

FRIDAY 1ST OCTOBER 2010

The Speaker, Sir Allan Kemakeza took the Chair at 9.42 am

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Minister of Foreign Affairs; Mines & Energy; Lands and Housing; Communications and Aviation; Health & Medical Services and Provincial Government & Institutional Strengthening and the Members for Lau/Mbaelelea; Mbaegu/Asifola; Malaita Outer Islands and South Guadalcanal.

SPEAKER'S ANNOUCEMENT

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, I wish to advice the House that I have been informed by the Honourable Chairman of the Parliamentary House Committee that there is no private members business for today. On that basis, the House Committee has in consultation with the Honourable Prime Minister resolved, to allot today, being a private members' day for business normally only brought on a government day. This, of course, means that motion, bills and questions that would normally be considered between Monday and Thursday maybe brought on today. Honourable Members with that, we will proceed to our next business.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development Annual Report 2009, National Parliament Paper No. 15 of 2010.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr. SOGAVARE: Before I move to ask the question standing in my name this morning, I want us to deal with some procedural matters first. In order for me to ask more than two questions today, I seek your consent to move a motion under standing orders 81 to suspend the relevant standing order in order to allow that to happen.

Mr Speaker: The Hon Member for East Choiseul proposes to have standing order 21(3) suspended in order to allow him ask more than two questions today. I will allow his comments on the motion before I put the question.

Mr. Sogavare: Thank you, Sir, for allowing me to move this motion because under the Standing Orders Members are only allowed to ask two questions. I noticed quite a number of questions, and parliament is coming to its end but I feel that some of the questions that I have noticed address matter of national interest, and so I seek the consent of House to agree that I ask three questions today instead of two.

I move accordingly for standing order 21(3) to be suspended under Standing Order 81. Thank you.

Hon. Maelanga: This side of House has no objection to that request.

Mr Speaker: Standing Order 21(3) therefore stands suspended and the Member can ask more than two questions today.

Progress: EU budgetary assistance:

22. Mr. SOGAVARE to the Minister for Development Planning and Aid Coordination: What further progress has been made to fully secure the budgetary assistance of \$160million from the European Union?

Hon. RINI: I want to thank the Member for East Choiseul for asking this question. Firstly, I want to thank the former Minister of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, now the current Leader of Opposition for his hard work in securing this fund.

As you would appreciate, sourcing budgetary support from aid donors is a tough job, especially the EU. The EU process of securing funds is a very long process, and that is why I must congratulate the former Minister of Development Planning and

Aid Coordination for securing this fund in a very short time. I do not know how he made the short cuts but he made it in very short time, less than a year in finally securing this funding.

The process, as I mentioned, is quite a long process. I understand that he had two political dialogues here in Solomon Islands and the final one is where I have the privilege of joining him and the Prime Minister in Brussels to finalise the last political dialogue and that is when he signed the finance agreement.

But signing the finance agreement does not mean signing the agreement and the funds come. There are also other conditions attached to it before we can actually secure this fund. In the finance agreement that the Minister signed he stated or focussed on areas that the Solomon Islands Government and also the European Union must do before final release of the funds.

I am very happy to inform the House that the last government has fulfilled the responsibilities the Solomon Islands Government is expected to do and the European Union has also completed what it was supposed to do. We are now in the final stage before the funds can be released.

In August last month, a joint donor review from the IMF, the EU and the ADB came here to Solomon Islands to make a review of how this fund should be finally released. The government is now waiting for the report before it asks Brussels to release this fund. Now we are at the final stage.

Mr Sogavare: I would like to thank the response of the Minister of Planning. This is just a supplementary question. In terms of the Solomon Islands Government whether we have mapped out or we have some plans as to how we are going to use that money. How would the Solomon Islands Governments utilize this fund?

Hon. Rini: What the government must do before the fund is released is that it must look into which projects is the priority of the government. Those projects must also follow the criteria that the EU places on the work program of this budget support. First of all, the projects must be government's priority projects, and secondly the projects must be projects that should assist Solomon Islands to improve its economic situation. These are the two main criteria before the funds are released.

Mr Sogavare: Further question. Have we actually identified the projects that we are going to use this \$160 million on?

Hon. Rini: Right now we are just waiting for the letter of assessment from the IMF before we will look at which projects are priority projects. When the government puts

its priorities on which projects are priority, those would be the projects the government is going to fund. But at the moment we are yet to put in which projects are priority projects. We would do that when the new budget comes into place. Right now we are yet to identify which projects are priorities and we are still waiting for the letter from the IMF and also wait until the government comes up with its new budget and it would be then that we will identify which are priority projects.

Hon. Abana: Thank you Minister of Planning for those kind words. I just want to come from another angle and nothing to do with this funding. On the front page of the Solomon Star this morning, the Ambassador to the United Nations has been recalled, and I understand that it was because he voted against the Lisbon Treaty of the European Union. May be the government needs to consider this or the Minister so as not to cause further disappointment to Brussels. But I think the action is well right in that understanding. I want to ask the Minister to take note of this development.

Hon. Rini: Yes, we will take note of that.

Mr. Soalaoi: I would also like to thank the Minister for what he said earlier on. In terms of projects that should be seen as priority, in regards to the release of funds from the EU, since it is going to be budgetary support, is it going to go into the consolidated funds before the projects are funded? Or do we need to forward the projects to the EU before they are released based on projects?

Hon. Rini: Yes, this fund will go into the consolidated fund, and from there the government will disburse it according to the priority projects of government.

Mr WALE: So all told in terms of waiting for the letter of assessment of the IMF to come and then the government sets the priorities. When are we expecting that funding to reach us so that the government can begin to work?

Hon. Rini: I would like to thank the Member for Aoke/Langalanga for that supplementary question. The program is still within the time frame. We expect that money to be finally released before the end of this year. We are expecting the last quarter of this year for that money to be released. The money will be release before the end of this year.

Mr Wale: So the letter of assessment presumably will contain some broad parameters or conditions that the EU might want to see, and therefore the priorities put by the government will fulfill part of those conditions. If the government does not keep to those conditions or sees the need to shift, is there a risk of the possibility of recalling the

funds if government thinks it should shift outside of the focused areas it has agreed on during discussions when priorities were first identified or is it because it is budgetary support and so it goes once we fulfill the conditions upfront?

Hon. Rini: The former government had already fulfilled the conditions and the current government is not going to change those conditions. We will just be following what the former government has done and has already agreed on in regards to the funds. This new government will not change anything but will just continue to follow what has been done and agreed on by the last government.

Mr SANDAKABATU: Supplementary question. How free will be the Ministry of Finance or the Solomon Islands Government for that matter in disbursing this EU fund coming through the consolidated funds?

Hon. LILO: As we all know this is budget support and the EU is well renowned for putting conditions on where it want its funds to go to - broad conditions as to where it wants its funds to go to. This framework was already discussed between the Government and the European Union.

In terms of the freedom to government as to the usage of this money, the language should not be so much of that, but it should aim at what would be the kind of outcome that both partners or parties agree as to how this budget support should be used on. Now, it is budgetary support but budgetary support as part of the overall foreign aid policy of the European Union to developing countries facing this financial crisis is also there as well that poverty alleviation, rejuvenate economic growth within the country, environmental management and climate change is also a major issue and so forth.

In terms of the criteria that have been already satisfied, like that group on the other side would have known and some of us here too, there are only two issues left at this time, and the first is the assessment of this supplementary budget. The IMF Mission has arrived about two weeks ago and has made an assessment on the affordability of our supplementary budget. There are few concerns but their comfort is that the measures we have imposed in the past, which is the reservation, still remains so that we can keep a budget at a sustainable level.

The commitment the IMF has given is that by mid November they should be able to complete the staff report that will go to the IMF and then the IMF will give the final signal to the EU that in terms of financial management, Solomon Islands has passed that criteria.

The other aspect that still remains at this time is the framework on the national development strategy, which the group on the other side also understand, we have engaged the Asian Development Bank to do it last time and it is also currently in the

process of finalizing that particular one, and that will give a good indication to the European Union as to where the investment of the budgetary support will go towards. And this government, as the Minister for National Planning has said will fully comply with that particular condition to come up with a national development strategy for us to use.

All in all, what we should be looking at is the particular aspect of satisfying the European Union is there. The only hiccup is the recent voting by our Ambassador to the United Nations against the Lisbon Treaty, which gives the European Union the mandate within the context of the United Nations to help the countries that have gone through the financial crisis to better coordinate where development assistance should go to, to help those countries.

Our Ambassador, I am not too sure what has happened, but maybe it was instructions from a government in caretaker mode or I do not know, but he abstained and that raised a bit of concern. That could possibly be the reason why he has been recalled to come and explain to the government why he had to abstain because that abstention has given a negative effect of Solomon Islands vote to that particular resolution to the Lisbon Treaty.

But I think the good thing is that in terms of the conditions put by the IMF, we have passed the goal. It is a very tough one including a 10% reservation and a 25% reservation where we have to build up a cash reserve by the end of the year to a certain limit, and all that. All these have given rise to our credibility of being able to access that budgetary support from the European Union.

Mr Sogavare: Part of the supplementary question I was intending to ask was already answered by the Minister in regards to fiscal conditionalities, and that is for us to impose reservations. We would have thought that that decision should really get wider discussions first before restricting our own ability to finance our own budget. We are only talking about \$160million, so why impose so much conditionalities on ourselves. That is the question. But in terms of monetary conditionalities, what are the other specific concerns of the European Union and the conditions set on the country on them?

Hon. Lilo: As you would know, one of the conventional philosophies of the International Monetary Fund that they always engage in any country is in terms of the external reserve; how do we feature in terms of our external reserve or how do we feature in terms of inflation and whether or not real exchange rate is affected as a result of the government's poor fiscal policy management which gives rise to maybe crowding out effect over credit in financial institutions where we will be forced to borrow deficit and that sort of thing. We have passed those marks.

I think I mentioned yesterday that inflation has gone down; thanks to the vision of the Minister for Planning now who was Minister for Finance at that time and came up with the proposal to reduce the import duty on rice, which led to the price of rice going down and inflation also goes down. We are on that condition in regards to monetary side where inflation has gone down. On external reserves we are on seven months import cover right now so we are in a very healthy external reserve position.

In terms of the purchasing power of the Solomon dollar, I think it would be relevant if we consider the position of our own currency in relation to the baskets of currencies that we normally deal with in terms of imports and exports. Right now, the conditionalities the IMF normally comes to assess us on, we have a tick on economic management. The fiscal side is the issue that is still a problem.

Mr Sogavare: I think it is this tick that I am worried about and, I think there should be a bit more wider discussions before you allow them to tick those areas. The Minister talked about us meeting their conditionalities and that is why inflation is going down. This inflation you are talking about is statistics based. Just go and see the reality on the ground. We could probably question even the package of goods we are using to assess the inflation. That would be a subject of ongoing debate in terms of inflation and all that. Is it also a condition that we keep liquidity in the country at a certain level?

Hon. Lilo: The general rule that banks would normally follow out of the Central Bank to set the Broad Money Supply is there. I am not too sure what the liquid assets ratio of the Central Bank versus all the financial institutions is at this time. If the Member who is sitting besides the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa is here, he would be able to tell you what it is. But right now we need not to force that because our external reserve has already a very big import cover there; our external reserve balance is big. If you look at the monetary survey normally given out by the Central Bank, external reserve forms part of the money supply so we have excess liquidity. It is not a condition right now with this particular case. No, it is not a condition.

The question that I know you two will ask me is why banks are not lending. That is what you should be asking me; why are banks not lending, why the interest rate not going down. It is a matter that the Central Bank, and we cannot force it otherwise we would be like Bainimarama who forced the banks to lower interest rates and tried to force lending. We are not going to do that but we will just allow the market to take its course. The Central Bank is talking to the financial institutions or the financial institutions might be waiting for the government to announce its policy next week before they would know the priority they need to put their credit line on in the private sector like maybe on tourism or here and there. Maybe they are waiting for that, I am not too sure. But the best we can do is what economists would normally say we do

assume that that is what they are waiting for. But in terms of conditionality on the liquidity I do not think that is an issue right now. It can be an issue but it is not the issue right now, given the fact that the external reserve of the country has improved a bit, quite unprecedented, seven months import cover because we normally slice behind three months or two months, but now it is seven months.

Mr GUKUNA: One of your Ministers was trying to say to me that one of the requirements is that we must reserve about 30% of our budget or three months equivalent to our budget before this fund is released. In my rough calculation that three months is equivalent to more than \$300million, and it makes no sense to me that we will reserve \$300million and bring in \$160million, which still puts a big dent on the budget. I just want the Minister to confirm whether that is correct or is it just a kitchen talk.

Hon Lilo: I think the latter one will be much relevant. I think that is just a winch in the kitchen. I would expect you to better know the composition of the budgetary support and the conditionalities because you were in the previous government.

As you would know the budgetary support that is coming is not just made last month or two months ago. It started off as far back in 2009 until now, and we know that by this year the government's financial position would go down because of factors that are beyond our control, and that was the reason for the budgetary support provided by the European Union.

Come the beginning of the year when we passed the budget in here, the assessment is that the budget's sustainability might not be possible because of the big hole we have in the projections of revenue, businesses will fall, some of our export earnings will fall and all that. This reservation started in the beginning of this year where initially 10% was put, the joint monitoring Mission of the IMF and other donor partners come in and told us that they think by the middle of the year we will not have enough to spend and have asked us to do further reservation. The Cabinet at that time had no option and so the former Minister of Finance agreed that we have to do a further reservation of 25%. That is just to put us on a sustainability part, and this is just a temporal measure.

Now that we have passed the supplementary budget there is some flexibility given by the Mission that we can relax some areas. But it is not totally right across the board. We know that health is exempted, education is exempted, infrastructure is exempted and grants to provincial government are also exempted.

This reservation of 10% is right across the board and 25% is on selected expenditure heads. Now we will go through the exercise of asking the ministries what line items they think should be slightly relaxed where they feel there is pressure and where there is quality spending that they can do so that come the end of the year we

can still achieve either the objective under the IMF's target, and secondly we will still have a sustainable budget that can roll over to next year. Thank you.

Mr SOALAOI: This \$160million budgetary support, some of us heard it as budget support. If the government or the Minister can inform Parliament as to how much of that would the government be thinking of putting to recurrent and how much to development.

Hon Rini: As soon as government programs are in place we will decide on priority areas as to how much should be in the recurrent and how much should be in the development budget. You will see in our next budget where funds under this budget support will be allocated.

Mr Sogavare: Before I thank the Minister I just want to say that maybe when the 2011 budget is presented, normally there are supporting documents that explain how the budget will be financed and the various financing aspects affecting the economy and therefore we would need that kind of information to come with the presentation of the 2011 budget.

