

WEDNESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2008

The Deputy Speaker, Hon. Kengava took the Chair at 10.am.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Commerce & Industries, National Reconciliation & Peace, Fisheries & Marine Resources, Forestry, Women, Youth & Children, and Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, Central Makira, North Malaita, West Are Are, North Guadalcanal, Temotu Nende, Shortlands, North West Guadalcanal, West Makira and South New Georgia/Rendova.

Mr SPEAKER: I wish to remind honorable Members that this Saturday 6th December 2008 marks the first Parliamentary Open Day. This year the day will celebrate our 30th Year anniversary since Independence under the banner "Parliament and People celebrating 30 Years".

The plan to have an Open Day this year came out of the Corporate Planning Exercise last year through a recommendation from Ms Clara Pita, the Hansard Editor and Saturday will be a culmination of a great deal of planning and work by the parliamentary staff and supporting organizations.

On Friday evening Members and VIPs have been invited to inspect exhibitions of the eight (8) Parliaments since Independence and I sincerely hope all of you will come along with your families to support the staff and assist the public develop their understanding of Parliament and our representative democracy on Saturday.

I also wish to inform the House that today, the Speaker, the Rt. Honorable Sir Peter Kenilorea will be awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Queensland at a graduation ceremony at the University Headquarters in St Lucia, Brisbane. I am sure I speak for all Members when I warmly congratulate the Speaker on being recognized with the presentation of this prestigious award.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

"National Environmental Capacity Development Action Plan 2008 – 2012"
(*National Parliament Paper No. 40 of 2008*).

"National Adaptation Programs of action."
(*National Parliament paper No. 41 of 2008*).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Health: Suicide Deaths

6. **Hon SOGAVARE** to Minister for Health and Medical Services: Can the Minister inform Parliament of the number of recorded deaths by suicide for the years 2000 to 2008 and what steps is the government taking to address this problem?

Hon. KOLI: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking me this very important question concerning suicides.

Mr Speaker, according to our records held at the Medical Statistic Unit there were a total of 63 suicidal deaths reported through the death registry forms from clinics and hospitals during the past eight years from 2000 – 2007. We do not have the report for this year as yet. The highest number of suicidal deaths was recorded in year 2002 and 2005 with total death per year of 14 and 16 respectively.

Sir, there were no reasons established for this finding. Sir, of the total number of suicidal deaths reported for the past eight years about 75% were females whilst 25% were males. This indicated that suicide is common among women than men.

Overdose from drinking chloroquine tablets has been reported to be the most common way of committing suicide followed by hanging. Though we reckon that this information is under reported, we also acknowledge the fact that it has highlighted some important areas that need to be addressed. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Hon. Sogavare: Mr Speaker, just one or two supplementary questions for the Minister to tell us the age group that commits suicide the most and whether the Ministry has established the causes of why do people resort to taking their own lives, Mr Speaker? Thank you.

Hon. Koli: Mr Speaker, most of the deaths are youths who have frustrations and they have to commit that kind of crime to themselves.

Hon. Sogavare: Mr Speaker, the other part of the question is, what steps is the government taking to address this problem?

Hon. Abana: To enlighten you a bit on this question, the Ministry is continuously trying to establish the reasons for suicide following reports from clinics. There is a workshop to determine that. Reports should come to the Ministry to resolve what is actually happening to our youths. As mentioned by the Minister some become frustrated, and so we need to know what caused the frustrations so that it can be addressed.

Hon. SIKUA: Mr Speaker, as the Minister mentioned the majority of cases identified as suicidal death are our youths. The reasons following domestic violence, some cases

happen due to unwanted pregnancies, as a cause for suicide by our young women. The other cause is low self-esteem, loneliness and rejection as the cause for young men, and another factor that has been noted is absence of job and poverty.

In relation to the steps being taken by the government to address the problem, the government through the Ministry of Health has approached the problem in a holistic way, and this is to provide service opportunities for people to access counselling services and psycho social clinics to detect vulnerable people needing further attention.

Mr Speaker, the Social Welfare revised strategic direction is moving towards integrating social services with NGOs and community based services to provide both prevention and protection of vulnerable people. It has also been recognized that there is a need for the establishment of psycho social networks.

Mr Speaker, while these programs are responding in a general way, there are more specific strategies and activities to address the suicide problem in our country. This is contained in the Mental Health Strategy 2006-2010 that was designed in mid 2006.

Sir, in 2009 there are moves to establish a psycho social unit at the National Mental Division and this is crucial to help detect and treat people presented with symptoms that if not dealt with may lead to further psychotic disorder or potential suicide cases.

Sir, the government is putting in place measures to help people with mental or psycho social problems to help our people as of 2009 with the establishment of a psycho social unit at the National Mental Division within the National Referral Hospital.

Hon. Sogavare: Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister and the Prime Minister for answering my questions.

Police: Commissioner of Police's Post

7. **Mr SOGAVARE** to Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services: What is the government's plan to substantively fill the post of the Commissioner of Police?

Hon MANETOALI: Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Leader of Opposition, and Member of Parliament for East Choiseul for his question.

The government, Mr Speaker, has made the decision that the post of Commissioner of Police would be substantively filled. In accordance with that decision, the government had requested assistance from the European Commission and the British High Commission in Honiara in the selection and appointment of a person to substantively fill the post and to provide remuneration for the post. Thank you.

Hon. Sogavare: Mr Speaker. I thank the Minister for answering the question.

Questions No.45, 48, 52 & 53 deferred

80. **Mr. BOSETO** to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development: What measures has the government put in place to fulfill CNURA's policy announcement that each Solomon Islander will be able to have a balanced meal daily by the year 2015?

Hon. RIUMANA: Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the hardworking Member for South Choiseul for this question.

Mr Speaker, the CNURA policy that each Solomon Islander to be able to have a balanced meal by 2015 is part of Global Goal No. 1 of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Of the eight (8) goals under the MDG, Goal 1 deals with agriculture, eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. These goals state as predicted that by 2015 all people on planet earth will have access to two meals a day. The CNURA Government has seen it fit to improve the goal by a balanced meal. Two meals a day of available starch will not do any good to the health of a person. The government, therefore, has taken one step forward to address balanced meal instead of two meals a day.

A balanced meal, Mr Speaker, by definition is the proportionate balance of food intake, and that includes protein, carbohydrate, vitamins and minerals. For this reason, it is important that Solomon Islanders have access to animal and fish meat, root crops, rice and vegetables.

Mr Speaker, the followings are the programs currently undertaken by the government: The national cattle development program, the national rice development program, the vegetable and fruit trees program, the small livestock program, the copra and cocoa rehabilitation program, all these is gearing towards addressing this balance meal.

Mr Speaker, the government is further taking the following measures to fulfill the policy to ensure that each Solomon Islander will be able to have a balance meal daily by year 2015 through an existing program in collaboration with donors and stakeholders as follows:

- On the exotic and indigenous crop development program, Mr Speaker, this involves pests and disease screening of slippery cabbage varieties.
- On the improved food crops variety introduction, it includes introduced varieties tested on farmers' fields and selected crops and distributed to farmers. It is an ongoing program.
- The sustainable smallholder garden program is funded by the Australia's Centre for International Agriculture Research and the World Vegetable Centre in Taiwan. This program is testing open pollinated introduced vegetables for adoptability and performance at various locations currently undertaken on Guadalcanal, Malaita and Makira.

- The improved plant protection for Solomon Islands is funded by Agriculture Australia's Centre for International Agriculture Research and SPC. Increase in crop production can lead to pest and diseases. Pests and diseases on crops reduce food security and income for farmers, and therefore the improved plant protection measures for Solomon Islands is currently testing user friendly pest control methods.
- On SPC's involvement, it is providing technical expertise assistance in addressing plant health issues, for instance, in the case of taro pest problem on Rennell Island. This is a major food security for the province seeing taro is their staple food crop. This problem has been identified, however, it will take time to rectify the situation as new resistant variety of taro and farming system have to be developed and adopted.
- On food processing, it is a facility funded under this program and should be completed by December 2008. It will be used for training food processing, quality control, and enforcement of standards.
- On sustainable land management, there is a capacity building project. This development of national action program is nearly completed. The program will address the issue of land degradation caused primarily by unsustainable industrial logging, agro-deforestation for commercial and subsistence agriculture. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Hon. Sogavare: Just a supplementary question. Is it a real problem in Solomon Islands that people are not having a balanced meal that we established some kind of statistics as to how many people are not having a balance meal in this country and so it becomes an issue. This is a program that the government of Solomon Islands is taking up because it is mentioned in one of the 8th millennium development goals, and most of the problems highlighted in the millennium development goal, Mr Speaker.

Has the Ministry or maybe the appropriate authority establish or to what extent is this problem of people not having balance meal is a problem in Solomon Islands. Is it the case that our people do not have a balance meal?

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Member for East Choiseul for that very important question. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Solomon Islands has abundant resources, abundant fish, and natural resources and people are currently accessible to a balance diet. It is the way they prepare food that is a concern. However, Mr Speaker, given the change in climate, given the increase in fuel, this will become a problem in the future. Also increase population against constant land mass will result in uncontrolled human activities and subsequently result in reduction to crop production. These measures are being put in place to safeguard the future. Thank you.

Mr. Boseto: Mr Speaker, one supplementary question for clarification. Does the phrase 'each Solomon Islander' include both naturalized and indigenous Solomon Islander?

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, every living soul in Solomon Islands needs to eat to live, and so it includes all. They all need to eat to live.

Mr. Boseto: I like this policy. Mr Speaker, this policy has regional and global implication in terms of how we consume, produce, and distribute our one planet earth's resources. Has the government been considering whilst having this policy that it is better to recommend this policy to both the Pacific Region and the global level?

This policy has global implications because we have extreme poverty and extreme rich and therefore, it is very important to consider the Prayer of Jesus give us today our daily bread. Has the Ministry consider recommending this policy to both the regional and global level?

Hon. Riumana: This policy is gearing towards safeguarding the food security of Solomon Islands as we all need to eat to live. Given the impact of climate change we have to put in place strategies and measures for our food security so that our future generation to come would not be affected. We are the foundation of future generations.

Hon. WALE: Mr Speaker, perhaps a further clarification of that question. This issue is already a regional and global issue. It is part of the UN's Millennium Development Goals, and so it is already focused at the global level in a basic balance diet.

Mr SITAI: Mr Speaker, my supplementary question goes like this. Are there any specific strategies put in place by the government to implement a balance meal for the people that we regard as residing in our urban sector, which is the town and provincial centres.

In my observation there are two sectors of the population. Those in the rural sector could perhaps meet the requirements. The difficulty is with people living in the urban sector.

My question is, in the overall policy are there any strategies to target providing three balance meals to people who are low income earners attracted to the urban areas? And many of these people are those selling betel nut along the roads where the cost of living is very hard for them in the urban sectors.

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, when mother nature and given the scattered geographical location of our islands, these programs and projects are designed to be located on strategic locations throughout the country. Thank you.

Hon. ABANA: Mr Speaker, in addition to that, I think in response to the policy of the government, the Ministry of Health has developed a National Nutritional Lifestyle Plan

to treat and advocate balance diet and ways to correct micro nutrient deficiency among our children and women. There is a policy in place that is developed through this plan.

Mr. Boseto: Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister, whilst we have this policy, keep in mind that although we are growing population wise, Solomon Islands can meet everyone's needs but not everyone's greed. To me this is a very important lesson so that we share what we have with each other as part of our traditional philosophy or ideology.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker and I thank the Ministers for answering the question. Thank you.

Agriculture: Giant African Snail

81. **Mr. BOSETO** to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Development: Can the Minister inform Parliament whether or not the Quarantine Department has successfully contained Giant African Snails in the areas the pests have been discovered, and measures taken to prevent it spreading to other areas?

Hon. RIUMANA: Mr Speaker, thank you again, the MP and hardworking MP for South Choiseul for this question.

Mr Speaker, since the Giant African snail outbreak, my Ministry through the Quarantine Department has continued to contain the outbreak of the snail in Guadalcanal. The area where it was first detected at the Earthmovers site has been cleaned but continual surveillance of the area is still being carried out. This surveillance will continue for a period of two (2) years before it is finally declared free from pests. However, the Giant African Snail has spread to areas downstream in Feraladoa Valley through natural disbursal by flooding and some sightings at Foxwood have been confirmed.

Work has been in progress to control the snail in areas where there is infestation. These are Foxwood, Ranadi Dump site, Feraladoa and downstream Feraladoa. As soon as Parliament allocated a budget of \$500,000 this year, my Ministry has had casual workers to work onsite by cleaning and collecting snails. Chemicals were used to procure and the infected sites have been bated with small baits. My staffs are also continuing to work in the evenings and at weekends to collect snails at bait infected sites.

