islanders and to spend more on local goods and services where possible. RAMSI has already indicated that it has started down this path and our Committee encourages it in that regard.

In terms of the assistance of other bilateral and multilateral aid donors, the report outlines briefly the key programs but notes that the Ministry of Aid Coordination should continue to improve its role as the focal point for all aid programs. As the representative of the government, the Ministry should ensure that programs suggested by aid donors supplement the government's as well as that of RAMSI. This way, there is no unnecessary duplication and programs can reach provinces.

Chapters 9, 10 & 11

In Chapters 9, 10 and 11 the report considers the three pillars of RAMSI. As Members are aware, RAMSI's work in Solomon Islands falls under three pillars: law and justice; economic governance and growth; and machinery of government. These three pillars are now captured in the Partnership Framework. There have been some significant achievements under each of these three pillars.

Chapter 9 of the report deals specifically with the Law and Justice Pillar. Under this pillar, the rebuilding of the justice sector (meaning the courts) and the correctional services have been major achievements. Of particular note, perhaps, the rebuilding of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF) and the restoration of community trust in the RSIPF is a significant and long-term undertaking and remains a key challenge. Tied to this challenge is the question of rearming the RSIPF. After taking the views of all provinces and authorities in Honiara, our Committee is convinced that rearming special units is necessary but only after proper consultation with and awareness of the people of the provinces. There are ongoing initiatives under the SIG-RAMSI Partnership Framework targeted at restoring the public's confidence in our local police force. And while it may appear to be a big ask at this stage, our Committee calls on the people of Solomon Islands to give our local police force a chance to restore its former pride and reputation. It is very important that this occurs under the guidance of RAMSI.

Rearmament will occur one way or the other. No nation remains totally unarmed forever. However, it is better to try out rearmament of special units only, such as airport, border and close protection units, with RAMSI still around, than to pretend that everything will be fine until RAMSI leaves. At that stage, it is very difficult to predict how the government of the day will react to this issue and if it decided to rearm the whole RSIPF, it could have serious implication in the absence of a guiding neutral force. In that scenario, we would have missed out on a significant opportunity.

Another major issue that is discussed in Chapter 9 is the tension trials. Despite many complaints, especially by those who were charged with tension related offences, our Committee is not convinced that it is necessary for Parliament to intervene in these trials. In fact, as I recall at one point last year, I personally considered moving a private motion to ask the government to look into the issue of those who have been on remand for long periods without trials. However, in the end I did not move that motion because I was advised that it would have amounted to Parliament interfering with the judiciary and its criminal justice system.

The issue of long or indefinite remands without trial is an ongoing one that I believe reflects problems with our system and laws for bail applications. This is, however, not RAMSI's fault. Those who suffered from long periods of incarceration only to be acquitted are at complete liberty to sue the government and the police for damages for the effects of such incarceration on their lives. Blaming it on RAMSI, however, is baseless and fails to address the real systematic issues. Alternatively, citizens are free to lobby the government to introduce legislative amendments to address the issue of long term remand. Our inquiry, however, was not one into criminal justice system so our Committee opted not to look further into this area, hence our conservative conclusions in the report.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 of the report contains our findings on Governance and Growth Pillar. Under that pillar, the reform of Government finances and stabilization of foreign debt has been significant. On its part, the CNURA Government has been very proactive in its approach, thus seeing liberation of the telecommunication industry; improvement to customs valuation; improvement to our laws on companies, state owned enterprises, foreign investments; and introducing a means for giving access to small loans to ordinary citizens. For these initiatives, our Committee commends the government, as well as RAMSI for its role in providing expert advice on such reforms under the Governance and Growth Pillar.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 of the report covers the Machinery of Government Pillar of RAMSI. Under that pillar the work of the Office of the Auditor-General in relation to transparency and accountability in Government has been a remarkable achievement. RAMSI's contribution to the UNDP Parliamentary Strengthening Project is also duly noted given the success of that project. Nevertheless, challenges remain as noted in the report and I urge RAMSI and the government to continue improving institutions and their respective capacity to continue functioning effectively post RAMSI.