The other issue that I am concerned about and probably a question to be directed to the Minister later on is the question that he asked us to ask him and maybe he needs to ask the banks why they are not lending. Maybe the IMF's argument is that when so much money is lent out it does have direct impact on inflation. But I think for us to subject ourselves to unnecessary conditionalities like that in restricting the growth of the economy and rely on \$160million from them is like relying heavily on people outside to help us address our internal problems, when we can address it through the liquidity that we have in our own market. Maybe there needs to be some balancing decisions here, but I guess these are decisions that we need to take them responsibly. In saying that, I thank the Minister for responding to this question.

Government action on RIPEL

34. Mr. SOGAVARE to the Minister for Commerce, Industry, Employment and Immigration: What is the government's plan of action to address the RIPEL issue?

Hon MUALA: In responding to this question I wish to thank the Honourable Member of Parliament for East Choiseul for reminding us of the important issue in this question.

As you are aware, the CNURA Government did establish a commission of inquiry into the RIPEL issue. Since then the CNURA Government did not appoint any person as the chair of this commission, although the two commissioners were appointed. Furthermore, I understand that the terms of these two commissioners have

expired or will expire very soon later this year. When I said the CNURA Government what I meant here is that 50% in this current Parliament are aware of the issue of RIPEL.

As the question reads what is the government's plan of action to address the RIPEL issue, as you know, the RIPEL issues are complex. Nonetheless, the Government will revisit the RIPEL issue through consultation at the ministerial level for an updated and better understanding of the issues at hand. This consultation will be among the ministries of Lands, Agriculture, Tourism, Police, Commerce, other stakeholders and members of the private sector that have interest in reviving the activities of this entity and sustaining them into the future. We envisage that at some stage after this consultation, the Government will be in a position to determine whether to establish a commission of Inquiry into the RIPEL issues, apply relevant legislative measures to deal with these issues and/or consider options that are prudent and legitimate in our endeavour as we advocate for equitable economical development by the Solomon Islanders in Solomon Islands.

Mr. Tozaka: I appreciate the Minister's answer and I also appreciate that this problem is a complex one and is quite urgent for us to address. I would like to ask the Minister that in his briefings in the Ministry what is his understanding on this RIPEL issue.

Hon. Muala: Because of the complex issues involved and the urgency of the issues concerning RIPEL, there will be a quick consultation with all the ministries I have mentioned to get work done and going.

Hon. Philip: As we all know, the RIPEL issue is a long protracted issue, and as a government we are looking at it not as an issue for the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, but an issue the government would want to look at in all its dimensions. The only problem is logistics in that we cannot sustain two commissions of inquiries right now and therefore we have decided only to allow the Commission on the Guadalcanal Land Dealings to continue until the 31st of December. We have suspended the RIPEL Commission due to the specific financial constraints, however, we cannot leave it in the bench but will pick it up as a ministerial consultative group to address this RIPEL issue.

There is new information coming through which if we can deal with that kind of thinking, I am sure we should be able to resolve the RIPEL issue as soon as possible, which means if it is resolved, most probably a new investor can come in. The sooner that is done we should be able to come up with a good scheme of arrangement and such

that it is a win win situation to everyone, I think we should be able to see a new investor coming in sometimes next year.

Hon. ABANA: I just want to come back to the Minister's answer who said that there are two commissioners on the Commission which probably their contracts would lapse sometimes soon. The Prime Minister has just said that the Commission has been suspended. The question is, if both commissioners still remain and have been receiving remunerations, what kind of work are they doing and when should they be foregoing the remunerations according to the suspension the Prime Minister has just mentioned?

Hon. Muala: The two commissioners according to information given to me by the Attorney General's Office their contracts will expire very soon.

Mr. MUA: I think the House understands that this issue has reached its sixth year and is greatly affecting people in my constituency, in particular in Russell as it really has great impact on the workers and even landowners as well as the company itself.

Listening to the Minister's answer, it looks like it is going to take a few more years because now he is saying that the plan is to go through a consultation process with the various ministries and probably later will decide on another commission of inquiry. My people are hoping that when the CNURA established the commission of inquiry, we were thinking that that is a process that would at least raise questions and probably find a solution to this problem. It is also sad to see successive governments failing miserably to address this issue.

What I know regarding this commission of inquiry, like the Minister has stated...

Mr Speaker: Honourable Member, can you ask your supplementary question please?

Mr. Mua: Thank you. I was just trying to put some background information to the issue. The question I would like to ask is whether this government is going to treat the RIPEL issue as a priority or will it just treat it like previous governments?

Hon Philip: In fact this problem has been going on for almost seven years now, and any government that comes in inevitably inherits the problem. This government which unfortunately came in at this time also inherited it as well. The consequences and result of that problem is common as we are all aware; the two previous governments and this

government are all aware, and we are very concerned that one of our biggest employment entities in the Russell Islands Plantations has remained dormant for the last seven years.

This new government is coming from a policy of not intending to keep the status quo in terms of keeping the same investor. We would like to come out with a policy that we want as, not the road forward but we want to stop the current status quo, get it out and put in a new roadmap to actually take the current investor out of the way and bring in a new investor. That kind of aspiration or objective will need who is willing to come. I think we have come to the stage where nobody is interested in Russell Islands anymore. Even the police, the law and order institution which is supposed to carry out certain orders of the high court are even slacked down and did not do it. There is a big theft going on in that place that anyone who wants to cook copra just goes ahead and do it and the services that are normally in Yandina in the past are no longer there; services such as education, health, everything collapsed in Yandina in the Russell Islands. This is a very big problem the government now has to deal with, but messages are starting to change that I think the current investor is intending to move out as it is becoming too much for him. But how can we attract the next investor? It means we have to sort that mess out, and in our quest of doing that we have to find some kind of a win win situation. We have to come to the position where we can start anew. I think that is the only road forward the government is seeing now.

I think the commission of inquiry has enough information that will help the government to organize this new situation. Once we can organize that new situation, sit down with the current investor, sit down with the ministerial group and then find the way forward. Right now we are looking at a lump formula. I think the intention is to stop the status quo somehow, get a new situation in place and then can look at a win win situation for the investor, the government and maybe the workers there and then later look at marketing it. When the place is free, when law and order returns to that place and services are coming through again we can look for a new investor to go in and invest again. That place is not worth investing in anymore right now because of the situation it is now in and so no one would want to invest in such a place.

We are going to address some of the things that perpetuate the situation there, like law and order and everything else that collapses, get those out of the way and deal with some of the situations that the government can possibly deal with first. Some of the problems down there, it is the government that should help to normalize, but it is very hard too, and I do not know why, and so we are also looking at them and hopefully the government can do something down there. We will try and do them and at the same time talk with the investor and other stakeholder departments within the government and see how we can nicely take the investor out of the way so that we can market Russell Islands Plantations, maybe revive it once again so that the entity can

bring in more exports and employment to the people of Solomon Islands. That is how we are looking at it at the moment but as I have said earlier on we cannot run the two commissions together. We can only continue with one until the 31st of December 2010. The other one that stopped on the 18th will remain suspended and within the context of new information we are receiving now, I am working on how best to arrive at that new scheme of arrangement.

Mr Sogavare: Just a supplementary question which arises from the explanation by the Prime Minister. Obviously, the government is fully aware of the serious situation down there, and one of the issues that is of concern to all of us is the breakdown of law and order there. The simple issue of enforcing court orders has become very difficult, so maybe the Minister of Police and maybe the Minister of Justice can help us to understand why the Police cannot go down there to enforce the law there. We have RAMSI here in this country. What is down there in Russell Islands is a big plantation which is sitting down dormant not helping this economy and it is this simple enforcing of law, more specifically court order that cannot be carried out. I want the Minister of Police and National Security and the Minister of Justice to help us out here, but maybe more the Minister of Police because it is about enforcing court order. Why are the Police not enforcing law and order down there?

Hon. Philip: All the situations that the Member for North East Choiseul is referring to have happened in the last two governments. Those two governments have failed to carry out all the court orders given. Now we are forced to do the same thing and I think that is not fair. I would like to say that first. It is not fair because so many court orders have been made but why is the government not telling the Police to go and arrest the people of Russells at that time. That is a question that will exist with us at this time too. I think we are all asking ourselves the same question. We can go round robbing asking that same question and who is going to answer it. During this period we are yet to get any court order given by the high court, a new court order. About four or five court orders made were made during the time of the last two last governments. So why were you not able to deal with it during your time? Rather than go around blaming each other on this problem we have to sit down and carefully assess the situation so that we can address it. I think where the thing is heading is liquidation and then it will be sold for peanuts. Rather than doing that there is some flexibility the government can use to try to consult and try to look at....

Mr Sogavare: Point of order. I was asking a specific question to the Minister of Police and I would like to have an answer from him. In fact, I have answers for the Prime Minister too. But allow the Minister of Police to answer my question first.

Mr Speaker: I will allow the honourable Prime Minister to complete his comments and then I will give the opportunity to the Minister of Police to also address the question raised by the Member for East Choiseul.

Hon. Philips: Why I am saying is that we have a problem at hand, and like I have said earlier on it is a protracted problem where it is one problem compounded onto another one until today.

The question of sending the Police to go down and arrest the people or even arrest the people who bring copra from Yandina to Honiara was not done. The Police could only confiscate the copra but they did not apprehend the thief or the people bringing the copra even though the court order says to prosecute or arrest and bring them to justice. That did not happen, and so we have a problem there, and this needs to be addressed.

What I am saying is that the question is quite specific in relation to the committee. That was the question asked by the Member, and this is the government's plan on the RIPEL issue. The government's plan at the moment is what I have just explained, and that is the commission will be in suspense because there is no money for it. But we cannot wait for money to come before it is addressed. I think there are certain things the government can do, and that is through the small ministerial arrangements; we will get the stakeholder ministries to try and look at this problem.

When we started talking about this issue, information that came to us says we need to talk and so we say let us talk. But how are we going to talk? They said we have to organize ourselves so that we try to talk as to how we can come with a win win situation so that if the government does not want us to remain then we have to go so that a new group comes in. That is basically where we are at the moment. If you want to know the government's plan then that is the government's plan at this time.

The aspects of law and order will be still there with us. We need to have some very strong guarantees by the state to protect investment in this country, not only in Russells. There are many things happening in this country that the law and order machinery cannot address. I would like to make that very clear.

Yes, as far as the government's immediate plan is concerned, we will organize a small group to start talking with these people and then if there is a win win situation we might see the exit of one of the current investor but we would have to provide a situation that will give confidence to the new investor to come inside. It is not as simple as you think because we would still have to deal with the law and order situation in Russells. We would need to upgrade the Police institution there, law and order, return the utilities back on; the water supply, the clinic and the wharf must be done properly, the shopping areas; these things will start to bring law and order mentality back to the

people. It is not just a simple way of sending Police to arrest people, no, we have to build a situation, we have to harness the goodwill that is already on the ground to make sure that we go back into normalcy before investors can come. Even if the current investor goes, to bring in an investor come out from outside is still not possible unless we guarantee them the right environment and security for their investment to happen.

Hon. TORA: In response to the supplementary question raised by the Member of Parliament for East Choiseul and in addition to what the Prime Minister had said, I cannot deny that the law and order situation in Yandina, Russell Islands has deteriorated.

In regards to Police response, as far as I know, last year the Deputy Commissioner of Police was sent down to Yandina to assess the law and order situation there as to whether the situation there can be brought back normalcy but has found it very difficult for that to happen himself.

This government, in addition to what the Prime Minister has said, is taking the right step. The Russell Islands case involves the the Solomon Islands National Union of Workers, the investor and the landowners and therefore needs a proper inquiry. A lot of money has been spent on the Commission of Inquiry that has been set up by our previous government and I think we should continue to try and find ways of resolving this issue and this is why this government has begun to work with the relevant ministries that can work together in consultation work.

As I have said I cannot deny the fact that people living in Yandina have become lawlessness with no one controlling them, and the only way is to increase the strength of Police presence there. But we cannot increase police presence because housing is also a problem. Therefore, what I would like to say here is that i will see to it again that the Police will try to find ways and means of deploying a good number of police officers to go down there, and that will be assisted by this government.

Mr Mua: Mr Speaker, if you can allow me to make one or two sentences before I ask my supplementary question and this is to put certain things right for the records and also for our people who are listening out there.

Mr Speaker: You have to abide by Standing Order 23. You have the opportunity honourable Member for Savo/Russells to make important information for the government during the motion of sine die. You are only allowed to ask your supplementary question, please. Thank you.

Mr Mua: The supplementary question is to the Honourable Prime Minister. Has the government been briefed by RIPEL or other stakeholders such as the Unions, the landowners before it makes any move?

Hon Philip: Like I said, at the moment, not yet, and that is the reason why we are going to put up this less expensive mechanism where relevant ministries consult together before we can see the exit plan. But at the moment it is heading towards liquidation or an arrangement for us to find a win win situation and that is to get the whole commercial thing out of the way and then deal with the law and order problem. That is what I am trying to get at. Yes, we have not had an opportunity to consult yet but between now and our next parliament meeting next year, we hope that we should be able to resolve the commercial question first by getting it out of the way. If it means using some of the recommendations already made by the Commissioner of Inquiry then we will use that. If it means talking with the Union yes, we will. If it means talking with the landowners in the Russells or the Central Islands Provincial Government then yes, we will. But we have to do one thing at a time. We cannot deal with the law and order problem, deal with the investor, deal with the theft question, deal with the commodities because it can be so confusing. I think if it is addressed step by step we will be able to reach a solution somewhere.

Mr Speaker: I think we have covered the question very well.

Mr Sogavare: I agree that I think we have covered the question well, but before I thank those who answered our questions, I just need to put some records right. The Prime Minister in his explanation earlier on today, I guess, pointed fingers to the two prime ministers before him. We were not privy to a lot of meetings that have been held. During my time I did call the head of the Mission, the head of RAMSI in here and the Commissioner of Police to come to me and we had some very intense discussions on why the Police cannot send a full force down to Russell Islands. If they can land 300 soldiers here in Honiara to address the law and order problem here then we have a serious situation down in the Russell Islands that needs addressing. That is history, and therefore to say that we did not address or attempt to address this issue is not right.

We are addressing this question to the government of the day, and the government is there all the time sitting down there and so it is appropriate and that is how things happen that we address questions to the government of the day and the Ministers responsible for those areas. That is the only reason why we are addressing these questions, and we are not finger pointing anyone. But to say that we do not address it, you should only see the heartache and headache we have gone through to

get these people. But why they did not obey me to go down, I do not know. It could be that I am Sogavare and so they did not want to listen to him to go down and address the situation there.

That is all. But I thank the Minister for answering the question and I think the direction that the Prime Minister is talking about is the direction to go and I encourage the government to continue to pursue that line so that we should finally come to address this problem. If I had hurt anyone I ask for their apology.

Honiara Casino: extended grace period

36. Mr SOGAVARE to the Minister for Home Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister: In relation to the proper management and control of Casino operation in the country, can the Minister inform Parliament as follows:

- (a) When will the extended grace period granted to the owners of Honiara Casino to operate outside of a hotel expire?
- (b) Will the government grant further extensions?

Hon MAELANGA: I would like to thank my good colleague Member for East Choiseul for raising this question.