Continued surveillance and monitoring program has been in progress utilizing both quarantine extension and research officers, where my officers visit log sites and possible risks to monitor for snails throughout the country. My officers have also just returned from visiting Choiseul Province this week and there is no sighting.

Awareness programs are also in progress through the use of media, brochures and public talks to create awareness to get public assistance. These awareness programs have enabled the public to assist quarantine by reporting the current spread of the Giant African snail.

The spread by which my Ministry is working to control the Giant African Snail and eradicate by using funds allocated in the development budget. Of the \$500,000 allocated in the development budget only \$18,000 is left as per our records. This is after four (4) months of work. It is expected that these funds will be used by early December and we will continue to work with the development fund.

We have continued to control snails through mechanical and chemical method and my Ministry is also investigating other possible methods of control. This is the use of sea water and possible introduction of biological control agents. The latter means that we are investigating and since this may pose risk to natural habitat, we will resort to this only after all possible avenues have been exhausted.

My staffs are currently using sea water to kill the snails and burn them and integrated with other methods of control. At the same time my staff with assistance from the SPC and Forum Secretariat are working on a bio security bill which when completed will be presented to Parliament. This is because the current agricultural act does not adequately cater for containment, eradication, exotic test, quarantine bands and compensation neither does it adequately protect staff from executing eradication program.

Mr Speaker, during the collection I wish to inform this House that on the first week of the month of June we collected about 20,660 snails, the second week of June 35,195, the third week of June we collected 25,362 snails and on the fourth week we collected 5,285 snails, a total of 86,472 snails were collected in the month of June this year.

In July, in the first week we collected 4,333 snails, in the second week we collected 3,353, the third week we collected 6,045 snails, the fourth week we collected 7,925 snails and the fifth week we collected 3,479 snails, which is a total of 25,636 snails collected in July. This is a reduction of 29.6%, which is a great achievement and therefore my Ministry is determined to contain and eradicate the problem. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Hon. Sogavare: Mr Speaker, thank you very much Minister for that very elaborate answer. In fact those statistics can tell us different stories. One is that we are on top of it, we are collecting a lot of snails or we are backing against a situation where the snail is just too much and we might not be able to collect them all. So they can tell us different stories

What is the situation now, Mr Speaker? The Minister is referring to 29% of something. Is that referring to a successful rate of collecting the snails, which means we have more than 70% of work to do to actually eliminate these snails in an area here? Can the Minister assure the House whether we are on top of this problem or are we struggling to really battle against it?

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, on the month of June we collected 86,472 snails, and in the month of July we collected only 25,000, which is more than half. This is a great, great reduction. That is what I mean that we are confident in eradicating this problem. Since

snail does not fly like a bird or fly like an insect but it crawls and therefore it is our hope that we can control it.

Mr. TOSIKA: Mr Speaker, when I listened to what the Minister is saying, I heard that three areas were infected by this snail. These are Foxwood, Ranadi and Feraladoa. Can the Minister inform us that out from the 86,000, how much is collected from those three areas?

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, I think this is the Parliament and so if the Member wants detailed information he has to come to the office. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr. WAIPORA: Mr Speaker, I am sorry for coming in late. My question to the Honorable Minister is, and he might have mentioned this but I missed it, and the information he has given are very informative, but are there any indications as to what means or what ways did those snails come into our country? Are there any indications by the quarantine as to how the snails came through?

I totally do not know and that is why I am asking this question. Maybe quarantine can inform us as to how or which way the snails came through our country.

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, I thank the Member for his question. There are many ways the snails can be transported from country to country, and our suspect for this case was through the machineries imported from a foreign country into our country. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr. Tosika: Mr Speaker, I heard that the Giant African Snails were eaten by Asian people. I heard that some people are importing these snails as their food. If this is true, what is the Ministry doing with these people? If human beings continue to encourage the importation of these snails, then we have to put a stop to it because we will find it difficult to put an end to it because human beings are dealing with it. If this is true what action is the Ministry taking against those people? Thank you.

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, indeed snail in some country is being used as food and not many countries are eating snails because not many people adapt to the taste. However, Mr Speaker, as a quarantine requirement, snails imported into this country were not basically for food, but they came in through the machineries and therefore quarantine measures must be applied and enforced, and we do not encourage importation of snails. Thank you.

Mr. NE'E: Can the Minister inform the House whether there has been any publication of the picture of this African snail to be circulated round Solomon Islands so that people recognize how they look like? I am saying this because otherwise logging companies in our island brought them in but we did not recognize them.

We are talking about this African snail, but I think 80% of us did not know what it looks like. Has the Ministry look into that area of publishing pictures of this African snail and circulated round the country?

Hon. Riumana: Mr Speaker, I think I have answered that question already in my presentation that awareness programs are also in progress in the media. Our field staffs conducting surveillance in every logging company throughout the provinces are also conducting awareness programs and workshops throughout the country. So awareness program is being conducted.

Dr. SIKUA: Mr Speaker, further to what the Minister has mentioned, during the National Trade and Agriculture Show at Panatina during our 30th anniversary of Independence, the public was given the opportunity to actually see the snails and be educated and made aware of in one of the stalls where the Quarantine Division of the Ministry of Agriculture has dedicated to this particular pest.

In view of the fact that most people coming to the Trade and Agriculture Show are people coming from the provinces, I am sure our people are fully aware of what this pest looks like and what it can do. I just want to add that in the response to the supplementary question and the answer given by the Minister.

Mr. Boseto: Mr Speaker, I thank the Ministers and the Prime Minister for answering our questions. Thank you very much.

Bills – Second Reading

The 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008

Mr Speaker: Honorable Members, debate on the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008 commences. I would like to remind Honorable Members that according to *Standing Order* 61 (2), a maximum of four days, is allowed for the second reading debate and today is the second day. When no further Member rises to speak on the Bill, then the Chair will call on the Honorable Minister of Finance and Treasury to wind the debate before the question is put.

(The floor is now open for debate)

Mr. FOLOTALU: Mr Speaker, I have the honor and privilege to thank the Honorable Minister of Finance and Treasury for his presentation of the 2009 Budget to this honorable House. With this opportunity too, Mr Speaker, I wish to express my gratitude and appreciation to the people of Lau/Mbaelelea for electing me and giving me the mandate to represent them in this honorable House.

Mr Speaker, it is always my political and ethical philosophy to render my support to any democratic elected government that governs and rules. So for the next 15

months or so, I will render my support to the CNURA Government until we go to the polls in mid 2010.

Mr Speaker, like any other budgets, this budget is an itemized account of expenditures and revenues over the next fiscal year beginning 1st January and ending 31st December 2009. Inter alia, the three (3) main components of this budget are the recurrent budget, the development Budget and debt servicing.

Sir, the government has prioritized six (6) main areas as new policy directions. They are :-

- Reconciliation and Rehabilitation
- National Security and Foreign Relations
- Infrastructure Development
- Social Services
- Economic/productive sector, and
- Civic Affairs

Mr Speaker, in the area of national security it is the desire of most citizens of this nation who want a simple, wholesome life, but better standard of living and freedom from social distress. For us our dream means personal safety and opportunity to compete in a free and open society. With it comes the promise of protection from the dangers of anarchy and social engineering. Mr Speaker, it means a healthy respect for individual rights and responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, with this opportunity I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to RAMSI for its work of restoring law and order in Solomon Islands after those ugly years of 1989-2003. Now Solomon Islanders can freely make decisions about how best to organize and manage their businesses to compete in a free and open society. Mr Speaker, with these sentiments I wish to commend the Solomon Islands Police and other law enforcement agencies for their effort in assisting RAMSI to restore law and order. Being a professional policeman myself and an aviation security expert, I know what it is like to be a policeman and a security officer. Mr. Speaker, police work is not a pleasant job; it is dangerous and risky at times. However, those who take it as a career would enjoy taking it as part of life.

Mr. Speaker in this transition period before the exit of RAMSI, the Police Force must be raised to higher heights in discipline, professionalism and performance. In the area of discipline, on occasions I have seen police officers in uniform chewing betel nut and smoking in public places. Such a behavior can only bring reproach on the officer and the police force. In the area of professionalism, Mr. Speaker, our police personnel must be trained and raised to a higher height and a deeper depth in professional policing.

Mr. Speaker, last week I was speaking to one of the senior magistrates who told me that the performance of police prosecutors at the courts was below required standards. In this generation, as the population grows, crime will also increase and will be increasing violent. Therefore, the police and the law enforcement agencies must be prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

On the question of rearming the Police Force, I see this as a must. There is a phrase in Baegu that says “a barking dog without teeth is only a psychological deterrent”. This is true because when it comes to real situations involving confrontation, that’s where the test comes. Mr. Speaker, I have heard comments from community leaders, chiefs and church workers, especially during the Foreign Relations Committee meetings in the provinces on the question of whether RAMSI is to leave or to stay, most people think that RAMSI should now leave Solomon Islands. However, Mr. Speaker, if you ask the same people who wanted RAMSI to leave if they want our Police Force to be rearmed, most of them would say no. Mr. Speaker, I don’t know the logics behind this, to allow the exit of RAMSI and leave a Police Force behind unequipped and helpless to counteract any threatening situations.

Mr. Speaker, last week the media made coverage on the Mumbai Terrorist attacks, which involved killings of more than 100 people and burning of hotels. With that terrorist situation, the military, the police and anti-terrorist personnel rapidly intervened and applied counter measure which prevented and protected 5,000 people planned to be killed. Mr Speaker, before RAMSI exits the Police must be rearmed and well disciplined to handle arms. But before rearming the police they must go through tough discipline.

Mr. Speaker, apart from discipline, professionalism and re-arming the Police Force, it is also worth considering the reviews of salaries, remunerations, conditions of service, better housing and accommodation for members of the Police Force.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of economic and productive sector, Solomon Islands is a country of about 28,000 km² and is made up of six (6) major islands and 992 small islands. It is inhabited by approximately 506,000 people and it is a nation being blessed with natural resources with a total sea area of approximately 1.6 million square km. Solomon Islands possess relatively abundant ocean space and associate diversity of potential resources.

Marine resources have long been an important component of the socio-economic livelihood of the people. The country’s marine resources are also important commercially forming a significant contribution to the national economy. The country has a dual economy; the formal or cash economy and the informal or subsistence economy. Mr. Speaker, 85% of the people and 85% of the resources are dependent on the subsistence economy. The country’s natural resources directly support both the livelihood of the village community and the nation’s formal economy.

Mr. Speaker, as a cocoa grower (farmer), I believe the Finance Minister’s statement in the Budget Speech when he said and I quote “we cannot expect donors to build our economy and we cannot wait for overseas investors to provide manna from heaven, we must take action ourselves”. Mr. Speaker, I have faith in this statement. For more than 30 years, Solomon Islanders are very familiar with the cargo cult scenario mentality. Most of our people become slaves to foreign systems that are designed to enslave us. When are we going to become masters? Are we going to be slaves all the time?

Mr. Speaker, we must not be misled that all foreign concepts and systems will work here. There are millions of failed businesses in the G8 nations, rising unemployment. There are millions of unemployed people. The worse is yet to come to them. Mr. Speaker, I for one would like to see genuine foreign investors investing in this nation, investors who will promote the tourism sector, those who will establish industries and create new business incentives and those who bring foreign working capitals to start off business. Mr. Speaker, I have seen in the past 30 years some investors who came here and left, some of them came here to raise funds as Solomon Island is a good place of fundraising, heap up wealth and then left to build empires and palaces elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, fundraisers are those who come in the name of investment for the sake of entry into this nation but later change their mode of business activities, and are now taking over businesses that should be left for Solomon Islanders. Mr. Speaker, buses and taxi services should be run by indigenous Solomon Islanders. Some foreigners are now selling betel nuts in front of their shops. Mr. Speaker, fundraisers will be here for a while heaping up wealth and then move on elsewhere to build places and empires.

Mr. Speaker, during the height of the ethnic tension most foreign investors pulled out and went away and only Solomon Islanders remained. Only the coconut and cocoa growers of Solomon Islands remained to keep the economy afloat. Mr. Speaker, Solomon Islanders are born here and they will die here.

Mr. Speaker, as I had said earlier, 85 percent of the population and resources are in the rural areas. The new policy direction on rural advancement or bottom up approach advocated by the former government led by the present Leader of Opposition and the present CNURA Government is a step taken in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, the budgetary allocation for agricultural sector next year will indeed carry the cocoa and copra production to a new height. Mr. Speaker, with the introduction of cocoa subsidy, there will be a cocoa production boom in the rural areas. Let us put more money in the cocoa and coconut industries. Give us \$40million or even \$50million a year and you will see a turnaround to our economy.