One area of contention that came up was in relation to the cross-cutting Women in Government Strategy. As noted in the report, the relationship between this program, the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs and the National Council of Women is unclear. As a result of this, the Council complained of being bypassed. Again, I call on all parties to sort this issue out to avoid duplication and unnecessary stratification. These kinds of issues have the

potential to detract efforts from the true goal – that being the women of Solomon Islands – and must be avoided.

Chapter 12

In Chapter 12, the report considers issues relating to support for the provinces. We decided to consider this area separately because after we visited all the nine provinces, it became clear that the concerns of the provinces are markedly very distinct from that of people living in urban centres. This extends to perceptions and expectations of RAMSI.

Chapter 12 notes that in the provinces, issues in relation to the RSIPF and the delivery of community justice are most keenly felt. Quite simply, the RSIPF and RAMSI do not have the resources to deliver justice systems to the provinces. This challenge is well recognized and programs are in place to address it, however it is likely to remain an ongoing problem for a considerable time. In addition, promoting infrastructure investment in the provinces remains an imperative. While the Committee believes that there is good coordination between RAMSI and the various bilateral and multilateral aid donors to Solomon Islands, and that many of those donors have been generous even in the face of the global financial crisis, nevertheless economic investment and development in the provinces continues to lag.

A few points need to be emphasized in terms of supporting the provinces. First, it was obvious that the majority of rural Solomon Islanders have very little or no knowledge of the actual mandates of RAMSI in the practical sense. RAMSI and the government need to address this through a drastically improved community outreach program. Clearly the program as it has been is still inadequate. Second, in terms of policing, lack of housing and infrastructure for police officers remain the key obstacle. While our Committee could not offer any solution to this problem, we encourage RAMSI to refine and launch its proposed community policing initiative so that the policing aspect is maintained whilst work on police housing and infrastructure continue through donors and RAMSI. Third, and perhaps the most overwhelming call from all nine provinces was for the government and RAMSI to do something about increasing kwaso and drug abuse, particularly amongst youths. This is, of course, a policing concern but with underlying socio-economic implications. While our Committee applauds the government's recent move to increase penalties for alcohol abuse, this still does not address reporting and prevention of such abuse in the long run. Our suggestion therefore is for the government, perhaps with RAMSI's assistance, to study this problem much more closely and act on the findings of such study.

In this regard, I recall the suggestion of a witness in our Savo public hearing who argued that cultural settings, the ethnic tension and many other

factors have inbred in youths certain psychological and emotional attitudes that are quickly dismissed without proper assessment. I agree with that gentleman that while we might think we know precisely why youths behave the way they do, that is based on many assumptions. We cannot continue to do things based on assumptions. Our Committee therefore calls on the government to look into this problem through an independent and professional study and then act on its recommendations. We might be surprised with some of those findings.

The final point I wish to make in terms of Chapter 12 is in relation to infrastructure development and investment in the provinces. This was a huge part of the evidence we gathered from all nine provinces. In some provinces, the call for assistance in this area was directed at the government. In others, however, the call was directed at RAMSI. Some may argue that asking RAMSI is unrealistic and based on misunderstanding of the mandate of RAMSI. I must clarify here on the floor of Parliament that our Committee does not necessarily share that view.

RAMSI did venture into the area of rehabilitating roads and other infrastructure as part of its peace dividends. Naturally, this raised expectations in other parts of the country. Further, many people in the provinces question how RAMSI could possibly guarantee long term peace and stability by being involved in short and medium term assistance while ignoring the core underlying issues, such as underdevelopment and poor service delivery, which have a real potential to spark conflict in years to come.

In particular, I wish to register the request of the people of Marau and the Weather Coast, perhaps the areas that were affected the most during the ethnic tension. I acknowledge that other parts of Guadalcanal were equally affected but these areas have easier access to Honiara and development and have indeed benefited much from aid assistance in terms of road rehabilitation at least. The two areas I mentioned, however, have yet to see similar rehabilitation and I believe they are entitled to ask the Government and RAMSI for assistance in that regard. Our Committee considers such assistance on the same footing as the peace dividends assistance RAMSI rendered in earlier years. Perhaps one could look at assisting Marau and the Weather Coast as belated rehabilitation and not RAMSI taking on the government's role.