- (a) The current extended grace period granted to Honiara Casino owners to operate outside of a hotel will duly expire on 13th November 2011.
- (b) The previous government, CNURA is looking at making a review into the Act so that is what will happen at this time. A review will be carried out on the Gaming and Lotteries Act.

Mr. Sogavare: I would like to ask the Minister a supplementary question. I want the Minister to confirm again the date of expiry whether it is 13/11/2011. That is the first question for the Minister to clarify and the next question is what are the terms of reference for that review?

Hon Maelanga: I think the date of the extended grace period is 13/11/2011. The review is, like now there are some hotels that are looking into casino, but some are looking at running poker machine and all these things and so the board needs to look at all these things. I think that is the purpose of the review. The review was arranged during the

time of the last government and this government will continue to look into it because I think it is time to look into the Gaming and Lotteries Act.

Mr GUKUNA: The poker machine issue is a different issue altogether, and we have some knowledge of what the Deputy Prime Minister is talking about. The question here is very straightforward, and that is will the government give an extension. The casino only has 12 months to build a hotel which is required under the law and to operate the casino inside the hotel. This casino has been operating outside of a hotel for about 13 to 14 years, and this is too long. What time is it going to build the hotel? In 2009 it said it is going to build it but that land is still vacant.

The question is straightforward; will the government extend these 11 months or will it force this operator to build a hotel?

Hon Maelanga: I think with this review we will look in to that.

Mr HOUANIPWELA: I still did not get a straight answer for this straight question. I understand that the last government, the previous government has decided not to extend the grace period. I also do understand that this extension, like the Hon Member for Rennell and Bellona has said is an extension that is continuing for a long time now. I also want to know whether this extension that was given up to next year is an extension given by the last governments or this new government.

Hon. Maelanga: I think the extension of the grace period was given by the past government and this should expire on 13/11/2011.

Mr. Sogavare: Following on from the question by the Member for Small Malaita, in what year was this extension given because under the GCCG, we have also given extension, and the reason for the extension and as alluded to by the Member for Rennell is to allow the operators to quickly build the hotel complex so that the Casino moves into the hotel as required by law. I think the question by the Member for Rennell Bellona is still not answered, and that is why did they not build the hotel from that time until today, which is from 2006 to 2010, it has been five years on and the hotel is still not built?

Hon. LILO: Yes, it was during our government's time that we extended it. But we need to correct some statements like why did they operate outside of the hotel. I think that entity operates within the law. We all must understand that, and that is the fact that it has continued to operate within the provisions of the law. When the time comes for a particular request given on recommendation of the board, this floor of Parliament

also facilitated that particular extension and so it is still within the law. Statements like, “..why are they operating outside the law...”, is wrong; it is wrong for us to make statements like that because that entity continues to operate within the law and it is this Parliament that passed the law for it to operate like that. As the Member for East Choiseul knows and those of you who were in the Eight Parliament, this Parliament also passed this law which provides for the entity a grace period of five years which will lapse in 2011, and within that period of time it would come up with a plan as to how it would build the establishment down in Town Ground.

The condition in the country has not been that easy, as we all know. Those of us who were in previous governments would know that the entity came and made its presentation that it was going to build and then the financial crisis happened which slowed down its plans. I mean that question will touch on financial aspects and so I think it is relevant that the Minister for Finance stands up to answer this question.

Mr. Gukuna (*interjecting*): *That is not your money, it is their money so let it answer for itself.*

Hon Lilo: That is a very irresponsible comment to make, do not make comments like that.

If you are going to make a comparative argument about this particular entity with the others that may have put in a request, it is a bit different because the other entities that somehow have been given the go ahead were assisted through the government system; we, the government helped to facilitate the investors to build, for instance, in the case of Heritage Park, it partnered with the NPF to complete building the Heritage Park.

This particular group has seen that it has been employing people of Solomon Islands, it has been established in Solomon Islands and so it approached the NPF to partner with it to fund that establishment but the proposal failed. Therefore, if the motive of any question is to make a comparison between this particular entity and that of others that may have proven some satisfaction of the provisions of the law, I think we need to understand it in that context.

It has now made a firm commitment that it will build and I think it will come to the government to put in a request officially to build, and not only this government but it also came to see the last government, it made the assurance through its solicitor that it will build. The Member for Aoke/Langalanga, you and I were in Caucus at that time when it came to make its presentation and it made a very impressive presentation, and it did tell us the risks involved in development financing in Solomon Islands. This particular entity told us and all of us understand this difficulty as it is not only them

that are facing this difficulty. I am sure it will also have the chance of renewing this understanding to come and build this investment.

But for the time being, I think the best we can say is that, yes the grace period will lapse next year, and in terms of whether or not the government will grant further extension, that would be a presumptuous question to ask at this very stage because the Minister has already told us that there is a review commissioned by the last government to review the gaming market in Solomon Islands so that we can determine whether we should only have one, whether the state should be involved or does it have any relevance or connection to tourism and questions like that. Those are the things we discussed during that time.

Let us allow that review which is now in progress to be completed and then we will have a better understanding as to whether to make a decision from there on. But the review was carried out under the auspices of the Gaming Lotteries Board, which under the Act has the authority to carry out review. That is what the Act says; any review of Gaming must be carried out by the Board.

I am sure this review is still underway and as the Minister said it will come and we will see it. But the entity is still operating within the law, it is still safeguarded by the law and I think it is a matter of time as soon as that review is done then we will know what we will do next to it.

Mr Wale: The answer by the Minister of Finance hinges on the reasonableness of the law in light of the decisions to extend this particular license. I think it is right to point out that the government has been over reasonable, has gone a hundred extra miles towards this particular entity. The caucus meeting referred to by the Minister is correct and then it came to cabinet and the Minister was in Cabinet and the Minister was very vociferous in Cabinet about this particular matter, and so a decision was reached in Cabinet that this license will not be renewed when it lapsed 'if', and it is an important 'if', it is not being unreasonable towards the entity, 'if' it fails to fulfil the conditions in the licence that it must build the hotel.

Now perhaps the comparison to Heritage might be fraught with that particular advantage of NPF coming in with them, but there is another comparison with the Supreme Casino where it has been able to do it. It was burnt down, it re-did it again and so it still begs the question, the jury is out on it. I suppose we will not be able to get a straight answer this time if we ever hope that we will get a straight answer from this one. But I think government needs to look at this particular matter very carefully.

It is very difficult for the government, I grant that because one of you is involved in that particular entity so it may present a conflict of interest, but government must still be a government and therefore it must look at that after the review report comes out and Cabinet has had an opportunity to look at it in light of the broader issues stated by

the Minister which is in the TOR. And I think it bona fides it as very valid and I think it is important for the sector going forward. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: What is your supplementary question? Are you making a statement?

Mr Wale: My question, and I suppose it is an open question; the jury is out so whether the government is going to come back and honour the decision made by the last Cabinet. But like the Minister has said it probably is presumptuous now that the review is not complete. But I leave it open like this if the Minister wants to answer it.

Mr Speaker: There is no question.

Hon. Maelanga: I would like to thank the Member for Aoke/Langa Langa. I would like to inform the House that the review will continue. From the company itself, the Honiara Casino, it will start groundwork sometimes in October this year, next month. It will start its first stage of groundwork building at its site down at Town Ground. I just want to let you know about this.

I think it is trying to put formalities to the Town and Country Planning Board, the Director of Environment, all its applications are with those institutions and when all these are granted I think by October, it is expecting that in October it should start working on the project. That is what I want the House to know about the project.

In regards to the construction of the project the company that will be doing the construction work is Fletcher Kwaimani and it is expected to complete the first stage by the end of December 2011. The first stage of the project includes a hotel reception, a restaurant, a bar, 70 hotel rooms and a casino. I think those of us in the previous government have seen the plan of the casino already and so we should understand it. I think that is the first stage work. I just want the House to know about this project. Thank you.

Hon. Lilo: Mr Speaker, can I respond to the comments made by the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa? Thank you.

I am not too sure about the Cabinet decision referred to by the MP for Aoke Langa/Langa who said that Cabinet has made a conclusive decision on this particular case. We, in the previous government which I was a part of do understand that there would be a review and that review as I understand it has been commissioned by the Gaming and Lotteries Board already. The fate of whether or not we should be able to have one or two more additional casinos depends on this particular review. That is the fact.

On the reasonableness of the law, the law that we enact in here, logically is to support investment in Solomon Islands. When it comes out here you then exercise what is reasonableness in the way you exercise it. The way laws are brought into this House is simple logic and that is for us to support investment to happen because investment will not just happen from anywhere or from nothing.

For us to forge an argument to think that because those on this side have someone from the entity here and so we must be against the law is not good. No, I think we have to disprove that because even in the previous government there was no presence of them in this House but the government still facilitates this investment with a fair and equitable reason behind it, and that is this investment must continue. It would be wrong for us to turn around and say because this person is sitting there you would be having difficulty. No, I do not think so. Would the same be said about you because you also come from a grouping outside that has a very strong opposition against that particular subject? For you to stand now and talk about this thing is not fair. That is not fair.

Let us look at the reasonableness of this particular law. Whether it is relevant it should be discussed in this House. Yes, it is relevant because this House passed it. What is the intent of this House? That it must run until 2011. Are we going to do it? Yes, it will run until 2011 supported by this review and then we will decide at that time. But for us to assert that because somebody is on this side and so we will go against it, is very bad, it is bad politics. Thank you.

Mr Wale: Point of order, I do not have a question.

Mr Speaker: It is not a point of order; the chair has given you permission to ask a supplementary question.

Mr Wale: I do not have a supplementary question but because of the statement made, my understanding on that particular decision is at variance with the honourable Minister so that I put the records right.

Mr Speaker: Your point of order is honoured.

Mr Wale: I did not dispute what the Minister has said. We want to facilitate all investments. We do not want to be discriminatory. That was not my point at all. My point was my understanding, obviously now is at variance with the Minister's understanding of that particular decision by Cabinet was that failing fulfilment of the condition of extension of the license, the license would not be renewed and transferred. Of course, the review may propose a different regime altogether, including perhaps an

increase in the number of licences. That was part of that decision. But that is my understanding so that the records are put right.

Hon. Maelanga: I just want to support what the Minister of Finance has said that there is no cabinet paper on that. The cabinet paper is just for the review of the Act.

Also to add on to what my colleague Member for Renbell has said today, but let us not just jump things. I think there are ways of dealing with things as leaders. The law is there and so if we want to talk out of the context of law then that is not good, it shows we are not leaders.

The Honiara Casino has been operating within the law but the only thing is that the Act says it must operate within a hotel and Parliament has also given the grace period to the entity. We must understand look at areas like that. This government is looking seriously into this, and that is why I said earlier on today that the review put in place by the previous government is still there, and this government will still continue with the review so that it operates within the law because that is what we want.

I just want to say that we have to be careful and we have to understand what we say in this House. Just to say things outside of what we intended to say would not sound nice. That is why the Honiara Casino is still operating. Within the grace period if it starts to build its building down there then that is what we want and the government too wants to see it start building that building.

I just want to clarify the comment made by my good honorable Member for Renbell.

Mr Sogavare: Unless anyone has any other questions but I want to round it off. But before I do so, some statements were made and I want to put them in context first before I thank the Minister, and it would be a quick one, and this is on the argument that we have to facilitate investment. There is a reason why the law states that the casino must be attached to a hotel.

The wisdom of previous leaders devising the law is that a casino must be attached to a hotel so that guests or people coming in from outside the country can come and use the facility. In fact our former leaders feel that casino should not be something that is open to the ordinary public to use and that is why it is attached to a hotel. That is the reason. We need to understand that in that context as to why the law requires that that facility be attached to a hotel. But the question has been answered that review is underway and so we have to wait for it. I am happy to hear that it is not only addressing the Pacific Casino issue but the overall policy on casino, gambling, lottery and areas like so I thank the Minister for answering that question.

Progress of APTC program in Solomon Islands

41. Mr WALE to the Minister for Education and Human Resources Development: Can the Minister inform Parliament on the progress and outcome of discussions on the establishment of an APTC program in Solomon Islands?

Hon. HA'AMORI: I thank the honorable Member for Aoke/Langalanga for raising this question.

Firstly, for information, the focal point of the Australia Pacific Technical College or (APTC) by acronym is not with the Ministry of Education but through a private agent. The APTC is funded by AusAID and Solomon Islands has been consulted on the options of establishing APTC in Solomon Islands during the midterm review by AusAID in 2009. During the review, the Ministry of Education strongly recommended that APTC works with existing institutions such as SICHE and the private sector. Right now, AusAID is working on its planned support to the Education Sector which will guide the discussions and the directions on APTC and how it will be established in Solomon Islands.

One of the focus areas in the planned support is skills development for employability. This focus area requires the Ministry to develop a TVET framework which will guide how AusAID will allocate its resources to skills development and I might add that such a TVET framework is in the final draft at the moment. The framework covers support throughout rural training centers and the strengthening of SICHE.

We must also note that the current Australia/Solomon Islands Government partnership for development signed in Port Moresby last year does not have education in the service delivery schedule as a priority so both governments will have to agree to the inclusion of education in the schedules of the partnership for development as one of the priority areas. This will allow the planned support to education sector to go ahead.

The progress is that we are still at the discussion stage of the draft implementation schedule of the AusAID plan support to the Education Sector. The implementation schedule intends a long term support to the sector up to 10 to 15 years. We anticipate that discussions will be concluded before the end of this month. Thank you.

Mr Wale: I appreciate the broader information in so far as the broader AusAID participation engagement on this vital and strategic sector in education.

I suppose the narrow focus of my question is, and I do understand and appreciate that the focal point is not with the Ministry in APTC discussions. However, the Ministry was part of those consultations and continues to have some input into APTC's plans which is a strong desire to initiate programs in Solomon Islands. I

suppose my question really is, are those discussions still ongoing or are they towards the end or the outcomes are emerging now as to whether it will hook up with SICHE or some of our private providers? Is the process of dialogue still ongoing?

Hon. Ha'amori: Discussions relating to APTC as we will by now appreciate are not really with the Ministry of Education. Nevertheless, the Ministry is involved in it although it is not so directly involved with this particular institution.

To go back to the honorable Member's supplementary question or basically a clarification to his question, it appears to be slowing down a bit this time for a very good reason, and that is the Solomon Islands Government and Australia under the development partnership will need to sort out this matter of education which as of last year has not been included. But they said that health which was signed last year according to information available to the Ministry of Education, the reason given for non inclusion of education in that agreement was because at that time health was priority. However, assurance has been given or rather some leniency has been expressed during that time that after 18 months they might return to consider the inclusion of education in that agreement.

I would like to report that that is currently underway and that is way the Ministry is hoping that by the end of this month some definite progress will be made in that direction and we will have education including in the development partnership. When that is in place we will then return to the question of APTC, because after all it is the Australian Government that funds the APTC and it might want to look at how it will attach APTC into Solomon Islands. As has been stated, Solomon Islands has been very clear on how it would like to see APTC work inside Solomon Islands, and that is it wants APTC to join with SICHE or work through this institution or any other institutions of similar nature in Solomon Islands.