With these sentiments I wish to remind the Minister of Agriculture & Livestock to be cautious and aware of computer farms and professional project appraisals. Most of the grants released last year in 2007 did not reach their destiny, but ended up in casinos, hotels, motels and some have been used to purchase buses and taxis.

Mr. Speaker, I support the Bill.

Hon. TOZAKA: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for allowing me to take the floor to contribute to this important debate.

Mr Speaker, I wish to take this opportunity first of all to thank the Minister for Finance for Introducing this very important Bill and to thank him for setting the directions and what we are expected to do to manage our government finances, but especially for indicating the level of financial resources that is allocated to us to carry out our programs next year.

On that same note, I wish to thank all hard working Public officers, permanent secretaries, staff of the Budget Unit, the Chief Admin officers, Chief Accountants, and the Public Accounts Committee who, during the budget process have sacrificed their time and energy in the budget process. Mr Speaker, without the efforts of all these people, this Budget would not have been debated now.

The 2009 budget

Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister of Finance for his hard work in preparing this Budget. The 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008 is all about delivering services to our people. One obvious feature is that it has increased to \$1.7billion compared to \$1.4billion this year. This is expected and justifiable bearing in mind cost of services have increased and the demand on the government has also increased. As we all know the budget details the allocations for each sector of our country. I am happy that the highest allocation continues for the Education Health and Security Sectors.

Mr Speaker, the need for improved services has increased the responsibilities of my Ministry as a central agency to facilitate means to ensure that service delivery outcomes are realized. Service delivery in our governance system is depended on human resources. Unlike other resources, human beings are smarter. They will work harder if they are happy and work less if they are not happy. On the other hand, they may appear to be working but very ineffective and inefficient.

Mr Speaker, the Human Resources Management policy adopted by the SIG is specified under the Public Service Act, the PSC Regulations, the General Orders, the Employment Act, the Labor Act, and instructions issued by the Public Service. So while the Ministry ensures compliance, the daily activities of managing staff are vested on Permanent Secretaries. They are expected to administer performance reward system, discipline, recruitment, staff development, staff welfare and retirement. The thinking has been that Permanent Secretaries know the needs of his/her officers better.

Mr Speaker, I know that everyone in this house, like myself, appreciates that our public officers continue to work against difficulties dictated by the geographical nature of our country, diseases that are rampant at the workplace such as malaria, high cost of maintaining livelihoods, political interference in posting of officers, increasing cost of fuel and materials needed to facilitate work, the increasing population and the demand for limited resources and so it is easy to criticize, but with an institution that is regulated, better ways to deal with criticisms do exist. In fact criticisms are feedbacks for improvement. Those of us who are responsible for Public Service should take these onboard and improve.

Mr Speaker, permit me now to inform this house what my Ministry has been doing so far. You may be aware that the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) has and will continue to provide training of public servants through more applied courses. The IPAM will continue to undertake design and development of more courses to levels of excellence to ensure of a capable public service of value, integrity and excellence. These professional developments are best left to this particular institution, a professional institution, IPAM but it is extremely important that

all stakeholders know that training does not come by easily or cheaply. Somebody at the engine room is sweating away each day in putting together and disseminating relevant knowledge to all public servants and someone is meeting the costs.

Mr Speaker, the IPAM is allocated funds to carry out training and it would be going beyond the parameters of affordability for it to be expected to finance other costs not inherent in the budget. For example, travel costs for participants are generally not budgeted for under IPAM, even payment of allowances might be stretching the training budget beyond affordability.

The Public Service procedures show public officers how to do things correctly in this huge organization. Our laws and the Constitution empower them to do what they must do to enhance speedy delivery of services to the public service and the public. Always be aware and conscious that you apply the skills learned from the IPAM to further strengthen development production in line with government policy intentions.

Mr Speaker, my Ministry has facilitated the filling of vacancies. Recruitment into the Public Service is on merit so that the best people for the job are recruited. It is hard to find the best people but we have been successful in filling priority positions in ministries and will continue to assist ministries to build their capacities, hence the importance of filling vacancies. We have delegated recruitment to Permanent Secretaries, and we have seen some improvement in filling vacancies this year, although a lot still needs to be done. The allocation for this as appears in my Ministry will assist to hasten the filling of higher level vacancies.

Mr Speaker, another process that was delegated in the discipline of public officers, however, I have recentralized the discipline of levels 7 to SS3. Under the reform program, we will be making improvement on the process to follow when dealing with disciplinary matters. By doing this, the Ministry of Public Service will be able to ensure officers delegated with the power to discipline must be seen to deal with disciplinary cases promptly and to conclude them as soon as possible. Responsible officers who fail to deal with such cases will be charged for misconduct for failing to perform their delegated responsibilities.

It has been our aim to improve our effectiveness of our service delivery. Sir, we have the Organization and Development (OD) Unit to address weaknesses in central agencies as well as provinces in areas of absenteeism, attitude to work, disciplinary matters, compliance to rules and regulations, grading of posts, systems re-engineering and manpower inspection.

The OD Unit can also carry out inspections of processes and procedures and make recommendation for improvements. The 2009 Budget allocation will strengthen this particular important unit in my Ministry to carry out inspections, not in the ministries alone but also out in the provinces. It is expected, however, that Chief Executives and Permanent Secretaries are responsible in dealing with these matters in their respective ministries and Provincial Secretaries in their provinces.

Mr Speaker, at this juncture I would like to take the opportunity to thank the Chairman and members of the four Commissions responsible for approving

appointments into our Public Service, and to ensure that naughty public officers are disciplined. I pay my special thanks and tribute to the Chairman and Members of the Public Service Commission, the Chairman and Members of the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, the Chairman and Members of the Police and Prison Service Commission, and the Chairman and Members of the Teaching Service Commission.

Mr Speaker, at this meeting I am also happy and proud too to inform you that we have managed to produce the Public Service Civil List, which I am holding here in my hand, the Solomon Islands Government Civil List of 2009. If one cares to look at the Civil List it contains all personal information about individual officers. It includes officers' names, post, grade level, province of origin, duty station, even gender and date of birth are all contained in this list. All public officers in the country are in this list. That is something for us, and is audited a little bit according to the policy of the government to open up accountability, transparency and the things we have been talking about in according with the policies of they government so that our people can understand who are the public servants working in the Public Service

The purpose of having a civil list two is very important in that it assists ministries with its planning in terms of placing officers in their right positions based on their qualification. This important document is produced biannually I would like to request all ministries to have a copy each.

Mr Speaker, I also would like to up date you on this ghost payment. When we talk about ghost payment you look to the public service. The issue on ghost payment has been an issue raised by stakeholders. I wish to inform the house that a new payroll system is being worked on with donor assistance auspices by the Ministry of Finance. This new payroll system should assist in improvement of data collection and also assist us in rectifying the problem related to ghost workers. We are now addressing this problem head on and we know those people who have already left the public service but are still being paid. We have now come up with this new payroll system in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance to sort out this problem. This is a very important matter that the Ministry must attend to, because we talked about it all the time but now we are sorting it out.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to register my appreciation for the assistance of donor partners for awarding scholarships to our public officers this year and will continue again next year. We have public officers who will go overseas for in-service training to undergo postgraduate courses, first degree postgraduate courses or even masters and doctorate. We are working very closely with the donors who are funding the scholarship of public officers. I also wish to thank them for coming to our aid when we have limited qualified manpower in specific line positions especially in the Ministry of Finance, Justice and Police.

Mr Speaker, you will note that under the RAMSI Partnership Program we are currently engaging 14 expatriates holding line positions. These are temporary appointments while our people are being trained to take up those positions. This is a reduction of two (2) positions from 16 last year. Besides RAMSI, there are a number of

donors who have assisted us with personnel and also carrying out duties in line positions. The number of multilateral and bilateral is 25.

Mr Speaker, as the demand on the need for services continue to increase, we must find new ways to get services delivered and tailor relationships at home, in the region and with multilateral friends to be partners in development. The Public Service is no longer a bureaucracy or a one way process of administration. It has become an inclusive process of collaboration. In other words, all of us sitting in this house are responsible for public services in one way or another as leaders. And I would like to thank my colleague Ministers as well as those on the other side of the house for the leadership you have shown to our public officers. They are very much looking at us as leaders to run public offices that have been assigned to us.

One such strategy is to expand our private service deliverers. If the public service is not working then outsourcing should be encouraged. I wish to encourage those who have taken this strategy to continue using it.

The notion advanced by some people that expatriates will persist to dominate the Public Service does not hold water as work is continued to be advanced so that in the immediate future, our people, Solomon Islanders will take over these positions.

Mr Speaker, the Public Service Improvement Program (PSIP) has commenced and will be an integral part of my Ministry output regime for the next years. This program renders an opportunity to enhance our past efforts including those of other ministries and will assist us in providing leadership in the Public Service and achieve government objectives to improve service delivery.

We may not do better but we have done our best to serve our people.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion I am happy that the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008 has provided my Ministry and other sectors with just enough resources, as for me in the Public Service to do what we have planned to do. It is a difficult task to meet public expectations but we can only do so if we can all put our hands together to support our public officers. If the status quo cannot provide for our needs then other strategies must be explored. That is why we must create an avenue for improvement in our systems and procedures while at the same time consider the needs of those who deliver those services to us.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I wish to assure this house that my Ministry has always been supportive of ministries' programs in terms of human resources and we will always try to do just that through our capacity building programs. I therefore applaud once again this budget with a sure feeling that a lot of good things will come out of it and help us continue advance some of our programs next year.

With these few remarks, Mr Speaker, I support the Bill.

Hon. HUNIEHU: Mr Speaker, I also would like to contribute in the debate of the 2009 Budget Speech 2008 other the colleagues who have already spoken. I would also like to thank the Minister of Finance for introducing the Budget at this appropriate moment. I also would like to thank all the hard working staffs in his Ministry who have one way or

the other assisted in the production of this Budget Speech in time for the deliberation of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, this Budget is asking Parliament to approve expenditures of \$377million in the Development Budget and more than \$1billion in the recurrent for the various services needed by our people in Solomon Islands. My support for this budget is not because I am a minister of the crown and a member of the government, but my support for this budget is because this budget is premised and founded on three key pillars. First, this Budget, at the few pages in front talks about stability, political stability. The Prime Minister has to provide stability so that we can implement many of our programs or projects that have been planned and in the government's policy statements.

The Budget, Mr Speaker, talks about peace, the process of peace. Peace is very important because without peace we cannot attract development partners in funding some of the crucial projects we need in this country. We all know during the social ethnic tension that there was little happening during this period of time when this country was more or less controlled by militants. Peace is what we need if we are to grow an economy and if we are to grow our revenue base.

This budget is also about partnership, Mr Speaker. Little do we realize these key principles affecting the development process. When we manage an economy without these key principles, sometimes it is very hard to attract donor partners, sometimes it is very hard to attract investors into this country, sometimes we find it hard to attract bankers to become collateral financiers in some of the projects that we wanted to implement in this country.

Sir, I see this Budget as hopeful. The people of Solomon Islands must be hopeful and delighted that they have a government that is prepared to fight hard for them. I do not want to see negatives about budget presentation. Of course, when we have conducive policies we can grow the revenue base to fund these projects. And this has been happening since Independence. All we need to do is provide conducive policies for those main actors and they will find their way in and we can grow the revenue base and we can grow the economy. I have a lot of confidence that Solomon Islanders will do this and when this happens, it affects our ministries in particular, the development ministries. Let us not talk very much about our doubtfulness because this budget needs all of us together working together to make this happen, and not tearing us apart, Mr Speaker. That is what this nation needs. This nation needs a united front in order to collect the revenue projected in this budget, which is over a billion dollars, something huge if you talk about this four years, five years or even ten years ago.

Mr Speaker, whilst we can say that we can achieve these budgetary estimates, as a government and as a future government as well, we have to be mindful about our costs. I have heard many of those who have spoken already not concerned about costs. Of course, Mr Speaker, we will need a couple of million dollars more for the development budget and that is why many of us might be complaining that some of our development projects in our ministries have been cut. Mr Speaker, I think future

governments should seriously look at cutting costs so that we can increase the level of funding in our ministries.

The other point I wish to raise, Mr Speaker, is that of RAMSI. I like RAMSI, they will be spending about more than \$2billion in this Budget, and this money will be spent in Solomon Islands and some of it will be re-floated back to their home countries. But what I wish to float in this Parliament is that perhaps it is time to look at slicing some of those budgets from RAMSI to development and productive ministries to have them well equipped.

The long term security of this country depends on the success of the economy, not only security alone. Long term sustainability of peace and security hinges very much on development ministries on how they activate economic activities in their ministries. Tourism, for example, my Ministry of Mines and Energy, Agriculture, Fisheries, Commerce are the ministries. I believe this can be done. More than \$2billion on security is alright but at least we must be looking at the other sectors that also provide longer term security when we have a booming economy going for the people of this country.