Having said that, I strongly feel that the government should continue to look into the requests of other parts of the country. I am positive that donors are willing to assist but the Government needs to take the lead in identifying these needs and prioritizing them. RAMSI's role could be on funding or on providing the expertise for the initial stock taking exercise. However, with the exception of Marau and Weather Coast, the actual implementation of infrastructure development and investment in the provinces is the government's core

responsibility with the assistance of its donors. Giving that responsibility away to RAMSI or another could mean giving up our own sovereignty and rendering our own government virtually obsolete.

Chapter 13 of the report considers the issue of the root causes of the ethnic tension. Let me emphasize here that it was not part of our terms of reference to inquire into these root causes. However, this was one of the consistent calls that we heard from all the provinces that the root causes must be addressed before RAMSI leaves. In some parts, there is an expectation that RAMSI directly addresses the root causes. In others, it was argued that this is the government's responsibility. In our report, we did not attempt to identify the root causes. That, I believe, is the mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. What we did, however, was to point out the root causes as perceived both locally and by external studies. Whatever the true root causes are, however, our Committee is convinced that these must be addressed. The issue is thus not whether these are addressed or not, but who to lead the charge in addressing such issues. Quite obviously, that would be the government of the day. These root causes are effectively the same underlying concerns that every Third World country faces, except that in our case other factors resulted in these concerns surfacing as an ethnic conflict. I hope that on the completion of the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, we would know for sure what actually caused the ethnic tension. In that regard our Committee calls on the Ministry of Reconciliation, Peace and National Unity, women groups, churches, donors, RAMSI and the Government to continue assisting the Commission in whatever means appropriate.

Let us hope that when the Commission's work is done, the Government would be in the position to start addressing the root causes as best as it can within our means. RAMSI's role in that will very much depend on the nature of the Commission's recommendations. Perhaps there will be areas in which RAMSI may be able to assist within its current mandate.

Let me clarify one thing. When I talk about addressing these root causes, I am not suggesting that the government fulfils all the wishes of the people. That is not possible as some of these wishes may be contradictory to each other and some may be financially impossible to accommodate. Addressing the root causes means firstly, identifying these, making a distinction between long term underlying causes and the triggers of the ethnic tension. Secondly, the government would need to assess how best to meet the expectations in a fair and practical manner. However, our Committee does not support the idea of the government blindly giving in to demands of the people.

Addressing root causes that involve demands of a particular part of the country must first be assessed on the validity of such demands and resolved

through negotiations. The Government should not, however, be expected to pay out all demands and to treat any one group more favorably than others. To do so would mean holding the government at ransom, an undesirable precedent to set. It would also mean continuing the tensions because others may feel unfairly left out by the government and start coming up with their own demands. I trust that the government will, when the right time comes, be able to address the root causes throughout the country as opposed to just a few groups.

The final chapter of the report, Chapter 14, outlines briefly certain outstanding issues that our Committee believes has the potential to set the direction of the SIG-RAMSI partnership and RAMSI's operations in Solomon Islands.

Aside from addressing the root causes of the ethnic tension, there are other important challenges facing the Solomon Islands Government. These include taking the lead in the SIG/RAMSI partnership, delivering services and infrastructure to the provinces, addressing the issue of federalism and other long term provincial demands, and crucially, bringing transparency and accountability to government. Our only recommendation in this chapter relates to the issue of federalism.

In that regard, I wish to clarify that whilst our report calls for the government to prioritize the completion of the current review of federalism, we made that call based on the wishes of those who addressed our Committee in the provinces. Whatever the outcome of the work of the Constitutional Congress and proposed convention, the important thing is for the government to ensure these processes are completed as soon as possible so we can all be clear on where we stand. It may be that by the end of the process the outcome may not be what people expect. By way of example I note the recent issues with the two bills seeking reform to the political party system. The Whitepaper on such reform was unanimously accepted by Parliament and supported by the public but when the bills were finalized, many Members and citizens were dissatisfied with these.

The point I am making here is that as far as federalism is concerned, it is unknown where we are at in terms of the review process and the people out in the provinces are thus left hanging. It is therefore very important to the people that the government prioritizes the review process and be very clear on its preferred way forward. Certainty is really what the people wishes for and I make that request of the government today on behalf of those who appeared before our Committee.