As I understand it, being a one time board member of that place, I the institution wants to establish alone like it normally does in other countries. There appears to be a difference of opinions between the institution and the opinion of the Solomon Islands Government on this request. The government was saying that if it wants to come into Solomon Islands it has to work through this institution. Maybe it may change its mind, and we hope that will happen and that it will work through our institution but that is yet to be seen. Thank you very much.

Mr SOGAVARE: Some of us are lost on this. Maybe for the benefit of this House can you explain what this APTC program is?

Hon Ha'amori: Let me just give a brief background with your concurrence, Mr Speaker, a very brief one. Sometime around 2006 when we started to think about sending our people to go and work overseas in the labour markets, we approached Australia so that we enter their labour markets. At that time the Australian Government that is in power at that time did not share this view with most leaders of the Pacific. Instead it came up with the idea that it will help Pacific Islanders to raise their education skills and so it put aside a substantial amount of money for that kind of consideration, and that is how the APTC became an entity.

At the moment it is a bit quite difficult. I think they have made progress last year, I am not quite sure, but up until the time I became engaged with this institution, it does not have a kind of an entity where we can say it is like Unitech in UPNG. No, it does not. But anyway we have raised it and it would probably attend to that request.

The APTC was born so that it can come around the Pacific and provide technical trainings up to the level of Australian qualifications. At the moment it has campuses in PNG, Vanuatu, Fiji and Samoa. When I enquire about why they jumped from PNG and ended up in Vanuatu and other parts of the Pacific like Solomon Islands, it was reluctant to explain to me. But I pressed on until I was informed.

At the time when the APTC was established, the relationship between our good two countries was not up to its peak. In other words, we have a sour relationship between each other and as a result we missed out at that time. Now that things have kind of quietened down a bit and therefore under the midterm review referred to in my answer, Australia is reconsidering its approach and says okay it will come in as we are now good friends again. That is for the indulgence of the Members of this House.

Mr Speaker: I think the Minister has answered the question very well and so I will ask the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa to thank the Minister.

Mr Wale: I would like to thank the Minister for his answers. This is an important program and initiative for the Pacific and especially for us, because as you are aware the majority of students going into the set up of other countries under this APTC scheme, the majority of foreign students are from Solomon Islands so obviously the case is very strong indeed for one to be established here and so it is important for the Ministry to continue to collaborate with them. Again thank you very much.

Sitting suspended for lunch break at 11.38 am

Sitting resumed at 1.40 pm

Mr Speaker: I was informed that the Deputy Prime Minister or the government side for that matter would like to make some amendments to the original motion.

Hon. Maelanga: Mr Speaker, I rise to move that on the basis of Standing Order 8(4) an amendment be made to the Motion of Sine-Die when Parliament adjourns on Monday, the 4th the present meeting shall be concluded and Parliament shall then stand adjourned Sine-Die. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Permission is granted.

Hon. Maelanga: This motion is made with the view to give ample time to all Members of Parliament to contribute and participate in debating the motion. Thank you.

Mr. Sogavare: I want to thank the Deputy Prime Minister for taking that initiative. This side of the House feels that we need more time to, especially look at the presentation by the Prime Minister himself yesterday as we feel there are some very important policy matters that came out from his speech and we would like to have the opportunity over the weekend to read his speech so that we can make some views on it. So we thank the Deputy Prime Minister for this move and we support the motion.

Mr Speaker: At the adjournment of Parliament on Monday, the 4th October 2010, the present meeting shall conclude and Parliament shall then stand adjourned sine die.

The motion agreed to

MOTIONS

Motion of Sine Die (debate commences)

Mr. Sofu: Point of order. Is this debate on the sine die motion?

Mr Speaker: Yes, the Sine-Die instead of the meeting finishing today, it will adjourn sine die on Monday, 4th of October. That is the amendment to the motion made by the Deputy Prime Minister.

Mr GUKUNA: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the motion that is now before the House, the motion of sine die moved by the Prime Minister yesterday. I would like to thank the Prime Minister who is not here, but through his deputy I would like to thank him for moving the sine die motion, his first sine die motion as the leader of the government and the Prime Minister of this country. I would like to thank him very much. As we all know this is a customary motion that

signals to us Members of Parliament who have worked so hard over the past weeks that our meeting is coming to an end.

At this point in time, seeing that this is the first time I am going to talk after a long time, I want to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, for your election to the post of the Speaker of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. Not long after you took up that post, you made some comments in this House to thank the outgoing Speaker. All our comments were in admiration of the way the former speaker acted in his capacity as the Speaker, let alone being our national figurehead. But perhaps it is relevant at this point for me just to talk like this the manner in which he had directed this Parliament had given me a big challenge to emulate what he has done in trying to be fair to this House and treating everybody on both sides of the House, equally and fairly; giving equal opportunity when it comes to presenting arguments and when it comes to our contributing to motions and bills. Again, with those comments I again congratulate your good self for being elected as the new Speaker for this sovereign House.

Like the first three speakers yesterday, I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the people I represent in this House, the people of Rennell/Bellona for voting me in back at the last election. I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the confidence they have given me again. Actually, before that election, a lot of us were led by some weird individuals; we were like being led to the old time to be crucified first before the elections. There were a few of us in this House where two or three individuals outside were really trying to burn us down in the media. Their motives were clear, they were trying to shoot us down at the elections, but the elections have proved otherwise, it was a resounding defeat to some of them. I think the best we can advise them is to try and cooperate and benefit from the programs we are going on now. Because most of us have good intentions of helping our people, but when these individuals come up and say all those things about us, I think they were just jealous or what. With that, I would like to again express my sincere thanks to the people of Rennell/Bellona for the overwhelming support they have given me at the last election.

After the elections I stayed in Rennell for one week just resting and having a feel of the aftermath of the elections and I arrived in Honiara and already there were camps established in Honiara, in fact about four of them. I thought after coming back one week later the camps would have sorted themselves out, but not yet too. Nevertheless, I arrived and I visited the camps of my friends and what really surprised me was that I realized the election was not only to find some candidates of some Members of Parliament, but when you go to those camps you find losing candidates in that camp and also losing candidates here. In fact, once you lose the election you automatically become a member of the opposing camp.

The camps were full of candidates that lost the election. In fact, some of us went there and some of them who lost to some of us were on that camp and so we said let us go to the other side. But the lobbying was very intense and, in my view, the Pacific

Casino Camp was very green and could have easily attracted us to it. Because you know, Mr Speaker, as you have been in this Parliament for five terms the politics of the last five parliaments. We tried to put a stop to lobbying but it did not work out. What happened in the past three to four weeks was exactly what we wanted to stop.

The fear I have was that you know who the main people are who influenced the politics of this House for the last five, six terms. My worry is that the very people who continued to influence our politics have now come inside this House, the loggers, the gamblers, some individuals, they are right in here. When they controlled the politics of this Parliament from outside, it was worse, so how much more from inside. Not to take any credit from them, but just raising some points which I think are valid, which points to the need for us to reform and continue our attempt to introduce legislations to try and deal with this kind of lobbying that we always do during the election of the Prime Minister. Surprisingly, it was very interesting to me that the new ones were very steady. I observed them to be very steady, and it was those of us, the old ones that run around. We run around and around holding this country at ransom; we, the old ones, about five or six of us were holding this country, we run around too much and we prolonged the lobbying process. We need to put a stop to this and this Parliament must pass that legislation.

I want to congratulate the Prime Minister and his government, the Ministers, every brand new Ministers, I would like to congratulate them for their appointments. During this week I heard one or two of them getting angry with the questions. I heard one of them said that those who questioned us very much, we are going to mark them. I would to inform them that, please, question time is a very part of Parliament. It is your opportunity, do not think it is this side's opportunity, but it is your opportunity to tell the nation what you are doing and it is an opportunity for us to ask you and check you, and so do not get angry with us thinking that we want to spoil you, not at all, it is part of this House, and this is the place for where we must ask you and not outside. I have already congratulated the Prime Minister for his appointment, but after congratulating him, I am a bit disappointed with some of the things that he said, in particular the grand statements he made about RAMSI.

Some business people are already being troubled by what the Prime Minister has said about RAMSI that RAMSI could leave in 2015. No one denies the fact that they will not be here forever, but I believe that is not the way to handle it. The way for him to handle it is to get ourselves ready, and when we are ready we can say RAMSI can leave. But for us to make unsubstantiated statements and say that they will leave in 2015 without knowing exactly what our position is has already made some big business people and some communities in this country to be worried.

We have noticed in the papers that some communities are already worried just by listening to what the Prime Minister has said. I also disagreed with what he said. If we are saying that in the context that this country is our country, let me say that this is

our country, and who disputes that we own this country. We own this country and we will continue to own it for years and years to come; forever. So to make a grand statement based on the presumption that we do not own this country is insufficient and is not well thought out.

Just before we conclude this afternoon we have some exchanged on the question raised by the honorable Member for East Choiseul on the casino issue. I was not given the privilege to respond to what my good friend, the Deputy Prime Minister, and the Minister of Finance when they responded and mentioned my name specifically. Let me just say this to them that I never intended to say that the Pacific Casino is operating illegally, but what I said is that the Act is very clear, the law is very clear, and the law says that a casino operation in this country can only operate within a hotel as part of a hotel operations. What we have been doing is to give an exemption to Honiara Casino in good faith and allow it to operate outside the law, and that is what we have been doing, and that is quite legal.

The point I was making is that it has operated outside the law, nevertheless this Parliament gave it exemption to do that. I believe we have extended that exemption three times for about 15 years now, so how long will it take us to be convinced that it will not invest in a hotel in this country? It was given land, it was given time in good hope, it has led us this far and still there is no sign of building this hotel. Are we going to also grant it some more time in the hope that it will build the hotel? Is it quite possible also that we will give it five years and then it will sit back and wait until the fourth year and then start pretending or acting as if it will build the hotel?

I was involved in the first discussion where this idea of them going to set up a hotel was put across to in a meeting at the Sea King. It was only after we talked about that we started raising the issue of timing to them. We arranged for them and they came and made a presentation to us in the Cabinet. We were led to think that the thing was going to happen. We were led to think that after granting them exemption for two or three times they were ready to proceed with this investment. I doubt that this thing will come into operation in 2011 as the Deputy Prime Minister said. The hotel operation is a big thing and it cannot finish within the next 10 to 11 months. But I hope that the Honiara Casino shapes up or is smart up and start acting some truth. We have given them so much time, plenty of time has been given to them. How long are we going to keep on hoping that they will build that operation?

I have nothing against the Honiara Casino, I have nothing against them, but they must not take our trust, our hope and continue to use as a means of them continue to operate a business where under the basic law of this country they are not supposed to do. In terms of investment, as the Minister of Finance has talked about it is true, we are supposed to encourage investment, but how long are we going to keep on giving that kind of incentive, and allow them to pull us by the nose. I need to clarify that point raised by my two colleagues, my two good friends.

Over the last four months when Parliament was dissolved, a lot of interesting things have happened, let alone the elections. But one thing that really disappoints me again is when the South Pacific Oil started to build a brand new big tank over there. At the last Parliament I talked four times about the South Pacific Oil, and as you know, Mr Speaker, this is out of the concern I have for the fuel supplies in this country. I raised it four times and not long after I raised it the last time, a big problem happened to the South Pacific Oil. There were a lot of suspicions and some individuals who were responsible for that arrangement should have been held accountable for it. Nevertheless, it is building another big tank. If they are allowed to build what they are trying to build now, I guarantee you that they will never build another tank in that area because there is no space there. There is no more space to put up any more tanks down there. If the South Pacific cares about the future security of fuel supplies to this country, it should do what Markwarth Oil has done by building its tanks in Lungga. I understand during my days in the Energy Sector that there is a piece of land allocated for fuel supplies in Lungga. During our time we managed to move the LPG from Point Cruz. Markwarth has tried complying with that by moving out one of its tanks and there is no reason why the South Pacific Oil should not go up there for future expansion. The fuel supply here is only enough to cater for this country for another maybe 8 or 9 years at which time they will need to expand the storage of fuel in this country.

Also, if they move up there fuel costs will go down because they will double their rate of storage. Tankers are still coming in every three weeks and that is not good for fuel supplies in this country. We want tankers to come in maybe within an interval of every six to seven weeks, but they cannot do that because of the limited space here and so it is not possible. Again, if I were in a position to stop that tank I will stop it, no question, I will stop building that tank, it makes Honiara to look awful. That place is already crowded, it needs to move out. Whoever is responsible for this, whether the Deputy Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance, must look into this. I and the Minister of Finance did work on this project of removing those tanks a long time ago but it did not happen, so the Minister of Finance knows exactly the implication of keeping those tanks here. If he can remove those tanks to Lungga somewhere and get them to build the tanks there would be really nice. It would certainly involve landowners too, like my colleague who is sitting there on the other side.

There is one thing I have to talk about now and which I also talked about in the last Parliament and which I want to briefly talk about now is the RCDF. A lot has been said about the RCDF. But let me just tell you that this is a beautiful funding system. I and my colleague MP for East Are Are are members of the People's Congress Party. Our Party is the only party that believes in the RCDF; in fact, if we come into power we would increase the RCDF and continue with it. Because I tried to do some calculations on how much percentage of aid money actually reach the people, in my own calculation

of aid funds, they average at about 46 cents per dollar. If you look at the RCDF it is about 89 cents per dollar that reach the rural people. Never mind the critics because the critics have their own motives and have their own intentions. If we were to organize people that support the RCDF, this city will have no space to accommodate them to come and protest against the idea of changing the RCDF. The problem is that the people this RCDF is intending to help, most of them cannot write in the newspapers because most of them are in the villages, most of them, and maybe excuse them but are somewhat illiterates and do not bother writing but they appreciate what the RCDF has been doing for them. If we were going to tell them to write in the newspaper, every page of the newspapers would be full of their letters, maybe written in their languages or their interpretation of the English language. But the RCDF is good money because it goes down straight to the rural people. What we need to work on is to work on us, the MPs, because only a few ruined it. Work on the MPs to make sure that this money goes down to the rural people. Work on the MPs so that they are accountable for the money, but this is good money because it enables us to help our people, and you are one of them, Mr Speaker. It enables the MPs to go right down straight to our people.

This country is a big country that is hard to develop so why do we not look at the RCDF as just another mechanism of developing our country. Let us work in trying to come up with some credible ways of accounting for those funds. I think we should even increase the RCDF; I want us to increase it.

When we came into Parliament we came in with some good ideas to develop our constituencies. When you put those ideas to the aid donors they just do not want it. You submit a project to aid donors and it would take about four to five years before the project is funded. The RCDF funds have enabled those of us who have genuine concern for our people by putting something on the ground to help improve the livelihoods of our people. So I am a big supporter of the RCDF; I really support it and it should not change but it should continue.