People talk about how can we help Solomon Islanders in business? I wish to say to all my good friends, Solomon Islands businessmen that sometimes it is our attitude, attitudinal behavior is our biggest problem. The government has given us the Development Bank. What happened? Solomon Islanders can borrow but they don't repay and the Bank went into receivership now. It does not mean to say that the government is not helping Solomon Islanders in business, but if the government does help again, we have to change our mentality in running business, and our mentality in owning business. Even myself, I used to run four or five businesses before, but when we do not have the business mentality, we will fail and that is why many Solomon Islanders have failed. Business is hard, things are hard.

We should not allow Members of Parliament to complain that the budget does not help business leaders in this country or their business will be going bankrupt thus sometimes it could be true, government may not be assisting the way you want but most of the time it is your fault; most of the time it is our fault including those of us in here too. I hope that when we create conduciveness and when you have the opportunity, Mr Speaker, make use of it.

I always say that government can only create the framework to make things possible for all of us. The government can only create and try to create a level playing field for all of us. The government can only try to create meaningful partnership, and government can only try to create political stability, peace, harmony and reconciliation. And it is our duty to pick up the spade and hammer and do the work. Because sometimes we do not expect the government will give cash handout. Get money from the bank and run business.

I also wish to say that with all the huge money we see in this budget of something around \$4billion to \$5billion, if we can cut say \$500million of RAMSI from security and give it to the government to build more plantations, palm oil plantation in the next 10 years we will solve our problems. This is what we need in the next 10 years.

We need more plantations of palm oil or whatever it is to provide employment in the village.

My friend over there was talking about subsidy for cocoa and coconut. I have already moved a motion in this House about five (5) years ago for the government to provide funding to cocoa farmers. I think it is time we start revisiting some of these wise thinking motions in this Parliament. If you look at Hansard Reports there are many good suggestions from people who have already passed away or still in Parliament.

Sir, I wish to say that this country is full of corporate cowboys. Let us chase them away because they are not good for this country. One of them is the one owning 15% of RIPEL. Let us chase them away from this country because they are bad investors not fit to invest even one cent in this country.

I would like to make a statement here that sometimes politics too is damaging these things too; those of us in here too. I was Minister for Commerce one time when we were dealing with policy issues of RIPEL and how best we can navigate that operation into financial success. We were working closely with the policy evaluation unit, which is precisely a government policy. If you have a major business activity, if you have a major policy that you want proper evaluation for, then the Ministry's concern is for us to work together and provide advice to the Minister responsible. We did it and our recommendations were hijacked by these corporate hijackers with their political friends. What happens is that it is still a problem right up to now and it will become a major problem.

Did you know, Mr Speaker, at that time I introduced a Cabinet Paper called the Trade Liberalization Policy? I did it in order de-monopolize the CEMA and to ensure that RIPEL comes back into full production again. But these corporate cowboys came and offered themselves to own 16% and indigenize the other 85%. It was an attractive offer but when it comes to raising capital, the local partners do not have money. Sometimes things sound good but they are not logical, and this is what I am warning this country about.

There are many Australians wanting to do the same thing to the mining industry, the shipping industry and all other industries. This is the same with some New Zealanders, some Britons, and some Americans. If you are listening to me you come with your genuine investment and we will accept you, but if you come with the intention to benefit from other people's resources, then it is fair and unchristian

Sir, before I come to my own Ministry these are some of the issues I wish to raise for the information of this Parliament. Mr Speaker, my Ministry cannot save this nation from any future crisis provided that we invest in that kind of ministry. It is a ministry that business is hard to develop, in particular the mining. But once it is developed, we can be sure about revenue that we earn from the Ministry of Mines and Energy.

Sir, before I go any further I wish to say that the price of oil has already fallen to about \$50 a barrel, which means that those selling petrol to clients should also reduce their price; reduce the price. Mr Speaker, the fact that the price of oil has come down

does not mean that we have to sleep. The greatest fear for the future is if we do not act now to prevent similar incidents happening in the future.

Mr Speaker, the Finance Minister has warned us that one of the biggest reasons why our foreign reserve has dropped is the rapid increase of oil representing almost 40% and is making a big deficit, the trade deficit. If it continues it will have wider repercussions. But thank God that the USA economy is in a mess and even Europe and other developing countries who rely on oil because of the marked increase in the use of oil, the price of oil went down from US\$150 per barrel to now US\$50. So let us be fair to our clients and customers by reducing the price of food, reducing the price of fuel so that everyone can afford that Mr Speaker. Mr Speaker, I hope one day we will develop the mines that will help to sustain our economy. Already it was highlighted in this budget that very soon the production and export of round log revenue will be declining and so therefore we should be looking at the alternative. And I am recommending to Solomon Islanders and to this House that we pay equal attention on the mining sector. I believe this will happen in our lifetime and I hope that more mines will be open. Although the international economy has collapsed they have affected some of their investors. Sure it will, Mr Speaker, but as things improve in the international money market and the international market, I hope everything will be right.

Mr Speaker, on renewable energy we are continuing our drive to mobilize funding to look at the Tina Hydro Power project in Central Guadalcanal. As I have said today that the greatest fear is for us not to take action and make decisions now. These things will happen in the future. We hope that our program for other mediums of renewable energy will continue to be implemented and I hope many people at large will benefit.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, I would like to say that this budget is forecasting a lot of hope for our people and in spite of the degree of damage caused by the wider economic problems, I hope the Ministry of Finance will steer us through this budget framework.

With those few remarks, Mr Speaker, I support the Bill.

Mr. NUIASI: Mr Speaker, thank you for allowing me to speak on this very important Bill, the 2009 Appropriation. I would also like to thank the Minister of Finance for bringing this Bill before Parliament for our deliberations so that we can carry out our work programs for 2009.

I also would like to thank the staffs who were involved in formulating these budget estimates of 2009, which consists of two components - the recurrent budget and the development budget. It is a custom of our Constitution that every year the Parliament has to debate a budget appropriation in order to carry out its work programs according to policies formulated by the government of the day to be implemented by implementers.

Mr Speaker, as I have already said, the formulation of the 2009 Appropriation Bill is the custom under the Constitution and therefore it is a constitutional requirement that each year the government of the day has to bring to Parliament a budget

appropriation to enable the government spend according to its policy guidelines as well as programs the government wants to achieve during that particular financial year.

Mr Speaker, as all of us have been speaking and as most of us who have spoken earlier on have highlighted, the 2009 Budget is so far the biggest budget presented before the House for Members of Parliament to debate and pass for our work programs in 2009.

Mr Speaker, I do not have much problem passing the Budget because as far as the Budget is concern, it is for us to carry out our programs according to policies and also to address major infrastructure investment within the country. It is us that must carry out the programs according to the policy and also to address major infrastructure investment within the country as well as reforms necessary to ensure that the prosperity of our national economy is growing.

Mr Speaker, I would be very brief and talk about certain issues, which to me as a Member of Parliament should have been highlighted when speaking about this 2009 Appropriation Bill.

Mr Speaker, whilst all of us are talking and debating this important bill, the appropriation bill, all of us have been emphasizing and have been talking about the economic growth of our country. We should also be talking about the reconstruction and reformation of the economy as well. Those are very familiar words that all of us in here have been talking about on this important Bill.

Mr Speaker, as you can see before us here we have two books which divided the budget into two and putting them together. One is the recurrent budget and the other is the development budget. And whilst we are talking about development to ensure that economic growth is enhanced and put into the rural areas, the sizes of the books themselves talk about the amount of money each one will use. Mr Speaker, to coordinate the development budget in order for the programs to come into being and a realistic implementation of those projects, the monitoring funds that have been allocated to ensure projects actually eventuate is quite huge. In this regard, as I have already said I would be very brief, I call on the economic ministries to ensure that economic developments or funds that are allocated to economic developments in the ministries are implemented as far as possible.

Mr Speaker, there has to be an even distribution of developments within Solomon Islands. So far even though we have been talking about even distribution of development within Solomon Islands, it has not eventuated because there are certain issues that have not been addressed that have been hindering our programs.

Mr Speaker, as other colleague have said, if we could only ensure that economic developments are established, I am one hundred percent convinced that there will be peace in Solomon Islands, and this peace will be an everlasting peace because people themselves will be engaged in economic activities in their own provinces, in their own areas and in their own constituencies, if I may say so. Therefore, the establishment of the Ministry of Rural Development, I think, is a step in the right direction. That is the right way to go.

Whilst this Ministry is still new, may be only two years old, its disbursement of funds have been felt and is felt within most of our constituencies. Nevertheless some may have not seen it and will be taking about it, but to me this Ministry has been disbursing funds according to what is supposed to be for the rural population.

Mr Speaker, when it comes to implementation of projects, we always fail to see it carried out according to the policy of the government of the day. For example, when I was in the public service I see a lot of people touring the provinces than staying in the office. Nowadays if you go back to your province and live in your village you would hardly see any canoe going pass. This is an excuse that all officers have had and that is to ensure projects are carried out. Mr Speaker, unless we sacrifice our time ourselves there would not be any benefits for Solomon Islands. It is us who must sacrifice ourselves to ensure economic development is implemented.

Mr Speaker, the Budget itself is self explanatory if you look at all the ministries. They have their provisions; they have their programs, they have their programs which we can see allocated in the budget. Just last year the government came up with a new turn and that is to implement the development budget to at least may be 60% to 70% achievement. This is a new turn to me because that has never happened before although all development projects have never been utilized to their fullest. Now that we are going in the right direction, I am here to support any programs put in place for the remaining years of our term.

Whilst I appreciate this budget is a rural development budget, it is us the parliamentarians, public officers and people that need to work together to ensure that whatever developments identified for each place is agreed to by all of us. The government cannot do all these things by itself because sometimes the government comes across a lot of problems such as acquiring of land or trying to put programs into action because of certain disputes within that area. So it is up to the people of the rural areas, the parliamentarians and implementers for us to understand that it is high time that Solomon moves forward in economic development. Let us put aside our differences so that all these funds are used to develop our country so that we enjoy prosperity, we enjoy economic development and we enjoy life in this country when all these programs are implemented.

Sir, as I have already said that I would be very brief, even if I see no developments for West Are Are, but there is two there for Waisisi and Wairokai, which I need to be fast tracked. Those are the only two developments which I think will help my people to create employment for them and create market outlets and so forth.

In terms of forestry, Mr Speaker, the sustainability of our forest is a concerned that has been discussed by our government and we have already addressed this issue. However, Mr Speaker, I encourage the Government to continue with that program ensuring that individuals exploit their resources and that the idea of having a marketing authority is pursued quickly so that we can enjoy the market value of our products.

Mr Speaker, without going any further I support the motion.

Hon. SOFU: Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to joint other colleague Members of Parliament who have already contributed to the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008, brought to this Parliament by the Honorable Minister for Finance and Treasury. First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for delivering the 2009 Budget on behalf of the CNURA Government.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank the Minister of Development Planning for his input into the Development Estimates. Sir, I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the Permanent Secretaries and public officers, their Ministries for the good work in putting together the 2009 Estimates.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague Ministers of the various ministries and government departments, the Permanent Secretaries and public officers for their hard work, efforts, and contributions in providing registry information and statistical data for the compilation of the 2009 National Budget.

Mr Speaker, I wish to sincerely record my word of thanks to the hard working Chairman and members of the Public Accounts Committee for scrutinizing the 2009 Budget before coming to Parliament. Mr Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank rural farmers of the four corners of Solomon Islands for contributing towards the economic development of this country. I know there are times they face difficulties but continue with the activities they are doing.

I understand any successive government or even this present government sees the important role that our rural populace they play inside economic development of the country. That is why it is very important that any government come into power and try to address the areas in which we need to promote the activities in our rural places.

Mr Speaker, before I touch very briefly on the 2009 estimates, since I have the opportunity to take the floor I wish to congratulate the newly elected Members of Parliament for East Honiara and Lau Mbaelelea Constituencies. I believe with the experience they have in their different fields they would help our people throughout this nation.

Mr Speaker, it is normal process as required under Section 102 of our National Constitution for Parliament to consider budgeted estimates so that the government can continue with its delivery of services in the up coming financial year. In this regard, it is important that Parliament considers the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008 with seriousness and firm objective of giving it approval. This mandate, therefore, Mr Speaker, is on this Honorable House to give its support to the Bill, which clearly focuses on raising and sustaining rural livelihood.

Mr Speaker, as we all know, all of us 50 Members of Parliament want to see 85% of the rural population participate fully in economic development. I do not see any discrepancy in the 2009 Budget while most of components of this Budget are geared towards promoting and harnessing economic development to meet the development needs of our rural populace.