Having gone through the key findings of the report by chapter, I hope I have assisted Members to understand our report better in order to prepare for their contributions to my motion. I ask for your indulgence and support for my motion so that in accordance with the wishes of the majority of Solomon

Islanders, all these issues pertaining to RAMSI are discussed on the floor of this honorable House where the people can follow our deliberations. While our inquiry was done in a transparent manner, it was a still fact finding mission. Today, I ask Honorable Members as decision-makers and law-makers to consider our findings so that our people can hear directly how their elected representatives will respond to their concerns and views.

With that very enduring presentation I thank you for your patience and beg to move.

(The motion is open for debate)

Sitting suspended for lunch break at 11.52 am

Mr Speaker: Parliament is resumed and debate on the Motion moved by the Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee continues.

Hon SOGAVARE: Point of order. I rise to seek the ruling of the Chair on how Parliament will deal with the number of points raised by the mover of the motion this morning, and this is in relation to the views expressed by one Patrick O'Connor. I understand that there are issues raised by that person that the mover of the motion took perception and that is why he raised those issues. I feel that if that is the case then the appropriate way to handle that would be by way of a statement of privilege on the floor of Parliament to address issues that he is not happy with. I feel that we should not bring views expressed by people outside that are taken up in this report by a person that was continually referred to by the mover of this motion this morning. Subject to your ruling, Mr Speaker, if you allow the views expressed by that particular person, and which the mover is actually debating with that person on the floor of Parliament, then I feel that that particular report must also be tabled in Parliament, so that it forms part of issues that Parliament will consider to direct the way the debate on this matter is taken.

A lot of us do not share the views expressed by that that person, and I do not Parliament should be dragged into to deal with a issue that is probably reported in the newspaper. We are here to debate a report that is submitted by the Foreign Relations Committee. I feel that our consideration and our debates should be focused on the 14 chapters that are presented to Parliament by the Foreign Relations Committee.

I just want to get the ruling of the Speaker on this matter. My point is that if you allow the points raised because the normal rule is that the issues raised by the mover in the second reading form part of the issues that will be raised in the

debate, so if you allow that to go through then I would insist that the report is also submitted for the information of the House so that we see what this person is talking about, and it will form part of the debate. But my own view is that we should not drag Parliament too low to consider issues that are raised by people who have other agendas. This is the sovereign Parliament of the land and we should maintain its integrity. I just want to seek your views on that.

Mr Speaker: Thank you honorable Leader of Opposition. My ruling on that point of order is that I believe the Chairman made reference to that particular report extensively because when the report was tabled in Parliament, I think a day or two later this man's report came on the press. I believe that the Chairman in his capacity as Chairman of the Review Committee attempts to explain and clarify the position of the Committee in its findings in regards to what that media release is all about. Therefore, it is not really part of the report but merely to explain and clarify the report in relation to the criticisms publicly made by that particular person.

I think the whole report in itself as explained by the Chairman, chapter by chapter remains as it is. That is my ruling, and so we are not here to debate on the comments made by that reporter but in particular the explanations and recommendations made by the Committee as explained by the Chairman chapter by chapter. Thank you. Therefore, we will continue with the debate on the report and if no Member wishes to comment on the debate then I will adjourn the debate. I also know that the Chairman's statement is still with the Secretariat for print, and I am sure Members would like to have a copy of that too, and so if no Member rises to speak at this particular time this afternoon then I will ask the Chairman to adjourn the debate for tomorrow.

Mr Zama: I have been looking through all my papers on this particular report but I could not find the report. I am just seeking if I can have a copy of that report may be from the Chairman of the Committee. Because that, in my view, would really help me because I want to have a balance view and opinion on what I want to debate in Parliament. Apart from this report I would want to see other reports to help enlighten the whole picture. I wonder if I can have that report to help me in my debate. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: We will take note of that and the secretariat will provide such reports.

Mr Boyers: It would appear that Members may not be prepared to contribute to this very important debate today and so I do not wish to deprive Members of the

opportunity by winding the debate up. Accordingly, pursuant to Standing Orders 35(1) I move that the debate be now adjourn until 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 at 2.46 pm