I understand that our good colleagues from the Republic of China on Taiwan are concerned about some newspaper writings. As I said, if we knew in advance that people will be writing in the papers, we would have organized a lot of people to write in support of the RCDF and thank President Ma when he came here for his visit. But we were caught off guard and the people who are against the RCDF or those who always want to criticize this funding have gone to the paper ahead of us. I just want to advise the people who are trying to criticize the ROC to try and go beyond their concern on that fund. The ROC is a country that has been desperately seeking support for its cause and they do not care very much whether we support them but they are only concerned about this money. That is all I can say about the RCDF.

I want you, Mr Speaker, and my colleagues on the government side, my colleagues on the Opposition and our critics and people outside to know that I am really in support of the RCDF and I do not want it to be changed; in fact I want it to be

increased. If constituencies can become development entities in this country, what is to be used to develop our people in this country, let it be, it should be increased.

My colleague MP for East Guadalcanal in his speech yesterday talked about the provincial government system. In addition to the comments I made at the last parliament, I really think the provinces should be watered down. We have already seen that provinces did not work in the last 32 years; the provincial system did not work. Where are those many development moneys given to them? Where have they gone to? We should move into a constituency system because the constituency system reaches the people right down in the rural areas. If we send money to Auki, Tulagi, Taro, Gizo, I know that most of these funds would be used up in those centres and do not reach the people; and the same can be said about Honiara. I really think they should be watered down.

The other thing too is that in two weeks time the provinces will hold another Premiers' Conference. This conference is an expensive one too. It is only one meeting every year but it is very expensive, but I fail to see any product of this conference. If I am the Minister of Provincial Government I would stop this conference, as it is of no use to this country but just a waste of huge funds for nothing. One meeting to cost almost \$3million is good money that should be put to the RCDF; it would have been useful if that amount of money is put to the RCDF.

The NPF is featured prominently in some of the newspapers last month as investing here and there. Some of the questions I have, have been raised by my colleagues and get answered. But whilst I agree that we need capital for some of our institutions, some of our entities operating in this country are also very concerned about how the NPF funds are being kept on floundered left and right. Some of these investments, we question their wisdom, as it is people's money. And I repeat what I have said before that I have a feeling these funds will keep on flowing like this and then will flow out, let alone some of them in millions, hundreds and millions of them being locked up and will never be liquidated. They are locked up in assets that cannot be sold.

I am concerned about the NPF funds and I hope that people overseeing these funds are doing it with care. We have seen that some of the funds that were given to the South Pacific Oil have gone differently.

That is all I can say in my contribution to the sine die motion. I would like to again take this opportunity to thank you for giving me this small time for me to talk and for me to thank my people of Rennell/Bellona. With those comments I support the motion and thank you very much.

Mr SOFU: Thank you for giving me this opportunity to also talk briefly on this very important motion. I thank you for allowing me the floor to contribute to this motion.

This motion, obviously, is a customary motion which comes every time at the end of a parliament meeting giving opportunity to Members of Parliament to express whatever we would like to say here. I would like to thank the Prime Minister for seeing it fit in moving this motion at the end of this meeting allowing Members of Parliament express what they would like to say.

I congratulate you Mr Speaker for taking up the post of the Speaker of the National Parliament. I also wish to congratulate the honourable Member for Rendova/Tetepare for his election to the post of Prime Minister of this country. I understand that leading a political government is not an easy thing as it needs support and team work. I believe that Ministers and the government as a whole will continue to work together to achieve things good for our people. I also would like to congratulate the Deputy Speaker who was also elected to take up that very important post, so that in your absence Mr Speaker he will preside and control over meetings.

This is the Ninth Parliament and I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate each one of us, the returning ones and the new ones. It seems it is half of the House, - 25 new ones and 25 old ones so congratulations. I know during our campaigns some of us walk by foot, some travel by canoe and some by vehicles, but we made it, our people have spoken, and that is why we see our faces here, and so I want to congratulate all of you, the returning ones and the new ones. I believe that we will continue to serve our people.

I would like to thank my people of East Kwaio. I would like to thank them for their support of me in the Eight Parliament, for their understanding and the spirit of cooperation and working together in the last four years. On the day of election they have spoken again by re-electing me to be their Member of Parliament for the next four years. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the church leaders, the chiefs, the women and men in my constituency. Some of them have to walk long distances to cast their votes because the polling stations are very far. I believe this is also the situation with my other colleague Members of Parliament who are sitting here today. You are the one who knows much better, Mr Speaker, that they use walking sticks to walk with just to cast their ballots, which is their trust on us. Those papers enabled us to be here and enable us to talk in this House, and so I want to thank my people of East Kwaio whether you cast your vote for me or not, I am your Member of Parliament for the next four years.

I would like to especially thank some of them who went around with me during my campaign. During that time, as we all know, the weather was very bad and so the sea was very rough but they travelled with me, especially the boat drivers having to battle rough seas and very difficult times and therefore I must acknowledge them for their trust and confidence in me by accompanying me and also casting their ballot papers for me.

I would also like to thank my good brothers who contested the seat of East Kwaio with me. Democracy is important and so East Kwaio also wants to exercise democracy in that constituency through the means of election. Our people have spoken on that day and the result came out that I am their representative in Parliament and so I want to thank them for that.

I also would like to thank the churches and Christians throughout our country in that before the elections they have been praying for leaders. They were doing their part through spiritual support by praying for the elections. I believe that whatever critics may say, we are the answers to those many prayers of the many Christians throughout our country. I want to thank our churches, church leaders and Christian brothers and sisters who have prayed for the elections and the prayers were answered and we are the result of those prayers. We must understand that this country is a Christian country and God is in charge. I want to thank the Christian brothers and sisters who prayed for the elections.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our aid donors. In the Eight Parliament, I understand that my constituency just like other constituencies benefitted from the activities and programs of the Government reaching our various areas and rural places. The AusAID funding, NZAID and ROC have assisted in many ways. Without the help of our good friends, there will be no medicines in our rural places. They assisted the education sector enabling school buildings to be built and things like that. I want to stand here on behalf of the East Kwaio people to thank aid donors that helped us in those services because they see those services as very important. I believe that this Ninth Parliament they will continue their assistance and increase their assistance and help towards our schools, our clinics and our hospitals in our rural areas.

When we come into this House, we talk about development, development and development. This is a big word for people in the village who have been hearing this word for a long time now and are asking when will be this development. I would like to thank past governments and successive governments as well that they have been trying their very best to address the issue of land. What we must know is that these lands are tribal land or customary land owned by our people. Land is not owned by just one person.

I cited an example here in 2009 about a ship taking materials back home to build a wharf in one of our constituencies and when this ship arrived at its destination, the people there refused to allow the ship to berth unload the materials. This led to us losing the seventh wharf. Infrastructures are very expensive. You talk about road, you talk wharf and you talk about airstrips, these are services for our use, they are developments. Those things will help to enable us market our goods. How many times we may talk about development in this house, but it cannot eventuate unless we

address the land issue. Land is a very difficult subject, you know it yourself Mr Speaker, because you were once a Prime Minister, and you tried it too.

I think it is very important that ownership of customary lands must be resolved and recognized in order to access such important infrastructures. I heard the Honourable Prime Minister talking about land reform. I am really happy with that and I will give my support if a bill on that is brought here to Parliament so that whatever development comes in simply goes through. It is not something that creates confusion amongst our people.

Aid donors are very much willing to assist us build these very expensive infrastructures. As we know if there is no proper wharf no ships will go to our places. If there is no road no vehicles and trucks will come to our villages and so we want to thank our aid donors. If the land reform bill comes here and goes through, I would be very happy because it will address important infrastructures in our areas.

We have heard many complaints about the RCDF. I have nothing to say about this, but I just want to thank the Taiwan Government for seeing it fit in continuing to help us through this direct funding assistance. I believe those of us who are now in our second term or third and fourth time would know that this assistance has really helped our people. Even though it is not recognized but our people have felt it, touched it, and have seen it with their own eyes. Therefore, I want to thank the Republic of China on Taiwan for its understanding.

This is the Ninth Parliament and I would like to make a general comment. Whilst we appreciate the work of public officers, I think there needs to be a new direction, and I believe this Government has in place that direction. Public officers are serving the public. For me, drinking alcohol in the office is not acceptable, I am not happy with it, or even for public officers to sleep in government offices is unacceptable. I believe the new Minister for Public Service will improve on this. It is things like that that the public have seen and are complaining about. As a national leader reform is needed in the public service. Not every public officer is doing this but just a few of them. Whilst I appreciate the hardworking public officers and the good work they have been doing, there needs to be improvement on areas like that.

On development again which we talked so much about here, maybe we look at big and major things. It will take time, it is not an easy thing but a hard thing. Our people want to see a bit of change, maybe from degree to another. Whatever policy any government of the day puts must make sure has the interest and minds of the people. I would like to thank this new government, this Grand Coalition that is starting to be formed and coming together and start to work, it is doing it now and very soon it will launch its policy and work programs after.

Whatever complains levelled against leaders, this is my second time to say this in here, but to me it is just acceptable because those comments can straighten us out. They are things to shake us a bit so that we can make improvements. This given opportunity

is for me to thank my people and to congratulate every one of us as well as the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition, the MP for Fataleka who is there to provide the checks and balances on the government. I believe that with his experience he will certainly do it.

I wish to also thank the Leader of Independent, who maybe is listening somewhere out there that he will provide a very good balance for the government. With these few remarks I want to thank you once again Mr Speaker and would also like to thank the Clerk, the staff of Parliament, the secretariat and all the securities for doing a very big work for us during the course of the parliament meetings. I must acknowledge the Clerk and staff of the National Parliament. With these few remarks I support the motion and resume my seat.

Mr GHIRO: Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to contribute to this motion moved by the Prime Minister.

Before I proceed I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, on behalf of the people of East Makira, on your election to this important chair in the National Parliament of Solomon Islands. With your experience and wisdom, I am fully confident of your ability and your capability to guide the Ninth Parliament in its deliberations and to also perform your other constitutional duties.

I, on behalf of my people of East Makira, thank and commend the people of Rendova/Tetepare for electing someone distinctive and very humorous to be their member of parliament. The people of Rendova/Tetepare not only elected not only elected their member of parliament but the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. I therefore take this time to convey to you Mr Prime Minister and your government congratulations from the shores and highlands of East Makira.

As a new comer allow me to convey my thanks to my predecessor, Mr David Sitai, for his sound leadership representing the people of East Makira in the past 24 years. The length of time he has served as the Member of Parliament for East Makira reflects how much confidence the people have on Mr David Sitai as their Member of Parliament. The East Makira populace has been proud of his contributions to the nation and East Makira constituency. Thank you Mr David Sitai and you will be my role model for leading East Makira.

I also take this opportunity to thank my people of East Makira for their trust and confidence in me and seeing it fit to elect me to be the third Member of Parliament for that constituency. I more especially extend my thanks to the chiefs, church leaders and people of Wainoni and Hunarite of East Makira for their strong support and confidence in me. I stand on the floor of this honourable legislature to assure my good people of East Makira that I will serve them to my best and take East Makira to new heights.

As a new comer and as someone who strives his way out amidst rural development difficulties and weak provincial governance system, I also wish to form my opinion on the question repeatedly highlighted in the motion, and the question is “why do we want to come to Parliament”. As a leader in my own constituency, basically and honestly I do not come to this parliament to be part of any parasitical elite syndrome eroding public finances in this country, but to try and be part of a way forward for this country and my constituency. I want to be part of leading the people of this country into the land of milk and honey. This country is in dire need of leaders with courage and virtue that is always right for the people of this country.

The East Makira constituency consists of eight provincial wards with no infrastructures in place. The constituency is made up of a big land mass consisting of islands; coastal, inland and highland communities making it one of the constituencies difficult to administer and visit regularly. With a diverse background, the development needs of communities are also diverse in nature. The diverseness requires greater financial assistance from the government through their elected MP.

I would like to join the Member for Renbell in saying that the government should seriously consider increasing the Livelihood, Millennium and RCDF funds and to consider introducing a formula of sharing development funds according to population, land area and other factors of each constituency rather than across the board format we are currently using.

I would like to also urge the government to consider amending the constitution so that the Constituency Boundaries Commission’s report which was tabled in the Eight Parliament be re-tabled with special consideration to be accorded to the proposal to split the East Makira constituency into two constituencies.

On the Solomon Islands’ economy, Solomon Islands was very vibrant in the first 10 years as already said on this floor. But its 20 years seem to be stagnant due to past governments’ ignorance of no long term development plans and poor policy performance.

Solomon Islands as a country with a narrow economic base needs to get out of the vicious cycle of development we blindly believe and were trapped in as far back as times of successive post-independence governments. This nation must free itself from the web of development policy confusion in order to progress. It is interesting to see that since independence some 32 years ago, the nation is yet to fully develop its primary products, the sector where 80% of the population will actively participate in.

I commend my colleague MP for East Choiseul in his contribution on the motion of appreciation to the out-going speaker Sir Peter Kenilorea. In his contribution he highlighted the failures of past successive governments and diligently identified areas of improvement. Therefore, what this nation needs are strong and constructive reforms aimed at encouraging and boosting the rural economic base of the country; reforms that recognizes resource owners’ participation and that which are conducive to investor

participation. Customary land reform must be the flagship policy of any government of the day to effect a sound approach to sustainable and permanent development.

On the provincial government system prior to the introduction of the federal government bill, the government of the day must seriously include provincial government in the nation's building initiatives, especially on the revitalization of the rural economic base.

Provincial governments are handicapped in providing vital services to their people and creating economic platforms that enhances rural development due to lack of financial resources and legislative mechanisms and tools. The government should seriously consider working on a resource sharing formula with provincial governments and to implement it as soon as possible. The competence of provincial governments should not be underestimated but strengthened with effective and legislative mechanisms.

On the bottom-up approach policy the approach will have no positive impact unless there is parallel approach to local government structure. In practical the development approach must be developed alongside the local government structure. Every one of us knows very well that our traditional leaders, chiefs and elders were the custodians of our natural resources. Right now their most profound task in the rural communities is to maintain peace and harmony.

I am of the opinion that the stability needed for rural development to flourish is vested on our traditional leaders, so the revisiting and empowering of our traditional leaders is a component of the bottom up approach and that must be addressed. I am proud to inform this honorable House that the Makira/Ulawa Provincial Government has taken the lead in empowering our traditional leaders to be stakeholders and partners in any development initiative.

I think this is my contribution and I would like to support the motion.

Mr HANARIA: I would like to also contribute to this motion of sine die this afternoon.

Thank you for giving me this opportunity and before I go any further, I would like to give thanks to people who were involved in parliamentary proceedings. First of all, I wish to congratulate the Prime Minister on his victory as the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. He is a best friend of mine and I sincerely wish him well in his leadership role.

I also would like to congratulate the Deputy Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, the Leader of Opposition, the Leader of Independent Group in Parliament and Members of Parliament on their election victory to Parliament. Mr Speaker, I also wish to congratulate you for your successful election to the post of Speaker. I also wish to

congratulate the Deputy Speaker for his victory to the post of deputy speaker. This is a clear manifestation of an evolving government that needed change.