Sir, I believe that debating and passing the 2009 Budget Estimates is one thing, however, the effective and efficient implementation of the related government work programs and priorities is another thing. The implementation of government work programs in relation to the Budget Estimates lies entirely on implementing agencies and ministries, their capacity, logistic and access to implementation.

Mr Speaker, the government must continue to trust its officials who are expected to implement the work programs. At the same time, officials must continue to maintain their highest commitment thereby exhibiting good time keeping, availability in the work place at all times, compliance with established rules, and so on. The government recognizes the trust it has on the officials hence reflected on the Recurrent Budget but again at the end of the day, progress on the implementation does give the real picture for rural dwellers. That is the end result. He will assess government performance on what is on the ground.

Mr Speaker, this is my third year in Parliament. Since 2006, 2007, 2008, when it comes to the budget season, our rural populace is eager to hear something from this floor of Parliament. You will see all sorts of figures being mentioned in this house. This is giving very high expectations on any governments, successive governments that come and go have given our people very high hope. These figures they even do not know let alone counting them. But do you know that passing of the budget is the responsibility of us Members of Parliament and Ministers here on the floor of Parliament. But the important mechanism is the machinery of the government. They are the ones who will implement our programs in a given time. And we need to complete those programs in a given time. You know if there is no commitment to work, it is one of the avenues that slow down the government's program, Mr Speaker. I know our public officers are hard working, but this is just a reminder to us.

Mr Speaker, let me now comment very briefly on my Ministry. The Ministry of Infrastructure Development is one of the key ministries in the productive sector with the task of providing a sustained transport network with well maintained infrastructures. Sir, the Ministry, however, is so dependent on the private sector for the implementation of its work program. The transport infrastructure in the private sectors though so young with minimal capacities has shown its eagerness of being part of the government's program. You would have noticed their participation on the road. I believe and no one would deny that you can see it in Honiara, you can see it in Lata, and you can see it in Auki that roads that have not been maintained for quite a long time have been maintained and you can ride very smoothly in your vehicles on these roads. This is because of the private sector playing a very important role to the government. It has been very supportive to the government. Only one thing we want is capacity to be increased. We lack local capacity, and that is why some programs in my Ministry are a bit hindered.

Mr Speaker, my Ministry attempts to provide basic training for these private contractors in the areas of basic maintenance techniques, costing and bidding techniques, contract supervision and basic machinery uses and requirements. This is not enough because they need greater support to enhance the increase of their capacities to

be able to handle quality infrastructure reconstructions or new constructions. In this effect, the availability of appropriate machineries can produce quality finished product hence a longer lifespan. It is very important for my Ministry to conduct training for our private contractors so that they understand what they are doing. This would help them make better roads. They need to know, they need to undergo training from my Ministry that has technical expertise to conduct such training.

Mr Speaker, the implementation of the 2008 transport infrastructure development programs can be seen as a reflection of a still weak private sector supporting the government. Had there been a competitive private sector available locally, the Development Budget allocation of 2008 could have been used up within six months of the financial year. Sir, what I am saying here is that my Ministry has a lot of work to do, it needs a lot of funds and is desperately in need of a competitive private sector support.

Mr Speaker, the situation therefore is reminding us that we can approve so much millions of dollars for infrastructure development in this Honorable House, but if there is inadequate capacity within the government and also supporting private sector, implementation will always be a problem. I noted that the 2009 Budget is focusing on infrastructure development as one of the six priority areas, and I fully support the initiative. But I must stress here that there must be capacity within the Ministry provided for in the Recurrent Budget and also within the private sector for effective support for the implementation of work programs.

Mr Speaker, I would like to make mention the support which my Ministry, on behalf of the government, continues to receive from our donor partners through financing of some of our work programs. Through some consultations and discussions, our donor partners have come to realize our difficulties and limitations and are therefore prepared to continue support the Ministry along the lines of the National Transport Plan.

Mr Speaker, the intended establishment of the National Transport Fund (NTF) plans to finance the Ministry's maintenance program. Mr Speaker, I want to inform Parliament that maybe next week, the Minister of Finance and myself will bring a piece of legislation to this Parliament on the National Transport Fund.

Mr Speaker, I would like to briefly touch on the RCDF, which appears to be causing a lot of criticisms from critics around the sectors. I do not believe that RCDF is the cause of corruption. No, Mr Speaker, it is not its cause. The RCDF, as I see it is an avenue whereby Members of Parliament can assist constituents with small developmental projects or needs. It is however, important that Members of Parliament must consider establishing work programs in consultation with their constituents so that implementation is progressive. Absence of consultation may result in difficulties during implementation and there will be more criticisms. The RCDF is not a problem here.

Mr Speaker, beside small development activities, the constituents who would like to do these activities they are the needs that our constituents look to at their Member of Parliament for help. If someone from the village is sick and comes to the hospital he needs financial assistance because not everybody is healthy in regards to finance. The

Member of Parliament can assist in such areas where he sees fit. But I am surprised that there have been a lot of talks that a Member of Parliament uses the RCDF for his personal needs and therefore is corrupt. But do you know that I am using the fund to help constituents in my constituency for a good cause because may be a need arises at that time. Nobody in Honiara goes to visit the sick person in the hospital and therefore the Member of Parliament has to go and see him. There is no alternative to this but the MP has to help in such a situation.

Even when someone dies here in Honiara, the MP has to assist in repatriating the body back home when we are asked to assist. I believe all of us 48 Members of Parliament sitting down now cannot deny that we have assisted our people during the time of death. Our people turn on us as their Member of Parliament. They trust you and that is why they come and are you going to chase them away? No, sir, I must help.

Mr Speaker, in conclusion, I agree that allocating adequate funds is important for the implementation of government programs. However, at the same time, we must be equally conscious of our limitations in terms of how much we can practically achieve with the affordable capabilities available. The capability of the Public Service in terms of expertise can predetermine achievements.

Mr Speaker, before I resume my seat, I would like to stress here once again, that although there is a good budget to meet the policy programs of the government, its success depends very much on the work of the public officers who have been assigned to implement government programs.

As I said, I would like to call upon all stakeholders, government departments, responsible public officers, who are now being given the task to implement programs to perform their duties faithfully. Improving work performance is very important to help implement government programs. Mr Speaker, sir, with these few remarks, I render my support to the Bill. Thank you and I resume my seat.

Parliament suspended for lunch break

Hon. MANETOALI: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to contribute on the debate of the 2009 Budget Speech, which the Minister of Finance and Treasury delivered this week.

Mr Speaker, for us in Solomon Islands we have two types of language, which is official pidgin and English, but this afternoon I choose to speak in pidgin in the House. I will leave out English and use pidgin in my contribution towards this Budget Speech.

Mr Speaker, my ministry is the Ministry Police, National Security and Correctional Services. Most of the time people are confused with this Ministry. Sometimes people think it is the Ministry of Police and Justice but that is not so because the Justice Ministry is different from Police, National Security and Correctional Services.

My Ministry looks after the police, it looks after national security in the country and it looks after our prison services in the country, and now we call prison service to correctional services. My Minister also looks after law and order in the country and we also look after the security of Solomon Islands. Mr Speaker, without law and order in

the country there will be anarchy. In Solomon Islands today, law and order is very important, especially, after the ethnic tension. And that is the reason why the CNURA government regards this ministry as one of the six priority areas of the government, and that is law and order.

If there is no law and order, Mr Speaker, people will continue to live in fear, for example, during the ethnic tension. Today people can move around freely, people filled up the ships traveling to and from Honiara to the other provinces. The aeroplanes too are full of traveling businessmen people who are doing their work and hence business activities increase. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to thank our police officers of Solomon Islands, the RAMSI Police officers, and prison officers for their hard work until today.

Mr Speaker, national security is one of the six priorities of government. You can see this in the Ministry's 2009 Recurrent Budget with an allocation of \$120,101,947.00. This is the third biggest budget after the Ministry of Education. The government's commitment to national security is also reflected in the 2009 Development Budget with an allocation of \$13 million, which \$8.5million is for police and \$4.5million for prison services, and this is for infrastructure and housing. The New Zealand government is also providing \$27million for police housing and this is under non consolidated funds. I want to thank the New Zealand Government for wholeheartedly giving us that amount from its taxpayers to build police houses, which is one of the priorities of the CNURA Government for police services in the country. We need to build good houses for police officers.

Mr. Speaker, also under non consolidated funding, RAMSI contributed or funded the new prison at Auki, Malaita Province and hopefully new prisons in Gizo, Kirakira and Lata under the Law and Justice Program.

Mr. Speaker, to address the welfare of disciplined officers, that is one of the government's priority qualities and so the Ministry will continue to renovate and build new houses to provide adequate housing that will boost the morale of discipline officers and increase their morale and output, especially in their work. They must be well taken care of by living in good houses before they can do good work. Police officers must live in good houses. That is the main concern and plan of the government. Once again a big thank you to the New Zealand Government for their good heart for giving us assistances that comes out from their taxpayers' money.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will open up the Kulitanai bay in the New Year. Next year Kulitanai bay will open up in Shortlands in the Western Province. That is the port of entry to the country where things normally come in. An important border post for Solomon Islands is at Kulitanai bay for the security of our country.

The Ministry with the assistance of the Ministry of Lands will make every effort to start the King George Police Station because this is one of the important police stations for the Ranandi Industrial Estate and the surrounding areas. Mr. Speaker, funds provided for in the recurrent budget will enable the Ministry implement government priority policies and programs in the area of national security. For example, on police and prison recruitment, police and prison training, police and prison logistics and

equipment, surveillance of our economy zone, search and rescue and community policing. Mr. Speaker, the overall budget provided to the Ministry in 2009 will enable my Ministry carry out its mandated tasks and provide services required by the public.

Mr. Speaker, I will look at this point that always comes up, and this is on rearming of the police. I want to make it clear here that rearming of the police and rearming of an army are two different things. To rearm the police will be on things like batons, teargas and handcuffs. To rearm the army or field force means giving them guns, bullets and things for shooting. That is on this issue of rearming. But to rearm the police I want to make it clear here that the arms of the police are batons, teargas and handcuffs, and this is all, and not guns. Those are the points I want to bring out in my contribution

Sir, I want to also look at other ministries, especially in the development budget. In regards to the Ministry of Agriculture, when the Minister answered a question in here, he talked about rice farming. Rice farming is very important to us today, especially so when the price of rice is very high. I am also happy that a project, the Folo Rice Project in my constituency was mentioned by the Minister of Agriculture and hope the Minister will work hard on rice farming throughout the whole country of Solomon Islands.

On the area of infrastructure, I would like to thank the hardworking Minister for Infrastructure because some roads throughout the country are going to be maintained. They have started working on these roads this year, and may be next year some more roads will be built. I want to thank the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Infrastructure. I also want to thank him, especially for my road from Haevo to Tausese inside my constituency. It is a short road of about 100 metres long but it is still there in the Budget. I also thank him for the other roads throughout the whole Solomon Islands.

Sir, on telecommunication, transport and communication are two very important things in the country. And I am happy that priorities are there. And also the vision by the government that instead of using radio around the country, telephone is available for use in other parts of Solomon Islands and may be mobile can get through. Recently, Mr. Speaker, I am happy that even Telekom itself has gone out to other provinces and is trying to set up mobile telecommunications in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that rural livelihood is included in the budget for next year. This rural livelihood fund is very important, especially for our people living in the rural areas. The three main basic needs that our people need are housing, sanitation and water supply. These needs come out in the media, in radio and newspaper that so many rural areas in Solomon Islands are opening up their water supply, sanitation and housing. Even some Members of Parliament are funding iron houses for their people in the constituencies. People need to live in good houses, proper sanitation and water supply.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief comments I want to thank the Minister for Finance and Treasury for this Budget Speech he delivered this week. Mr. Speaker, I support this Budget and I beg to take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SOALAOI: Mr. Speaker, in contributing to the debate of the 2009 Appropriation, may I take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance and the government for bringing this budget before the house in time for us to deliberate. I believe the timely finalization of a budget for any organization or any institution for that matter is on its own, an indication that programs will also be implemented on time.

Mr. Speaker, like I have said I am optimistic that the 2009 programs of the government will be implemented in a timely manner due to the timely passage of the 2009 Appropriation Bill.

Mr. Speaker, whilst I strongly support this budget, allow me to generally express some of my views concerning the 2009 Appropriation Bill. Mr. Speaker, in terms of the government's reform agenda, I would like to support the Minister of Finance in saying that there is need for the government to seriously look at broadening its revenue base. This will allow us to ensure there is economic growth and this will also allow us continue to provide or to finance services to our people.

Sir, apart from obstacles included in the speech, I for one see that the absence of basic infrastructure in our country is one of the main obstacles to economic growth or economic development. There are five obstacles to economic growth in the Minister's speech, which I also agree with. May I also say that the absence of basic infrastructures in our country seems to me as one of the main obstacles to economic growth and development in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I will only be touching on some of the ministries that are of concern to me a lot. This includes the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Education. If I can start with the Ministry of Infrastructure, I think I must at this juncture thank the government seeing it fit to support the development of not only existing infrastructures but also new infrastructures. In terms of infrastructures, when we hear people talk about infrastructure in this country, people from my part of the country do not really know what we are talking about, when you talk about bridges and wharves. Let me say here that different parts of our country need different types of infrastructure. And I must thank the government for seeing it fit in supporting the efforts of constituencies and provinces trying to get their own boats to meet the shipping needs of their people. In my case, Mr. Speaker, the only piece of infrastructure that makes sense to us or that will allow us to venture into other economic activities is a boat. I must congratulate this government for seeing it fit in giving support towards that direction. Thank you, Minister of Finance for that allocation in this year's budget.

I believe not only myself but Members of Parliament in this House want to see support given to their constituencies or their parts of the country according to the potentials of those areas. If we build infrastructures in certain areas that do not have the potential to contribute to economic development in this country then we are wasting our money. In saying that, Mr. Speaker, may I also emphasize that different constituencies have different potentials. I will be using my constituency as an example because this is a place where I know more than other parts of this country.

Sir, we are seen as a region that has potential in the fisheries sector, and in this regard I expect the government to direct its assistance to such region according to what

we are strong in, for example fisheries like I have said. For those constituencies that have potential in agriculture should be given more allocation from the agriculture budget for this year.

The other area on infrastructure, which any government should look seriously into, is the maintenance of infrastructures that we build in different parts of our country. I guess we are all familiar with important infrastructures that we have built in some parts of the country that are not being used for the purpose they were built for. In other words, important infrastructures were put in the wrong places.

In terms of education, Mr Speaker, whilst I am a strong supporter of free basic education, I believe there are important steps the government needs to seriously look into before January 2009. I guess the funds allocated for in the 2009 Budget, to me seem to be for preparation. I know we are all aware that free education policy begins in January 2009.

Mr Speaker, I have already expressed this concern at the Public Accounts Committee, and I want to express it once again because I believe it is very important. There are schools in this country that are not attached to form one, and there are schools in this country that do not have enough teachers, and there are also schools in this country that do not have enough materials. The question, Mr Speaker, is what are we going to do with class six students who are not part of any community high school or secondary schools. I hope the government is already working on plans on how to do this, but I think it is important that we start reminding ourselves of the challenges lying before us. We do not want to see the much awaited free education policy bring more disaster than the hope we have been waiting for.

Mr Speaker, the free education policy is welcome news to us parents who have children attending schools, and it will be a relief for us in terms of school fees. And we must thank the government for seeing it fit to help parents in that regard. But I think we all need to be realistic about the challenges that we might face come January 2009. As leaders we need to position ourselves to be able to help or assist schools in our constituencies if the unexpected happens, Mr Speaker.

I believe we are all aware of the fact that we do not have enough teachers. Teachers in this country seem to be the focus of discussions nowadays where teachers are being blamed for absenteeism. Whilst I agree that teachers needs to work, I do not really think we should accuse our teachers for not attending to work unless we know the reasons or unless we are true about what we are saying.

Mr Speaker, I guess being in offices, sometimes we make accusation that are not really true about our teachers, and I feel sorry for teachers. Being a teacher myself I really did not like what my bosses have to say about what I was doing in class, and so I decided to take a different career. But I guess our teachers today are saying the same thing. We make decisions in offices about people out there in the field, who face practical challenges in their career and I think we are doing injustice to them by accusing them even in the media. Every time I read about accusations against our teachers in the media, I sympathize with them, not because I want them to be absent but because I know there are people who do not know what they are talking about.

Mr Speaker, the allocation to the Ministry of Education in next year's budget reflects the seriousness that this government places on education for our children. I believe our teachers should be accorded the respect they deserve as teachers. Sir, teaching is a professional career and as professionals the least they want to hear is criticism against the teaching career. Most of the accusations are so general and there are teachers in the Teaching Service who needs to be congratulated for being committed in ensuring that students receive education.

That is on education and I believe I have said what I have to say about the Ministry of Education. Like I have already said I will continue to be a supporter of teachers and if you have to say anything negative about teachers, it has to be said when I am not in the room because I will be against such people.

Mr Speaker, I have already said something about the Ministry of Infrastructure, but I want to emphasize again before I conclude since it is not in the Minister's speech as one of the things that hinders development. If we see infrastructure as an important aspect of economic development, then we are in the right direction. Mr Speaker, this country is referred to as one of the least developing countries, not because it does not have what it needs for development but because of other things and that is why we are raising concerns here.

Before I conclude, Mr Speaker, I would like to say that this year's budget gives hope to people in the areas with increase of funding to the rural areas. In that regard, Mr Speaker, may I briefly touch on the rural development funding. I must continue to thank our friend, the Republic of China for continuing to fund our rural constituency development fund. Mr Speaker, the only concern I have regarding the fund is the way Members of Parliament are been viewed by the public. I am sensitive to the concerns of the rural population. I think that people are right in what they are saying because the money belongs to the rural population but it seems to be in the wrong place. That is why whilst I thank our donor partner concerned for continuing to provide that assistance, I think we really need to start thinking about showing to our people that we are people who wants to do the right thing. Mr Speaker, but that fund is the only fund that goes directly to our rural areas.

The burden that is placed on Members of Parliament because of the funds is so enormous that sometimes we put ourselves under pressure and we inflict on ourselves even diseases. Most of us are becoming people with high blood pressure, not because we are not eating enough food but because of the pressure put on us by people from our constituencies.

Mr Speaker, I am not denying the fact that people should come to see Members of Parliament, but what I am saying is that the government needs to realize that if it is genuine about helping Members of Parliament to be able to effectively become legislators and lawmakers or policy makers then the government should look after its Members of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, I am a strong supporter of rural development and I want to continue encourage this government to ensure that the allocation for rural development reflects one of the pillars of our government, which is rural advancement.

I am looking for the time when our development budget will be on equal basis with our recurrent budget. At the moment if you look at every budget that we bring before this House, the recurrent budget is always higher than the development budget, which of course is understandable, but I believe the importance of development will only be realized and we can only show that we are serious about development by the amount of money we allocate towards development projects in our country, Mr Speaker.

I am not an expert in money, Mr Speaker, but I feel that we need to increase our development budget to match our need for development. If Solomon Islands is a developing country then our budget should also be saying the same message. We need more funds for development purposes.

Just before I sit down, Mr Speaker, I have already said that I support the Minister in seeing that there is a need for us to immediately broaden our revenue base to ensure that we finance our budget, especially to deliver services to our people.

I think we need to start thinking about what areas we should be looking into that will enable us to broaden our revenue base. What sort of areas can we collect money from, apart from the usual sources of revenue that we know of?

Mr Speaker, in terms of the Ministry of Agriculture, today rice seems to be the only topic in the Ministry. I will continue to say this in this House and even in the next meeting I might also say it that we will only be able to solve our problem on rice if it ends up in the counters of stores in Honiara. The only way forward in order for us to reduce our import of rice is to venture into large scale commercial rice farming.

For your information, Mr Speaker, when we go out to the provinces, this locally grown rice is not cheap as well. It is even more expensive than the rice we get from Honiara because it was claimed it is of high quality. So it is not really solving any problems but it is only making rice available there with the same cost given. It is even more costly than the rice we are getting from Honiara.

Mr Speaker, look at the bags of rice being transported to provinces that are currently embarking on rice farming, this does not really show us that rice is growing in the provinces. The tones of rice going out to the provinces seem to be increasing every now and then. And I would like to urge the Ministry of Agriculture to think seriously into venturing into large scale rice farming because I believe that will be the only way forward for this country, not only for us to reduce the import of rice but also for us to make rice affordable to low income earners in this country because the base of our economy is those middle class people

With those few remarks, Mr Speaker, I once again thank the Minister of Finance for finalizing the budget before the financial year begins next year. I am optimistic that this is an indication that we are prepared to start work straight after the budget is pass in 2009 and I believe it is going to be a good year as I can see from this budget. We can only wish the government good luck in 2009. We must all work together to ensure that this Budget brings fruit to our development efforts.

With that thank you very much.

Mr. OLAVAE: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for availing me this great opportunity to contribute towards this 2009 recurrent and development budgets.

Mr Speaker, all of us should be aware that the development and recurrent budgets have a purpose. This is my second term as the political representative of South Vella and having observed what has been going on for the last 30 years, I found that the recurrent budgets that we passed in the past were expended very fast than development budgets. Mr Speaker, globally we are competing with the rest of the world. There is nothing wrong at creation because we have been blessed with an abundant of resources and geographically resources and islands are scattered in subsistence ways, but our people have been surviving on this subsistence economy.

Mr Speaker, track records have shown that we are not competing effectively with the rest of the world. Look at the recurrent budgets that we used to pass and implement. They were considered foreign exchange earnings for our trading partners and look at the province's capitals, look at the central located infrastructures. Most private sectors that have contributed to our treasury till are only importers. The revenue we are talking about is collected from charging them taxes. They will come back and pay us and will continue to expend them next year. That will contribute towards our foreign earnings. Foreign reserve is draining out to import more goods overseas and the government will, at the same time, be enjoying services that will be provided by the same people who are not really Solomon Islanders.

Mr Speaker, one thing we have to understand is the geographical location of our islands. From the beginning it has not been easy, especially in our adoption of the multilateral trading system. From that time we encountered this very big problem because we are talking about trade, which is the bottom line.

Trade and tourism related activities have been the pillars of determining where we are going. When you go to other countries overseas they have similar infrastructures. If you arrive, say in Australia or New Zealand, you will see their international airports, their international wharves and all the best infrastructures put in place. All the bigger countries have compatible infrastructures attracting the whole world to travel, and that is tourism and trading related activities. That is what they emphasized on. That is why recurrent and development budgets have a purpose. They are supposed to stimulate trading and tourism related activities. These budgets, I know, have been trying to reflect assistance towards infrastructure. We are struggling because we are situated in very, very isolated islands, very far from the rest of the world, and so it is not easy. That is why for the last 30 years we have been talking about development budgets and recurrent budget. Let us tell the truth that it is not easy.

The private sector has been injecting money into the Treasury and we use that money for development, but that is not enough. That is why I commend the Finance Minister for doing a good job. What the Treasury can collect or has collected will be used purposely to serve our nation or our rural population as highlighted in the policy statements.

Mr Speaker, I have no objection to this development and recurrent budget. The government has done well by putting in place a good amount of livelihood money plus

the RCDF purposely to boost the rural economy. On behalf of my constituency and its people, I take this opportunity to thank the Finance Minister, Officers, and all of you who believe in this policy.

With that, Mr Speaker, I do not think I will dwell much on what most speakers have already highlighted because all of us have the same vision, same beliefs and that is to revitalize the rural economy. With these brief remarks, Mr Speaker, thank you.

Hon. HAOMAE: Mr Speaker, since I did not have the opportunity to contribute to the 2008 Budget, I will take sometime in my contribution.

Mr Speaker, I rise to contribute to the debate on the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008. At the outset, I wish to take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Minister of Finance for introducing the Bill. As you are aware, Mr Speaker, the Budget Speech addresses the six priority areas of the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement Government. My portfolio falls under the priority area of national security and foreign relations. My contribution will cover, in the main, the foreign relations component of this priority area.

Mr Speaker, since assuming office in December 2007, the Coalition for National Unity and Rural Advancement (CNURA) Government is committed to conduct its foreign relations policy in a mature pragmatic manner aided by the philosophy of “friends to all and enemies to none”.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, issues entailing foreign relations are complex in nature hence the need for countries and states to establish relations and cooperation for coordinated and better implementation of their respective foreign policy relations. In this regard, Solomon Islands is no exception to the challenges of the complexities in conducting its foreign policy.

Mr Speaker, one of the very first tasks for the CNURA Government when it assumed office in December 2007 was to mend our foreign relations with our neighbors in the Pacific Region. In this regard, the honorable Prime Minister led a very high delegation to Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and Australia. As a consequence of this diplomacy, Mr Speaker, Solomon Islands relations with our neighbors in this region have gone from strength to strength. Solomon Islands again has become a credible partner in the Pacific Region.

Mr Speaker, the issue of our sea border with our nearest Melanesian neighbor, Papua New Guinea, is a matter of priority. Both governments convened meetings at the official level and discuss strategies and plans for greater presence of our officers among the border area of Shortlands, Choiseul and Bougainville Islands. The CNURA Government is committed to station officers of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, Customs and Immigration Division on a strategic location at Shortlands islands to control, monitor and manage the movement of people and items along the border areas between these islands of our two countries. This activity is in line with the Memorandum of Understanding reached between the respective authorities of the two governments.