I would like to thank your office staff and that of the UNDP staff for organizing the induction programme for Members of Parliament from the 12th to 16th September 2010. This program really enhances my knowledge about the processes and procedures of Parliament. It gives me confidence when contributing to questions or motions in Parliament. I do suggest that similar programmes should continue in the future.

I would also like to congratulate the Ministers of the government for their hard work, especially the new ones, who bravely answered questions by Members of Parliament on the Opposition side. Being your first time you have done well and I too believe you will do excellent job in the future. Please, be made aware that these questions were not intended to test your personal ability but were raised to clarify policy matters initiated by the government. To my colleagues on the Opposition side, I do congratulate you as well for your constructive contribution to matters of parliamentary proceedings and for your patience to absorb answers to your questions even if it is half answered in some cases.

As a new MP I find it quite difficult to comprehend some of the political opinions that were placed in front of me, especially during the week of political lobbying before the formation of the government. I have seen the eminence of false promises, lies, deceptive spirits and hunger for power attitudes. I am sorry to acknowledge that money has played an effective role in winning Members to join camps.

Mr Speaker: Can the Member withdraw his use of the word “lies”?

Mr Hanaria: I withdraw the word ‘lies’. It has been the winning now in this equation but I stick to my principle and money cannot buy my integrity. All of us are equally important as Members of Parliament and we should not take irrational decisions which will cost the country in the long term. I believe we are here in this honourable House to legislate laws for Solomon Islands as a sovereign nation and we should not allow mammon to neutralize our efforts to achieve our goals.

I want to make some observations as well. One thing I observe was that the parties do not stick together; there is no stickability now because half of us are on the government side and half are on the opposition side so we cannot work together. That is one of my observations. I believe we should stick together as party members and let the party leaders to negotiate for the formation of government in future.

I have also learned from bills presented in Parliament. I learned that we debated bills that came without explanatory notes. As I am not a lawyer it was very difficult for me to mean the change of words from ‘an’ to ‘a’ or to ‘or’. It is difficult because I do not

have explanatory notes. I suggest that for future bills, please give us ample time with required explanatory notes.

I have also observed questions unanswered. I have learned that a lot of supplementary questions were denied. We were not given enough time and some of us were not able to ask questions because we were told to sit down. Allow us a bit more time in future, Sir, to ask questions that come to our minds.

I believe the PECP Party believes in the setting up of congress in the constituencies to administer funds. I think that would be taken in by this government to look at it, have a look at it so that the RCDF could be administered from the congress to the people. Even if it is increased or not but if we do not care about how to administer it, it is going to be useless. Therefore, we must have mechanisms in place for its proper administration. I believe this money if administered properly will go down to the people and we should be running parallel complementing the government, especially on agriculture the farmers where we allow the government to train those people and we give money to them to run the actual projects.

On physical infrastructure, I believe we need physical infrastructure and this road from Kiu to Masupa'a, I want to put it here that the government needs to seriously look at building a road there because the people in East Are Are and West Are Are today are making gardens on the same land but they wanted to move inland now by way of access to roads. If we have roads to the bush there many fertile lands there and the people of East Are Are and West Are Are can go inland and make their gardens or make projects like cocoa. But this time they are making garden on the same because the population increases but the land remains the land.

On the land tenure system, any government that comes up with a land tenure system that makes changes to help our people and development will get my support, the bill. Because our local land tenure system is an obstacle to development now. This land tenure system will encourage landowners to be partakers of development and will also make people get bigger benefits out of their own lands.

Allow me to say a few words to my constituents. To my people of East Are Are constituency, I am humble enough on behalf of my family to thank you for the trust and confidence you have in me to lead you in the next four years. To those who voted for me and supported me throughout the election period, I thank you for your support and fine judgement. To my supporters, let us not be complacent with our victory but let this be the beginning of hard work and sacrifice and let us attain sound management of resources in East Are Are constituency.

To members of my taskforce team, thank you for your tireless efforts and sleepless nights in the preparation of my campaign platform, the best ever campaign document in East Are Are for all time. We need to prove ourselves in fulfilling the expectations of our constituents by having a development plan in place that would act as roadmap for the development of East Are Are constituency. It will not be long before

my taskforce team comes to visit the five zones in the constituency to promote awareness and hold workshops to identify information for the formation of the East Are Are development plan. We need to get organized, identify our human resources, train and empower our people to participate in macro-economic activities in the rural area in order to improve our worsening cash liquidity and help sustain the lives of our families.

I wish to let my supporters know that I have been deprived of the opportunity to thank you in a tangible way as early as expected due to the fact that some selfish human acts have prevented that to happen. I wish to assure you that our time will come in the immediate future. I want my people in East Are Are to be rest assured that the petition against me is placed in good hands and my lawyers are taking the necessary steps to ensure that justice will take its course. I am still your member of parliament for the next four years.

I wish to comfort the candidates of East Are Are who did not make it. Please be humble enough to accept defeat and plan ahead for another challenge in 2014. It is unfortunate that only one who scores the highest will win in this democratic process, and my advice to you all is to improve your campaign strategy next time round and I would advise you against using money to pay voters because it is a very painful exercise after losing an election. Please, start preparing now for the next four years instead of waiting for the last minute.

I wish to affirm that my victory depends on developing better relationship with the East Are Are constituency, better prepared plans, consultation and commitment. My result would have been better if my supporters were not lured on the night before the polling day. In Are Are politics, Christians called this night the 'devil's night' and others called it a blessing night because they are blessed particularly on that night. There you are, that is Areka's politics.

There is claim they are involved in corrupt practices during the elections when in fact it is the opposite. I believe in the heart of the petitioners there is a guilty conscience that they are putting the righteous to the cross, let alone justice will prevail as a result of the petition before the high court. The truth of the matter is that my petitioners are pulling their supporters from their Member of Parliament and chances of having reconciliation is getting thinner than ever.

I would like to take this opportunity to make a word of 'sorry' if I have hurt anyone in my constituency through my words and actions during the election period. Please, know that we are all human and sometimes our human weaknesses can overtake our goodness and therefore, I beg your forgiveness. Let us work together for the common good of our people and whatever you want to offer to our people this is the time.

Finally, before I take my seat I wish to thank your supporting staff, Mr Speaker, especially those who make sure our allowances are paid; the staff of the Accounts Section. Those who make sure that we are secure enough in this Parliament House; the

security guards, and not forgetting those who sweep and clean the floor of Parliament and ensure that our bottles of water is always placed in front of our tables; the house keepers. What a tremendous organisation to work in. I wish to thank you all. With these few comments I support the motion.

Hon. HA'AMORI: Thank you indeed for the opportunity to contribute to the motion of Sine Die now before this Honourable House. I must also thank my other colleagues on all sides of the House for the opportunity to build up my confidence to speak without fear and intimidation on behalf of the people I represent in this Honourable House. If it was not for the supplementary questions fired mostly by my colleagues from the opposition bench, I will be unsure about standing up sometimes under pressure to speak in this Honourable House. In this regard, I must thank her Majesty's Opposition and the Independent Group for the indirect coaching they are giving to me to sharpen my debating skills.

Before I continue with my contribution to this motion, I am obliged to first of all thank the good people of West Makira constituency, especially those who by their ballot papers expressed their confidence in me to be their political leader and representative in this Ninth Parliament of Solomon Islands. I would also like to assure my good people of West Makira Constituency that I am still committed to carrying out the development intentions that I have talked about during my last visits to your communities. I will be visiting you after this Parliament Meeting after some urgent ministerial responsibilities have been taken care of. As you are well aware, my plan to bring about necessary changes to our beautiful constituency has these two fundamental goals: financial independence and autonomous rural economic community. To attain these goals it is necessary to address four apparently neglected areas. These are the dire state of the marketing infrastructure found in rural constituencies or rather the non existence of such infrastructure; secondly, the stagnancy of the rural economic base; thirdly, the slow introduction of feasible new industries into the rural communities, and fourthly the non availability of sufficient amount of cash to facilitate rural development activities.

My good people of West Makira constituency, I can assure you that these worthy considerations will occupy both my attention and time during the four years life of this Ninth Parliament of Solomon Islands. What I will need in these four years is your unreserved support to carry out the proposed development plans I have just reminded us of.

Allow me now to say a few things about rural economic development to highlight some of the few issues. Successive governments have over the years committed one common mistake. This mistake is the overloading of themselves with government policies. There are already enough good policies contributed by our

various governments since independence and so there is no need to add many more, especially the trivial ones. Doing so is but just changing paint colours on the same piece of wood, coupled with this is the lack of political will.

It is imperative not to be too ambitious when it comes to development policies. A government only has four years available to it to do business. Incidentally, the first year is usually spent in just settling in and only in the second and the third years do governments engage in some kind of quality work. The fourth year is mostly used for political campaigning. As we can see we only have two years for quality work. It is for this reason that we should limit the number of our policies. It is better to identify only a few strategic policies to implement and execute them well, instead of attempting to do many things only to find that we only did a lousy job of implementing our many policies.

There maybe things we know that needs our attention, but we must learn to respond appropriately to the realities of our limitations. We must leave some things to the next governments to attend to, especially if they are not urgent to attend to them. It is also important that we not only limit the number of our policies to a manageable level, but we must also prioritize the activities of our development plans.

Although this is now the Ninth Parliament, the approaches used in our attempts to cause rural development has not changed much, for example, we still expect financial aid donors to fund our socioeconomic development efforts. We still heavily tax our poor people to collect money to attempt to pay for our services, and we still take out huge and affordable loans to fund our projects. A question we must now ask is, are these the only ways to financially resource our development efforts? I believe not. There must be other ways to make finance available to us. One of our fundamental problems is when we are hard up focus, we simply turn to begging instead of thinking about new ways to solve our financial problems.

This attitude of taking a quick-fix weakens our minds to think about ways to summarily solve our financial problems. We must be aware and accept that there are money masters in existence and it is in their favour that we remain ignorant about what is the true nature of this thing called money. Money is not our number one problem but our real problem is our ignorance of what money really is. The definition we have been taught in schools about this article is deliberately calculated to keep us ignorant about its true nature, hence our continued enslavement to the money masters. Coupled with that is the fear also deliberately instilled in us by the money masters not to venture out and attempt new ideas to solve our money related problems. So far we have just been attempting things they sanction, the outcomes of which, of course, are calculated to their favour.

This Ninth Parliament must keep an open mind about ideas and be adventurous to attempt new approaches to solving our development problems and challenges. If we understand money to be just value like our forefathers did, we will soon realize that

money is never lost but only changes its forms? When someone goes to a shop to buy a can of tuna, for example, he or she did not lose money instead he or she simply transfers the money to a different form which incidentally still has the same value. It is because we are deliberately made to be ignorant of the truth that money and cash are only related but are not the same thing and that is why we are still stuck here in this financial pit.

This country is literally awashed with money. We do not have any problem with the money's existence except its availability in a convenient and transactable form. Our other serious problems are that we do not know about the nature of this thing called money and we still do not have a mechanism to put it in its usable form so that we can use it.

Knowledge about and skills related to how we can use such mechanisms are already available to us, all we need is the political will to employ them. Unfortunately, all we have been taught so far is how to record and manage the circulation of money but we were never taught the true nature of money so that we can access this article ourselves instead of waiting for the portions made available by others. If we continue to eat from restaurants we will continue to be at the mercy of the cooks. It is time we go into the kitchen and start do some cooking ourselves.

On another but related note, there is a need to educate our people about where and how to access the funds available each year to cause rural development. In addition to this, we must make accessing the ministries based funds easier. The process and the criteria expected of our people are very difficult for the 80% of our population. There are millions of development funds placed in the ministries but the problem is our people either do not know that they are there or accessing such funds is just too involved that in the end they just would not be bothered.

There are funds also available from aid donors but some of the criteria set down to access the aid donors' funds are insensitive to the realities of the local situation. As a result of this insensitivity, only the aid donors benefit from having an improved profile in the International Community because they appear to be aiding a Third World country while the reality is that the impact of their money is only a lip service quality. The criteria to access aid money must be sensitive to the local realities. Unless there are sinister ulterior motives hovering over aid money this is not such a big ask.

Considering the challenges brought about by the money masters which they always want to covertly called the global financial crisis (GFC), we must now be prepared to review of our laws governing money and financing so as to make room for our innovations to be tried out now. Over the years this world has been supporting test runs in the field of technology. Unfortunately when it comes to innovations in the field of money and financing, we just remain a cake although it is suicidal to do so. Nobody else can liberate us but we have to do it ourselves and to do this we must be prepared to reconsider how we do business.

Of the many development strategies that we can have, one of the most potential propositions is the rural economic community concept. In this concept, the current political entities known as the constituencies and their functions are reconsidered and redeveloped into economic communities. Instead of the political constituencies we should have economic communities. If we reorganize in this way, there should be organized government economic programs carried out in each economic community over the four years life of governments or parliament. However, for these new economic communities to be functional and viable, they must be allowed to carry out all the functions expected of economic communities. It is timely to take into serious consideration the kind of political statuses we must relate to as the current political leaders of this country.

On this matter of political development and reform there are three political statuses we can relate too. First, is the granted autonomy; secondly, is granted independence and thirdly are the sovereign states. If we are to be free as we have always wish to be, we must convince ourselves that ours are sovereign communities. As sovereign communities we must decide things ourselves so as to come with decisions that have to be made because they need to be made on their merits and not because someone or some international laws obliged us to decide that way.

Many times we have allowed ourselves to be virtually dictated by others, and this is not good. Many times we are but victims of calculated advices crafted to create situations that others can profit from. This is why our communities must accept and be prepared to operate a sovereign entity. We must assist our rural communities to be organized for the purpose of economic development instead of just political expediency.

Two examples of the serious contributing factors to the obvious failure to make desirable economic development progress in this country are the lack of organized economic development programs to be pursued in the constituencies and the lack of close and effective administrative supervision of policy implementations at constituency level. So far the little supervision of the implementation of our policies has been carried out remotely because of the non deployment of relevant officers or the nonexistent of formal community governments in the constituencies.

There must be sovereign rural community governments allowed for in our legal framework. If such provisions are not now inexistent, efforts must be made to facilitate the organizing of such kinds of government in the rural communities. The sovereign community governments should be administered, of course, by the chiefs and traditional leaders. Only if we have legal rural community governments can we be assured that the implementation of the government policies will benefit from close supervision. When we have close supervision for our policy implementation programs, our chances for success will be enhanced.

Remote control supervision must be avoided if we are to make any serious tangible economic development progress in our country. There is nothing wrong with our socioeconomic development policies today. The only things that are still missing in our economic development equation are the absence of government facilitated economic development plans for the constituencies and the lack of close supervision of the policy implementations in the rural areas where most of the government's development policies are intended to be carried out.