Mr Speaker, Solomon Islands has now renewed its working relationship with our neighbors in the Region and Regional Organizations in the Pacific, including the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the University of the South Pacific, to name but a few. In light of this improved relations and the confidence that our neighbor countries have in us, Solomon Islands through my Ministry has played central and key roles in the consultation of essential documents like the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) and PACER Plus, Pacific Islands Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) and the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with EU inter alia to promote trade and investment with our neighboring countries and members of the European Union respectively.

Alongside other Pacific ACP states, Solomon Islands continues to work towards the conclusion of a comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union during 2008. To that end, officials from my Ministry met with EC officials in April and September 2008, and have further begun a process of electronic negotiation with their EC counterparts since the September joint technical working group.

Mr. Speaker, after announcing Solomon Islands readiness to trade under the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement in late 2007, officials from my Ministry have been active in the negotiation of an extension of the PICTA to cover trade in services and labour mobility. Close consultations with other ministries and non-state actors is ongoing. To that end, Forum trade ministers are hopeful that a proposed text will be ready to be presented to leaders at the 2009 Forum Leaders Meeting.

The Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations, signed in 2001, provides for the future negotiation of a free-trade agreement between all Forum members, informally known as "PACER Plus". In light of the approaching deadline for the start of formal consultations in 2011, officials began informal consultations to discuss preparations for this process this year. Officials have so far met twice, and two further meetings are planned ahead of the next Forum Trade Ministers Meeting in 2009. In this regard, Forum Trade ministers have asked officials to present a roadmap detailing the way forward in 2009. As lead spokesperson for the Forum island country group on PACER Plus issues, Solomon Islands is actively involved in this work programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Asian region also immensely contributes to the development and growth of our country in terms of trade and investment. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade compliments the efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labor and Employment in our plans to encourage potential investors from the Asian region to investment in our private sector and to trade with our business community in Solomon Islands.

Mr. Speaker, Papua New Guinea is a strategic location for this initiative, being our gateway to the Asian region. Officials from our Ministries successfully hosted a Trade and Investment Promotion week at Port Moresby in August 2008. This has increased the level of investment from businesses in Papua New Guinea at Solomon Islands from SBD800 million to one billion Solomon Dollars by the end of the year.

Mr. Speaker, it is pivotal for Solomon Islands to have its presence abroad for prompt response and implementation of government policies and programs for better

results and utilization of our scarce resources. This can be done through establishment of our Missions abroad, appointment of Consul Generals and Honorary Consuls.

The CNURA Government is very mindful of this notion and ensures that our Missions abroad, Consul Generals and Honorary Consuls are strategically located so that the Government is kept abreast of the progress of its programs and priorities on a timely basis and in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Framework is a process to support Least Developed Countries in building trade capacity and mainstreaming trade policy into overall development strategies. In Solomon Islands, this process is funded by the International Monetary Fund, International Trade Centre, United Nation Conference of Trade and Development, United Nations Development Program, the World Bank and World Trade Organization and coordinated by the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, the CNURA Government through my Ministry has conducted nationwide awareness workshops throughout June 2008. Following on from these workshops, a Diagnostic Trade Integrated Study (DTIS) was conducted until August 2008. The Diagnostic Trade Integrated Studies was designed to analyze and assess trade gaps in relation to regional and multilateral trading. Mr. Speaker, a report on the Study is now available at my Ministry and on December 11 – 12 2008, a validation workshop will be convened in Honiara to assist the Ministry and the Government for that matter amongst others to formulate an Action Matrix leading towards a Trade and Productive Sector Growth and Development Strategy as a response to the findings of the Study.

Mr. Speaker, in that connection, may I respectfully urge all the Honourable Members to attend this important Validation Workshop. The workshop will be attended by more than 100 senior officials and representatives from the private sector organizations including representatives from the six core IF Agenceis and donor partners. It is in this workshop that the Government will be validating the reports and recommendations contained in the study reports for further implementations. It is envisaged that this will also include an Implementation Plan to address the policy priorities identified in the Study.

Mr. Speaker, the Validation Workshop is coordinated by the National Steering Committee comprising members from the private sector, statutory authorities, the government and representatives from the core Agencies and EU as the donor facilitator. May I take this opportunity to convey the Government's sincere appreciation to the core Agencies for their funding commitments to this process and European Union for playing the key role of coordinating these Agencies for effective implementation of the Paris Declaration.

Mr. Speaker, the CNURA Government through my Ministry has advanced the construction of the New Solomon Islands High Commission Chancery Building Complex in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. In February 2008, I had the privilege of officiating at the Ground Breaking Ceremony for the new chancery site and in October, the Government signed a Contract Agreement of K5 Million with the China Railway Construction and Engineering Group (PNG Limited) who won the tender to construct the New Chancery Building. In late October, the Solomon Islands Government received

a Grant Assistance of K5 Million from the Papua New Guinea Government for the construction of the New Chancery Building Complex. An amount of K2.4 Million for the Chancery was also given to the Solomon Islands Government by the Papua New Guinea Government in 2005. This brings the total Papua New Guinea Government Grant Assistance of K7.4 Million (SBD\$21 Million) for the construction of the Solomon Islands New High Commission Chancery Building Complex in Port Moresby.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the Construction Firm is currently mobilizing its plants and materials in Papua New Guinea and China. It is expected that initial ground work on the Chancery Complex will start later this month and full construction work to start in early 2009 with the completion of the work scheduled for the end of 2009. The official opening of the New Chancery Building Complex is also scheduled for early 2010. This will be the first ever Solomon Islands Government Building built and owned overseas in the history of Solomon Islands, and as such, we are very proud and honored to undertake this important project. My Ministry through our High Commission Office in Port Moresby is working closely on the project and to see its successful completion. In addition to this Project, our High Commission in Port Moresby continues to carry out representational duties on behalf of the Government throughout the course of the year. High Level visits and contacts were also facilitated by my Ministry through the High Commission Office aimed at strengthening our relations with Papua New Guinea.

This is evident by the following:

- In early January 2008, the Hon Prime Minister, visited Port Moresby, to meet with Grand Chief, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea. The visit was aimed at strengthening our bilateral relations with Papua New Guinea.
- In July this year, Papua New Guinea's Governor General, and His Lady kindly graced the 30th Anniversary of our country's independence celebrations in Honiara, by attending as our Special Guest.
- In August, a successful one week investment seminar was hosted in Port Moresby. The seminar was aimed at informing Papua New Guinea Firms and Companies on investment opportunities in Solomon Islands. The seminar was successful with a large turn-out of participants. A number of enquiries were also attended to by the Solomon Islands Delegation during the seminar. A number of Papua New Guinea investors had since moved to Solomon Islands.
- In September this year, a parliamentary delegation visited Port Moresby and held discussions with Papua New Guinea Government officials and other stakeholders on the Integrity Bill, which the Government is currently pursuing.
- Also in September this year, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands hosted the 7th Papua New Guinea/Solomon Islands Bilateral Discussions as well as the 2nd Joint Border Committee Meeting in Honiara.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of the Solomon Islands High Commission in Suva, Fiji, has also become a priority in the CNURA Government's Policy Statement on foreign

relations. This commitment was documented in the Policy Translation Document which later becomes a project under my Ministry's 2008 Development Budget.

Mr. Speaker, the implementation of this important project has already taken place when two of my senior staff members, were deployed to Suva, Fiji, on the 29th of August 2008 to carry out the setting up of the High Commission Office. As of today I am pleased to inform this Honorable House that the tasks to which they were deployed have been accomplished and the office is now ready to carry out its diplomatic functions.

Mr. Speaker, Fiji is a strategic location in the South Pacific Region. It hosts the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, SOPAC, UNDP and other UN Agencies and many more international and regional organizations. It also hosts the University of the South Pacific where the second largest number of students undertaking studies at the University is from Solomon Islands. The setting up of our Mission in Suva is therefore significant in the sense that Solomon Islands is now in a better position to relate to these Organizations on issues of interest to us and in pursuit of our developmental needs both at multilateral and bilateral fronts. It is expected that the appointment of the High Commissioner and selection of staff for the Mission will take place this month and early in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, the Republic of China, Taiwan has been and continues to be Solomon Islands true friend in deed. This year marks twenty-five years of close and warm relations between the two countries. The relationship between the two countries has been made stronger and was reflected through high-level exchange of visits of leaders of the two countries. The then Vice President of Taiwan paid a two-day historic visit to Solomon Islands in February 2008. A reciprocal visit to Taiwan was made in March by our Hon. Prime Minister. The Prime Minister took the opportunity to make a farewell call on the out-going President of Taiwan. The Prime Minister made a further visit to Taiwan in May this year to attend the inauguration of the new President of Taiwan. The two leaders met and assured each other of continued strong ties between Solomon Islands and Taiwan.

In July, the Speaker of the Legislative Yuan of Taiwan visited Honiara as Special Envoy of the President of Taiwan on the occasion of the 30th Independence Anniversary Solomon Islands.

Mr. Speaker, as witnessed throughout the year, Solomon Islands continue to benefit from Taiwan's direct assistance program in a number of sectors. These assistances continue to have positive impacts on the government and our people. Next year we will see new funded projects to be implemented including solar electrification for schools and office complex for members of Parliaments. Based on the bilateral Framework Cooperation Agreement and the CNURA Government policy directives, the two countries seek to broaden co-operation between them into areas of trade and investment for mutual benefits. Officials are currently exchanging counter-proposal framework for a bilateral free trade agreement to be negotiated between Taiwan and Solomon Islands. In addition to a trade and investment mission from Taiwan to Solomon Islands in June this year, and previous reciprocal trade and investment

promotion activities last year, a growing number of Taiwan's businesses have taken further and own initiatives to visit Solomon Islands looking for opportunities for investment or do business with Solomon Islanders. The interest from both sides is growing and the CNURA Government is committed to facilitate a strong business connection between Taiwan and Solomon Islands.

Mr. Speaker, labor mobility is an exciting new area not only for Solomon Islands but the Pacific region as a whole. New Zealand has kindly included Solomon Islands in their Recognized Seasonal Employment. This is now in Motion. Some of our people have already traveled to New Zealand under the Scheme. We look forward to seeing many of our people utilizing the opportunities provided under the arrangement.

I wish to inform this Honorable House that the MOU on Labor Mobility with Taiwan is ready and we envisage signing this early next year. As soon as the MOU is signed, detailed negotiations about the workers condition of service while in Taiwan and other important requirements will be undertaken with various stakeholders. The proposed MOU hopes to see some of our semi-skilled people engaged in the manufacturing, construction, boat (fishing) crewing and care-giving jobs in Taiwan. This arrangement would also provide an opportunity for our people to be trained in relevant vocational training institutions to upgrade their skills and competence to certain standards.

Mr. Speaker, an increasing number of our young people are studying in Taiwan. The first recipients of Taiwan Scholarships will graduate next year. We should send more students each year to Taiwan to study there. The point I wish to emphasize here is that educating more of our young and potential leaders in Taiwan and elsewhere in south-east Asia is an effective way of capturing the benefits of that region under the Look North Policy. If we were to get greater benefits from the unprecedented developments in the Asian region, we must also be knowledgeable of the culture, language and the business culture of that region. The effective strategy to achieve that is through education – send more of our young people to study in Asian educational institutions.

Aside from the activities mentioned, the CNURA Government through my Ministry has been considering various initiatives to make the relationship between Taiwan and Solomon Islands stronger and mutually sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, our High Commission in Canberra continues to carry out representational responsibilities on behalf of the Government of Solomon Islands. In addition, the High Commission facilitated visits to and transit through Australia via Brisbane mainly by High Level Delegations from Solomon Islands. These visits resulted in the subsequent normalization of strained relations between Solomon Islands and Australia, provided an opportunity for Solomon Islands to be represented at the highest level at the Australia-Pacific Islands Business Council meeting to meet with potential and interested investors in Brisbane, raise our profile among private sector and church authorities and strengthening our links with the Government of Australia.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to the Chancery project, the High Commission will host the signing of the design contract between a representative of the BHI Architect

Firm and the High Commissioner this week. After the signing, the Chief architect from the Ministry of Infrastructure will proceed with necessary briefings and discussions with the firm. The design work is expected to commence after the signing and completed in six months, while construction should begin toward the end of 2009 or at the beginning of 2010 and completed by mid 2011.

Our High Commission now enjoys cordial working relationship with the various Government Agencies including AUSAID in Canberra. In this connection, our High Commission is kept abreast of the state of the Partnership for Development Framework between the Commonwealth Government of Australia and the Government of Solomon Islands.

Mr. Speaker, relations with the European Union [EU] continue to be of a great significance to Solomon Islands and it remains our single largest multilateral development cooperation partner. Our cooperation activities are manifested by programmes in the agriculture sector, education, rural development and vocational training, and infrastructural development. I am profoundly pleased to say that our relations with the European Union has grown from strength to strength and we can only augur to ensure that this cooperation continues to deliver much needed development to a substantive cross-section of our communities. In particular, as can be attested by my Colleague the Minister responsible for Aid Coordination, who is also the National Authorization Officer [NAO], the micro-projects financing scheme under European Development Fund [EDF] resources epitomize a successful flagship program under basic needs of our rural communities which source assistance but also nurtures local ownership of amenities and facilities through community contribution and participation.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry through our Mission to the European Union in Brussels continues to jointly work with the Office of our National Authorizing Officer [NAO] in our collaboration with the European Commission on development cooperation issues in particular within the ambit of the Cotonou Agreement. Ongoing negotiations of regional economic partnership agreements [EPAs] with the European Union constitute one of the key structural reformations of our relations under the Cotonou Agreement. Solomon Islands, which is part of the Pacific region configuration of the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific [ACP] Group of States continues to actively participate in the negotiation process. The outcome EPAs will replace the trade regime that was used as a transitional trade mechanism for market access into the EU market. These Agreements represent a vehicle for economic prosperity and henceforth sustainable development for ACP countries. To that end, with the ultimate objective of securing predictable market access for our products into the EU, we have remained unified with other Pacific Islands Forum Member States to continue to negotiate with the European Commission [EC] a comprehensive Pacific – EC EPA.

Mr. Speaker, at this juncture, allow me to inform the National Parliament of Solomon Islands impending presidency of the ACP Group of States. Bestowed upon us such responsibility means that we will play a key role in the leadership of the ACP Group of States both at the level of ACP Council of Ministers and that of Committee of

Ambassadors in Brussels. These leadership responsibilities in turn synchronize with the joint ACP-EU institutions as provided by the Cotonou Agreement for the management of ACP-EU development cooperation.

I must point out that our tenure of Presidency and Co-Presidency of ACP and ACP-EU joint institutions come at no less challenging time as it coincides with the invocation of the process for a mandatory five-yearly review of the Revised Cotonou Agreement which was concluded and signed between the ACP and EU parties in June 2005 but only entered into force in August 2008. Indeed, Solomon Islands forthcoming assumption of the Presidency of the ACP Group of States in February 2009 comes some twenty-two years since we last held such leadership responsibility in 1986. And to this end, I must acknowledge and underscore the fact that this assumption of leadership for a group developing countries that constitute a good majority of developing countries within the international community today.

Mr. Speaker, the representational role of our Mission in New York continues to increase Solomon Islands international visibility. Solomon Islands was recently elected as one of the Vice President of the 63rd United Nations General Assembly. The country is also Vice Chair of the Alliance of Small Islands States and is a member of the Bureau of the least developed Countries. Our multilateral role has provided firm foundation for Solomon Islands to conduct its bilateral, regional and multilateral relations with the wider membership of the international community.

Mr. Speaker, on the issue of Solomon Islands relations with the United Nations, we continue to enjoy fruitful relations with the United Nations. This year we witness the appointment of a UNDP Deputy Resident Representative in Honiara. The country also has one of the substantial UNDP country program compared to all our regional neighbours. We have also seen an increase of UN presence with its other agencies and programmes with a growing investment in the provincial and informal sector of the country's wider system.

Our engagement with the United Nations is conducted at all levels including at Heads of Government, Ministerial and Official levels. The Prime Minister, attended the recent UNGA General Debate, delivered Solomon Islands' General Statement at the 63rd Session and participated at September High level Millennium Development Goal Round Table discussions. Hon Prime Minister also chaired portion of the General Assembly sessions during his brief stay in New York.

Mr. Speaker, our New York Mission is also accredited to the United States. During the course of the year, beside the regular visits of the US Ambassador to Solomon Islands in Port Moresby, visits were complimented with visits from State Department officials. Our Ambassador has been convening meetings with the State Department in Washington DC. As you are all aware, following recent US election a new Government will be leading the US during the course of 2009. The CNURA Government looks forward to working closely with the new administration as we advance into the 21st century.

The World Bank continues to provide grant assistance to Solomon Islands. More recently they have opened a country office here in Honiara last month. I would like to

note we have Solomon Islands nationals now serving their terms within the Bretton Woods Institutions, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Our New York representative is also accredited to Canada, and we are working with the Forum Secretariat in trying to establish a guest worker scheme for our people. The proposed scheme continues to dominate our bilateral discussion this year with various stakeholders in Canada. I hope we will soon be able to see the fruits of the study.

Mr. Speaker, our New York Office is also cross credited to Cuba, since signing Cooperative Agreement with Cuba last year, Solomon Islands now has fifty medical students studying medicine there. So far four other Pacific countries have students studying in Cuba, namely Kiribati, Tuvalu, Nauru and Vanuatu. For 2009 we have been offered a further 15 scholarships. I hope to work with the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Medical Services to send more students to Havana in due course.

Mr. Speaker, as a member of the United Nations, we have engaged with all 192 members of the Organization. We have successfully established further cooperative arrangements with Turkey, Italy, Austria and Cuba. In the case of Turkey I am equally pleased to report that funds for five rural based community projects has been received, appropriate line Ministry will be implementing the projects. Similarly the first trench of funds for the first twenty provincial schools to be equipped with renewable energy sources has been remitted under the Italy and Austria Cooperation. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification [UNCCD] through Venezuelan funding has also released funds to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock this year.

On consular issues, in an effort to beef up our tourism industries, we may need to look at equipping our Foreign Embassies to issue visas and renew passports for our nationals living abroad.

Mr Speaker, let me briefly comment on human rights. Solomon Islands position on human rights questions on country specific resolution is based on the principles agreed to by the General Assembly in reforming the Human Rights as far back as 2006. Human rights must be universally applied rather than politicized through country specific resolutions. Under the reform Human Rights Council, all countries will be subjected to universal periodic review. In other words, human rights report card of all states will be considered and assessed. We continue to be cautious with those that exploit human rights issues under the pretext of country specific resolutions for political reasons. Such naming and shaming of countries undermines the principle of cooperation and dialogue something that Solomon Islands values. It fails to address the issue of human rights and undermines genuine cooperation.

Recent High Rights debate at the United Nations was so confrontational, divisive that the vast majority of the UN membership voted against or abstained from country specific resolution. Solomon Islands recognize the fundamental responsibility of the Human Rights Council in its role and impartially in dealing with human rights issues. We strongly feel that the Geneva based Human Rights Council is the appropriate institution to deal with the issue of human rights and not the Third Committee in New York.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of politicization of human rights is a concern to us over the years; when Southern Hemisphere states are being targeted. There is also biasness of some states to focus more on civil human rights over other rights. In this connection, I would like to inform the House that a certain country voted against resolutions on the right to development, right to food and the right of the child for their own reasons. This brings me to the point that it is at times like these that countries such as Solomon Islands need the UN the most as we are small and the most vulnerable, hence we can not afford to move away from its principles.

Mr. Speaker sir, I would like to remind us that our international system is changing. It is moving so fast that there are declining and emerging powers. In that respect, we need to recognize that and understand why certain emerging states are attacked from human rights to nuclear issues and others that have them are not featured in the discussion. With some of our potential friends, the concern is not so much the human rights rather it is their nuclear programs.

Mr. Speaker, since the CNURA Government took office in December 2007, the relationship between the Government and the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, RAMSI, for short, has grown from strength to strength. As you are aware, RAMSI is a regional initiative and the Government saw it fit when assuming office to firstly renew its commitment to the participating countries by endorsing the Pacific Forum RAMSI Report conducted and prepared by the Forum Secretariat in 2006. Furthermore, the Government with the support and cooperation from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has convened two meetings of the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee (FMSC) on RAMSI and three meetings of the Enhanced Consultative Mechanism (ECM) on RAMSI since it assumed Office in December 2007.

The Government has appointed a Permanent Secretary who will be directly responsible to liaise with the Offices of the Special Coordinator for RAMSI and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Representative to Solomon Islands for better coordination and consultation of RAMSI and SIG related issues. The Government is also serious in concluding the discussions of the SIG/RAMSI Partnership Framework. This will be one of the priorities of the new Permanent Secretary - Special Duties on RAMSI.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to express my sincere and profound appreciation to the Chairperson and members of the Solomon Islands Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee for the splendid job that they have done so far, as it invites witnesses for their reflections of the mandates of RAMSI to assist the Parliament in its review of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003. I will be remiss if I do not acknowledge the witnesses for sharing their views and experiences with the Committee, relevant Authorities and Members of Parliament with a view to progress and strength the peace process in our country in partnership with the participating countries of RAMSI.

Mr. Speaker, in its commitment to further advance its priorities, the CNURA Government has allocated adequate resources to my Ministry. Next year, my Ministry will continue to undertake the construction of our Chanceries at Port Moresby and Canberra. The completion of these Chanceries will raise our profiles in PNG and Australia as we reach out to our friends to better serve our people. There are reasonable

increases in the Payroll and Other Charges of my Ministry. This reflects the seriousness and dedication of the CNURA Government to enhance the capacity of my Ministry to allow us effectively undertake its priorities and programs. In the light of the current financial crisis, right level of resources has been allocated to our Overseas Missions as they are our 'eyes' and 'ears' at their respective accredited countries and institutions.

Mr. Speaker, the CNURA Government will continue to ensure that Solomon Islands is perceived as a respectable and reputable partner by its friends in the Pacific Region and at bilateral and multilateral fronts. In addition to these financial allocations, my Ministry has been embarking on capacity building so that our programs can be successfully, effectively and efficiently implemented.

Mr. Speaker, having dealt with the micro aspects of my Ministry, I will now address the micro issues of my constituency because that is where every member in here have interest on.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to record on behalf of chiefs and people of small Malaita constituency their appreciation to the government of the Republic of China in Taiwan for their generosity in providing other assistance and also the RCDF. Schools, clinics and water supply projects were put in place by the usage of these funds. Had it not been for this funding, Mr. Speaker, those of us who belong to constituencies isolated from the centre, there would not have been the inception of some of these programs. I would like to put on record our appreciation for the assistance from the Republic of China, Taiwan.

Sir, I also wish to express appreciation on behalf of my people to the Australian Government through the CSP for rehabilitation work they are doing now of the Afio/Olosu'u road on small Malaita and the construction of some schools in the constituency. I also thank the New Zealand Government. We have to give credit where credit is due. The New Zealand Government has provided some assistance to the women in my constituency, and I would like to thank them for that. Aside from other assistances given to the nation which permeates through the Ministries of Health and Education, but here I would like to specifically refer to the assistance given by New Zealand to women groups in small Malaita.

I also thank the Government of Japan. Well in my heart now as the Member of Parliament for the constituency I thank Japan for providing assistance to the grassroots projects for schools, clinics and other activities on small Malaita.

Also, Mr. Speaker, if you can allow me with your indulgence to thank on behalf of my people the European Union for funding under the Micro Project Scheme assistance towards micro projects, like water supplies and all those projects in the constituency, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the Ministry of Communications and also Telekom for constructing one of the towers for telecommunication purposes in Afio Sub station in the southern region of Malaita. Afio, although it is the so called headquarters of the southern region of Malaita, it has been neglected for sometime, and I think it is important that telecommunication facilities are installed. So I would like to thank the

Ministry and the company concerned for the initiative. I would like to assure you that those facilities will be used for the purposes for which they are constructed or installed.

Mr. Speaker, I would like also to thank the Ministry of Education and the government that in the budget there is provision for free education for the first nine years, which means forms 1 to 3 are not going to pay school fees for next year. This is a very important policy development. In Small Malaita there are many children not going to school because their parents do not have access to means or resources to enable them pay school fees for their children, and therefore some bright children just dropped off from going further because their parents were not able to pay for their school fees. This is a very important policy initiative and I would like to thank the present government for seeing it fit to implement this policy this year.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the government too for the rural livelihood funding for the rural people. Some of us who come from isolated constituencies, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for that funding would not receive any money from the government, apart from funds channeled through the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. This is important for purposes of uplifting the standard of livelihood and the standard of living of our people, not only in Small Malaita but all other constituencies throughout the breadth and the four corners of the country. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I support the Bill.

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 35(1), I move that the debate on the question be now adjourned until the next sitting day.

Debate on the 2009 Appropriation Bill 2008 adjourned

Hon Sikua: Mr Speaker, I now move that Parliament be now adjourned.

The House adjourned at 4.10 pm