Our policies must also liberate us from the undesirable state of affairs we are still caught in. It is imperative that we all work together for our common good and this goes to a bipartisan approach to government. Perhaps a political reform worth considering to advancing us towards a more stable political environment is the return to a government structure that has sectors instead of ministries. Under this possible rearrangement, ministries should be considered under each sector which is to be manned by members of parliament who will be ministers of the crown, of course, and to be led by a sector chief minister. Each sector's political administration is to be a governing entity as well as a watchdog for the other sectors. In this potential political reform, the opposition's function will in effectively be annulled.

How we select our prime minister is an area we may need to reconsider. If the nation elects the prime minister instead of the members of parliament electing the PM, he or she will not have to worry about taking decisive actions against ministers of the crown that deserve to be removed in the interest of public good. Currently, prime ministers compromise integrity because of the fear of abandonment by sacked ministers and their supporters when it becomes necessary to take punitive actions against rouge ministers.

We also need to minimize the number of motions of no confidence that can be taken against ruling governments. It is a good idea not to allow a motion of no confidence against a government during the first year of its reign. When a motion of no confidence may become necessary, only an internal motion of no confidence on a government leadership should be allowed at cabinet level as the first action to be taken. In the first motion of no confidence only government leaders should be removed. If with a new leader a government still does not perform, then the government can then be removed on the floor of parliament.

Before I sit down I would like to say something about the importance of education to our development aspirations. First of all we must decide an acceptable answer to this question: what kind of Solomon Islands do we want? Only when we have already settled this question should we then embark on the development programs to bring about our desired Solomon Islands. Implementing development plans without answering this question is naïve; it is akin to punching the air only until one is tired without tangible results. It is also wasteful in terms of time and other resources.

To Solomon Islands, education is still a development tool and is still not a luxury item. If education is to be worth the expenses it incurs every year, it must be relevant to our development aspirations. I may be pre-empting here, but this government will support all efforts to make education in the country not only to be of quality and accessible but will also expect education in the country to be relevant. It is this desire to provide accessible quality and relevant education that this government is seriously thinking about upgrading SICHE to become the nation's national university and facilitate the establishment of at least one technical college in each of our provinces. The rationale behind the thinking to establish technical colleges in the provinces is to provide more spaces for our secondary school graduates to be trained at college level for our local labour market as well as the regional labour markets.

This government is not short on ideas. What it will need is political support and support to take on the challenges confronting this nation. It is in this regard that the government will appreciate the encouragement from her Majesty's Opposition and the Independent side of this honourable House. This government may not have the academic flying colours so desired by the world, but I can assure you that this government is surely blessed with a healthy dose of much needed commonsense. What this government will need is the encouragement and support of all stakeholders and also the need to be given a change to implement its plans for the good of our people. With these few remarks, I support the motion.

Hon. TAREMAE: I also want to contribute to this sine die motion. Thank you for the opportunity to briefly contribute in support of this motion of sine die. This is the first meeting of this Ninth Parliament. At this outset, I wish to join other speakers to take this opportunity to thank your good office for your able guidance and leadership in ensuring the smooth conduct of this 1st meeting. Although this 1st meeting understandably is short and brief, much work has been done to ensure business of this parliament did take place and reach its successful completion.

I would like to make some observations on this 1st meeting of the Ninth Parliament. In this regard, firstly out of the current total of 49 members, 24 of us are new members, therefore although we convene Parliament on 8th September, a special adjournment was made to allow for the induction program for MPs to take place and for preparation of the 2010 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2010 to be concluded and also allow the process of formulation of the government's policy statements to continue.

For those of us who are new MPs, I thank the staff of the National Parliament for conducting the induction program which has greatly enlightened some of us on our role as MPs and also on our conduct and participation in Parliament. This greatly helps us in understanding parliamentary functions otherwise it would have been a very daunting experience for some of us. Your office should be commended for putting

together the induction program. Furthermore, I also acknowledge your understanding and tolerance with the first timers at this first meeting.

Since this is my first term in parliament, I wish to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank my good people of Central Makira Constituency for the confidence they have in me in which I have found the strength to take leadership as their Member of Parliament. I would like to thank in particular the chiefs, village elders, women, men, all the youths along the coast and up the Bauro Highlands for providing unfailing support to the mission which I undertook during my campaign. I am humbled and wish to assure them that I will do my best to serve them to the best of my ability in these four years.

As other speakers have alluded to, this first meeting has had its own challenges as far as the business of Parliament was concerned. We all know that when we have more than six different parties merging under one policy framework, challenges are expected. But this task, one that government is finalizing to set the new direction that we consider would best serve our country.

During the course of this first meeting, the government is still completing its policy statements and therefore this has to a certain extent also affected the asking and answering of questions in terms of the answers given could not be more specific when issues of new policies are raised. In this regard, the Opposition group must be highly commended for the excellent questions, which I am sure has also helped government to take this into consideration while finalizing its priority policies. More so at an individual MP level, I am sure this has given new MPs the first appreciation of what being a Minister means and demands. More importantly, I also believe through the questions that were asked answered our people have been informed on the progress, if not, what government priorities are.

One of the questions raised that also concerns my Ministry was the proposed Forgiveness Bill. As explained on the floor of Parliament, I repeat that necessary consultation process will take place with all stakeholders. The TRC, my Ministry and the AG's Chambers in connection with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission will complete its two-year term as provided for under the TRC Act 2008 in January 2012. The recommendation of the TRC will be most useful in determining the requirement for the relevance of the nature of such a bill if so required. In addition, the government is committed to support the finance of the TRC in partnership with existing donor support program for the TRC.

I also want to use this opportunity to thank all government ministries and staff. They are to be commended for their contribution to the various government business brought to Parliament at this meeting. While only two bills were brought before the House, the passage of the 2010 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2010 of the sum of \$177,780,400 is most crucial at this point in time; one that would enable ministries concerned to continue to legally expend the appropriate budget for the delivery of

services and their respective priorities. The Supplementary Appropriation is provided for us to supplement expenditures incurred by the issue of contingency warrants during the year by the ministry responsible and also to supplement additional pressures approved by Cabinet during the year.

The second bill is the Customs Valuation (Amendment) Bill 2010. This Amendment is purposely to enable the continual use of the calculation method of import duty based on the cost insurance and freight charges rather than on the free on board value introduced under the principal act as alluded to by the honourable Minister. The Amendment Bill has the intention of strengthening the Customs Valuation and Offences Act 2009 and as such the amendment will allow corrections to the Act, which will enable it to fully operate and achieve its policy objective. Such debate has been made on the pros and cons of amendment, which I am certain the responsible ministry will take on board in the operations of the Act.

In view of the important motion on the resolution moved by the honorable Finance Minister under section 103(1) of the Constitution which empowers the honorable Minister of Finance to authorize the issues of monies from the consolidated funds for the purpose of meeting expenditure necessary to carry on the public services, this motion, both sides of the House are obliged to support. The resolution legally covers the period of the next six months to ensure the delivery of services continues and government machineries to continue with its work for our people.

Obviously, the next six months will be a very busy and demanding time for all ministries. Raising priorities as alluded to will include finalization and interpretation of the policy statements of the government and translation of these into work plans and programs. The 2011 preparation reflecting government priorities will continue to completion, translation into national development plans and necessary donor dialogue, to also commence to ensure the covering of the second sitting by the third quarter of 2011.

Finally, Mr Speaker, I thank your office and staff for ably conducting this first sitting. I also thank the Leader of Opposition and those on the other side of the House for their contribution in the business of Parliament and also all government ministries for contributing to the success of this First Meeting of the Ninth Parliament. With these remarks, I beg to support the motion.

Sitting suspended for 10 minutes break at 3.27 pm

Sitting resumed at 3.42 pm

Mr SANDAKABATU: Thank you for giving me this great opportunity, and I say great because it is my first time to stand here and take the floor to represent my honourable people, and here I say honourable because they deserve it, of North West Choiseul on the floor of their parliament and to contribute towards the motion of Sine Die moved by the Honourable Prime Minister and currently being debated.

On the same note, I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for seeing it fit to table the motion of Sine Die at this time to allow Honourable Members of Parliament, regardless of their political affiliations and/or where which side of this House we find ourselves in, can freely express ourselves without fear or favour.

Furthermore, I am indeed grateful for the opportunity that is here and now enabled us as responsible elected Members of Parliament, pay tribute in earnest and with sincerity to the people we represent back in our constituencies, a case in point, my honourable people of North West Choiseul constituency and the whole of Laurus for that matter.

As a matter of courtesy and protocol, my people and I, extend our congratulations to every honourable Member of Parliament sitting in this Chamber, for your elevation to this highest office of the land. We wish you good health and God's guiding hands in the exercise of your duties and responsibilities in ensuring that Solomon Islands continues to enjoy peace, progress and prosperity. Most importantly, we extend our sincere congratulations to you, our Honourable Speaker of Parliament and the Deputy Speaker for your elections to these prestigious positions of highest authority. Similarly, I congratulate our Honourable Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister for willingly taking on the mammoth task of keeping this nation on course and at the same time making sure that our Government remains in focus, relevant and not swayed by political vagaries that are bound to arise now and again.

I take this opportunity to also congratulate all our Honourable Ministers of the crown, most of whom are not here at the moment for your appointment to your positions of highest authority and status. My people and I trust that you will do your utmost best in your exercise of authority to bring about fairness and identifiable tangible developments that will mean much to all citizens of this nation, including the disabled, the poor and the marginalized. My people and I are pinning our hopes on this government to deliver that changes that I will still have to see inscribed in your policy statements when it is launched. Please, do not disappoint my people and the people of this nation.

I entered politics not by chance but by choice and therefore I entered this Honourable Parliament also, not by chance but by choice. You can see me standing amongst the Opposition and the Independent Group in this honourable House still, not by chance but by choice. I choose to be where I am, earnestly believing in the astute leadership and renowned integrity of the honourable members of the Opposition and Independent groups that I am with, to keep this government true to its words, and that

is “the government by the people and for the people” and not a government that is only for those that govern. I strongly believe that a good government is measured by its active, intelligent and timely participation from the Opposition group in a climate that is trusting, understanding and friendly.

I come to Parliament full of hope in finding answers to many of my people’s questions. One in particular is the compensation claim by the people of Batava Ward on North West Choiseul with the Papua New Guinea Government, for the fear and atrocities committed against my people at the height of the Bougainville spill over effect or crisis in the late 1980s and 1990s. For the information of this House, my family is a silent victim of this war. My two children and their mother were being shot at by rogue elements of the PNG Army at Moli Catholic Mission Station, Choiseul Province, on April fool’s day of 1996, whilst they were attending afternoon mass with other village women. That incident plus many other similar incidences of the same nature, not only taunted the minds of my children to this very day, but that of the whole of my constituency. We are still waiting for an answer to this compensation claim.

My people have almost lost hope on this very sensitive and touchy issue and strongly feel that successive governments have not acted responsibly in providing a satisfactory answer to my good people of the Batava Ward and the whole of Choiseul on the same matter. It is my hope that in order to do justice to my people and the people of Choiseul, this Government must pursue this claim and settle the matter once and for all.

Speculation has it that the PNG Government has honoured this compensation claim, together with that submitted by the Western Province, and I here I stand to be corrected, but in a manner that does not compensate our anguish, anxiety, pains and the many losses my people had encountered throughout the Bougainville Crisis and its ensuring spill-over effects. The Solomon Islands government through its relevant ministries and responsible leaders we feel have sadly let us down. Enough is enough and I call on the Honourable Prime Minister and the government to see that this matter is settled as soon as possible.

Lest you forget, Choiseul is also a province of Solomon Islands. In the past 32 years we were virtually forgotten. Whilst other provinces enjoy good road networks, education, health, electricity, communication and the list goes on to harness and support rural development, my people have been mere spectators. For the information of this Honourable House, Taro provincial centre is still without electricity, water supply, proper housing and medial facilities and a wharf, of course, to service my people justly. We are still waiting for our mini hospital and the relocation of the provincial capital to the mainland of Choiseul. Certainly, it is has been a long and frustrating wait. I hope this Government will have my people to wait no more.

Whilst I so much desire and look forward to a fast pace economic progress through sustainable utilization of our resources, I am also mindful of the need to

manage and conserve our environment and natural resources. Our country is blessed with abundant natural resources in both marine and terrestrial. We are millionaires and have no reason at all to be beggars on our own tuff. People must change to realize and fully utilize our natural resources to provide for that lasting and sustainable livelihood that has been mistakenly cohered with donor handouts. Finally, it is my hope that this government is one that listens to the plight of the poor, the disadvantaged, the sick and the marginalized in our society; one, amongst the many others that has respect for the right to life, the common good for all and the principles of democracy.

Before, I take my seat, allow me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank my good people of North West Choiseul Constituency from Sanqigae to Galoe villages that through a fair and clean electoral process, you have chosen me by a clear majority to be your representative in this parliament. I sincerely commend all of you for exercising your democratic rights in choosing me to be your leader. To me, it is not who has voted for me that matters or counts, but it is the choice of the majority that counts, and that happens to be me, your Member of Parliament. Hence, take it from me, my honourable people of North West Choiseul that I stand here in Parliament as the representative of all people, big and small, young and old from North West Choiseul. I would like to pay a special tribute to the old and frail and to the sick and disabled, who took that painful effort to arrive at the polling stations on August 4th 2010 to cast their votes. I salute you honourably.

Last but not the least, allow me to thank the Leader of Opposition and the Leader of Independent group and my honourable colleagues in the mentioned groups. Your constant encouragement, mentoring and advice have been most valuable for me. I look forward to drawing strength from you as we go, like a young bird growing feathers and learning to fly. I hope that not long from now I will not only fly well but glide effortlessly in the skies of the Solomon Islands' politics. With that I support the motion.

Mr. HOUENIPWELA: I thank you for most sincerely for the opportunity accorded to me to make some remarks on this Motion of Sine Die. I thank the Honourable Prime Minister for moving the motion.

In moving this Motion, the Prime Minister informed us that this would be his third sine die Motion. That to me is quite a remarkable achievement already. This shows not only the Prime Minister is a devoted Solomon Islander desirous and committed to the service of our people in parliament, but this shows he is an old hand at it. That contrasts very significantly to some of us, including myself, who is speaking for the first time on this motion of sine die. That being so, let me first of all thank my very good people of Small Malaita Constituency. I thank all of my people very, very sincerely and especially the 1,677 voters that did every good thing you have done in ensuring that I stand here today to represent you in this Chamber. I thank you for

voting me in to represent you for the next four years. I will be here in the next four years so I would like to say to my people that be sure I will be presenting you for four years. At the same I would like to thank all those who contested the seat with me, the 14 of you. In particular I would like to thank and acknowledge the former Member of Parliament, Mr. William Haomae, for all the good work he has done for all our people. I like to acknowledge his contribution in the development of Small Maliata. To you my good people I assure you I will represent your interest to my best and to serve you and represent you in this House.

The only reason I am here in parliament and why I decided to contest the 2010 general election is only to serve my people and the people of Solomon Islands and no other interests. All of you here may have many other different interests but for me that is my only interest. I am therefore very delighted that I am given the opportunity to represent those interests as a parliamentarian.

Like the Prime Minister, I truly love my country Solomon Islands. I am a very, very passionate Solomon Islander. Therefore, the Prime Minister in saying what he said I really can feel what he said because I love my country, I love my people and despite of everything that everyone in the world may say about this country, Solomon Island is my place and I want to say again here that this is why I would like to serve here in parliament.

I believe that Solomon Islands has a lot of potentials with its growing population and natural resources. It has the great potential to become a very, very progressive democracy and a very progressive country in terms of its economy. Sadly, however, over the years these opportunities have been wasted as a result of ill-conceived development policies and actions. I saw in my own constituency, for example, many communities are sliding into impoverishment. I see my people catching the disease, I called, *aid dependency syndrome* where they now depend on hand-outs. We must not allow an economic development process that drives Solomon Islands into a beggar-thy-neighbor society. Our people are hard working, are very industrious, and very enterprising. All they are looking for is genuine economic opportunities. They need the enabling environment where there is equal opportunity to do their best.

That said I know that some of our people believe in taking short cuts to get rich, and that is a very sad truth, but we see some of them, at least, selling off their precious natural resources to foreign logging operators for a few dollars, and in some cases only in return for hotel accommodation in Honiara. It is still beyond comprehension as to why so many of these so-called landowners continue to sell their forests after seeing the endless disputes, arguments, court cases, and the injustices and the wholesale damage being caused to their environment by logging activities.

It is further mind-boggling to see there are still others, who in the hope of getting rich overnight, join the bandwagon of fantasy clubs in financial scams like the Charity Fund, hoping their investment of a few dollars will make them millions. Sir, you

yourself are too familiar with these people, as you would recall in 2000 when you were then the PM, you and I worked very tirelessly to bring commonsense to some of these people. You would recall Sir, one particular lady who cried at your house and I can still picture the bag she was holding and accusing you for not signing the forms. We worked hard to help our people know about this, but unfortunately as you would know, this lady has obviously misled thousands of investors who lost their hard earned cash and savings in this scheme. But I hear this scheme is very much alive, and I am very sad about this. I think the most hurtful part about it is that they are even more hopeful that their millions will eventually be realized now that I am in Parliament and you are the Speaker of the House so I think we still have work yet to be done. But this is a symptom of a society that is devoid of realistic, holistic development policies and strategies, a sign of a society that is sick. To this end, I am heartened to hear that the new government policy directions are geared towards the philosophy of a holistic development approach.

Another of my observation is that this country, especially its political landscape is controlled and managed by strong vested interests. Usually this shows its ugly head during elections, and I had a glimpse of it during the past elections. While by definition, it would be impossible to eradicate this practice, perhaps it would be useful to realize again whose interests it is we should be representing here in Parliament. I hope all of us Members of Parliament would remember the notes we were issued during our induction program. Most of all, it is my hope that we do not forget the challenge that was given to us by Dr. Zoebule to be the salt and light wherever we are. In that regard, let me remind us, all of us that we occupy positions not only of influence, but more importantly, we are placed where our actions – whether intended or not – can cause deliberate outcomes for our people. Lest we forget, politicians can make or break!

Politicians like us can turn a country into a prosperous one, which there are many examples of. On the same token, they can ruin the country and there are also many examples of this today. Lest we forget, we in this House have the mandate of our people to made laws to govern this country and to manage the affairs of this country. This is the power and the authority of the people. It is a dangerous weapon if applied without wisdom. When used with wisdom it can turn Solomon Islands into a prosperous country just as we sing and long for in our national anthem. It is in this context that when I was asked to be a candidate in the 2010 General Elections, I was actually a reluctant candidate.

The notion of being a national leader sent shivers down my spine; I am frightened of it, I am afraid to come here because I look at the role and looking at some of you too makes me afraid. But this is not a role to play around with, it is an awesome responsibility, it is serious business. So for me being a MP, being a member of Parliament is not only understanding the issues and knowing what to do about them, it is not even about performance in parliament or how well you can contribute in

parliamentary debates, but the responsibilities of a national leader extend far beyond the walls of parliament for you are carrying the people of your constituency with you. As a matter of fact you are carrying every Solomon Islands citizen with you. You are a role model to the young people of this country. You are Solomon Islands ambassador to the outside world. You are the people's representative wherever you go. That is what I was thinking about which makes me afraid of this place.

I believe this is part of Dr. Zobule's message to us at our commissioning service. To me, what this means is that your reputation and integrity is what you must protect. As Members of Parliament we must realize that we are role models, as I was just saying a moment ago. So the question is what kind of a role model are we demonstrating to this nation and especially to our young people and for that matter, what kind of role model are we to our own kids and our spouse, and in some cases, spouses? That is a question I am going to leave to ourselves to answer.

Let me now turn to the first meeting of this Ninth Parliament. We met over a week and we debated several Members' questions, and apart from that we discussed a motion of appreciation for Sir Peter and passed a supplementary appropriation and the motion on the resolution. While I am unable to quote any past experience to compare with, from what I understand I think we have done quite well. But more to the point, I think the government has done well, especially the Minister of Finance, he has done well, and I congratulate him. Of course, his job is only done under your able leadership and guidance.

Whilst on the Supplementary, I wish to reiterate again what I said during the debate on the manner of the budget, and to be precise the budget process. It seems to me this process has become arbitrary, even ad hoc in its formulation, but more especially in its implementation. It should be a serious and rigorous process whereby line ministries compete for funds and when successful they must protect those funds. However, this process has now become a practice, a mere tradition to the extent that line ministries have to expect a supplementary after the budget is passed.

Accounting officers namely Permanent Secretaries in line ministries must be compelled to make realistic bids to the Budget Unit. I say these must be bids, in other words, they must not only compete for funds but must be able to substantiate those bids. The problem in some ministries is that they take it as a matter of practice to rely on to what is now called CWs and expect a supplementary to see the year out. This is not good enough. They must be held accountable to every dollar given to them to run their programs.

The process, as you know, also involves the Ministry of Finance, more particularly the Budget Unit arbitrarily making cuts and prescribing ceilings to submissions by line ministries. Often than not, at a supplementary, the year's budget usually would end up with the original submission anyway. This is a cause for doubt on the budget process and I think it is no light matter. I would like to see a process that

leaves no question as to how figures are derived, how moneys will be spent, how they will be accounted for and who is accountable. This practice has made the budget process into one which has very little integrity and therefore the budget goes to Parliament despite the debate only as a formality. The Budget, as the Appropriation Act, has the potential, if not, already lost confidence. This is unacceptable to me. This, to me, amounts to Parliament being misled. While I appreciate the Minister has legal powers under the Public Finance and Audit Act for the use of contingency warrants, I am of the view that the same Act is very specific on the question of what CWs are intended for; it is specifically for urgent and unforeseen expenditures. The point is that most of these expense items that are bought in CWs or requested as new money are actually not unforeseen and in some instances they are not urgent. I would like to suggest that we return the budget process into one that can guarantee confidence in the appropriation itself. Only then can Parliament be absolutely confident that when it considers the supplementary it would be looking at these as urgent and unforeseen expenditures.

The responses to my questions during the meeting in relation to SOEs and in particular to Soltai and Sasape Marina Ltd while acceptable, they have not really provided the assurance I was looking for. I agree that the general thrust towards ensuring SOEs are to stop their reliance on budgetary support and return these entities to profit making status. I am concerned, however, on the area of governance in a number of SOEs. I think some of the SOE Boards still have politically connected individuals who may not satisfy the requirements under the new SOE regulations.

On the matter of management agreements, especially in joint ventures, care must be exercised in these arrangements. I am concerned more particularly in the case of the NPF taking up equity shares in certain investment proposals. It is obvious the NPF Board is taking an aggressive and proactive approach to broaden its investment portfolio. That is to be welcomed. However, the Board should be mindful that the funds it is in charge of belong to the members; in other words these should be regarded as private funds and must not be used to enhance political aspirations. That being said, I recognize that the NPF does possess an important source of funds that can be deployed to boost economic development in Solomon Islands. I am therefore encouraged that these important public entities are being resurrected and restructured to be profit making entities. We hope to see fish productions growing again and in due course, our ships would be adequately served by a more efficient and top class shipyard at Sasape Marina.

Speaking of public sector investments, it is very sad to see that over the years successive governments have not invested adequately in public utilities. We all know that no economy can function without a functioning air, land and sea transportation system. This is the lifeline of economy in the movement of goods and services including people around the country. We have to start investing again in our airfields

and especially the rehabilitation and maintenance of our existing airstrips such as the one at Parasi on Small Malaita.

Apart from the economic arguments for a working transport system, we are reminded that our country is an archipelago of scattered islands that we must knit together for obvious reasons. To this end, a working transport system is a critical factor and in that regard the government should be commended for the recent signing of the shipping franchise which should see our remote parts of the country being served on a regular basis. But equally important is the need to develop economic activities to the rural areas from the urban centres, especially Honiara. We know that Honiara is already congested and its services cannot cope with the demands of its fast growing population. Not only that, but to continue investing more public sector funds in Honiara deprives the rest of the country from taking their place to effectively participate in the economic development of our country. Besides, to not do that only continues to limit the opportunity and potential for the economy and Solomon Islands for that matter to expand and grow.

Much of what needs to be done is by way of building basic and fiscal infrastructure. In this regard, much of this country remains untouched. We in the southern region of Malaita Province are ready, but our people need to have the enabling environment. To that end, I welcome the government's plans to accelerate work on establishing economic growth centres around the country. I am especially grateful to the government and the Prime Minister in his announcement that Afio Substation is one of those centres.

My only concern is that we have nothing in hand in terms of government's plans. Sadly the new government is yet to produce its policies and priorities. At this point in time, therefore, there is no way to see what the government will actually be doing, so in a way we are left in the dark. In this regard, while listening to the Prime Minister's speech in moving this motion, I am quite disturbed by some of his remarks which already are a cause for concern to the public. If the Prime Minister is alluding to what is contained in the government's policy document and its strategies, then I am quite concerned.

Of course, the government has already made it known that it will be a responsible one and its assurance to pursue good governance, transparency and accountability principles are well noted. I further note that the Government will be pursuing sound and prudential financial management practices. These are all very encouraging words but, of course, words can remain words; it is the action and performance which is the real test. I would like to believe that the government can be held to what it says it will do, and I am confident that under the able leadership of the Prime Minister, the government will succeed in this endeavour. I would like to encourage those of us on this side of the House to provide that much needed support.

Having said that, I am conscious of the enormous task that lies ahead. I think it is important that the government must be able to apply self discipline to itself. In this connection I recognize that Solomon Islands currently has important benchmarks under the IMF Program and the Honiara Club arrangements. It will be critical not only to reach these, but in so doing, we can be assured that Solomon Islands would be able to sustain itself in the long term.

I would like to commend the government for a successful completion of the 2010 National Elections. Of course, it is a happy outcome, at least for now, to all of us here. As to how successful it is for us, will depend on the outcome of some of the election petitions still outstanding. As you know, these elections are one of the biggest items in the Supplementary that was approved this week by Parliament. One reason given for the shortfall was that some donors did not pay their promised financial assistance to the Electoral Commission. It is quite disheartening that the Commission is yet to receive these funds.

While the general elections were peaceful, there is a lot more that can be done to improve on. In this regard, I am pleased that already the government is taking steps to improve the voter registration process and management thereof, and also to review the election process itself to allow all eligible voters to cast their ballot anywhere in Solomon Islands. Also, we should aggressively pursue considerations to use a preferential voting system in the election process to be more representative and effective.

Rural development is the catchword in Solomon Islands. In fact we now have a separate ministry that deals with rural development and indigenous affairs. It demonstrates the level of attention the government devotes to the rural sector. Suffice to say, this is where the bulk of our population resides so it is only the right thing to do to ensure the majority of our people are reached. But as mentioned elsewhere, in so doing, not only do we allow our population to participate in the economic development of this country, but it also provides the opportunity to widen the economic base and thereby ensure a sustainable economic growth path.

As you would agree, these are all good and bold intentions by the government. However, rural development and social services for that matter cannot be delivered without a delivery vehicle. Sadly, the vehicle is either in dire repair state or just nonexistent. The public services and extension services that used to serve the rural population are no longer there.

I disagree with the notion that lack of funds is the problem. In fact, in my opinion, too much of it, is the problem. To be precise, too much money is being thrown into the system which is currently weak and in need of an overhaul. Millions of dollars have been channeled through the various funds that are managed by MPs, namely the Rural Livelihood, Micro-Project, the Millennium Fund and the RCDF. It seems to me we are overloading a delivery vehicle that is not functioning. It is a well known fact

that the Ministry of Provincial Government is unable to do this and least of all our respective provincial assembly governments. As already alluded to, the extension services network is already non-existent. Even with the creation of the Ministry of Rural Development, no mechanism or systems have been established to deliver

Hon MAELANGA: Point of Order, Mr Speaker, it is now 4.30 pm and I can see that there are still quite a number of Members who would still want to speak on the Sine Die motion. I therefore move that Standing Order 10 be suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the continuation of the business of the House until adjourned by the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 10(5).

Standing Orders suspended at 4.30pm to permit the continuation of the business of the House

Mr Houenipwela: Thank you Honourable Deputy Prime Minister for the motion to extend the debate.

Even with the creation of the Ministry of Rural Development, no mechanism or systems have been established to deliver or if there are any I have not seen them. We are therefore left with this only alternative, and that is through the local Member of Parliament. Be that as it may, it seems this remains the only workable mechanism; the only delivery vehicle whereby rural development and services are being provided throughout our country. While there may be pockets of success stories on the whole, this remains unsatisfactory and I do not have to bore you with examples of these. We should therefore focus our attention on ensuring the delivery vehicle works. We must establish operation mechanisms for delivery of development to our rural areas as a matter of urgency. Such mechanisms must also establish procedures for appraisal and reporting. This calls for a revamped manpower and institutional capacity building. I think with the Ministry of Rural Development now geared up to this objective which, I believe, under the hardworking new Minister, the government should be able to achieve it.

While on the question of rural development, we cannot overemphasize the need to pursue wider sector reforms. It is encouraging to note this is an area the government is already thinking about, especially in terms of land reforms. However, as critical as it is, land is a very sensitive issue. I do not need to remind anyone, but if not handled well, it can quickly blow into one's face. I would caution the government to be very diligent in dealing with any land reforms.

To have a sustainable development path, we need to establish also a good investment environment. Currently, Solomon Islands is not rated very favourably in the latest World Bank publications on the cost of doing business. In fact, amongst about

135 countries we are just above the hundredth mark which is actually a decline in our position the previous year. The issue is not so much which position we are placed in, in these international publications. As much as the need to work hard to encourage our own people domestic investors, not to rethink where to put their last investment dollars, it should be here in their own country. This is where I think we can achieve a more sustainable and long term economic growth path.

Still on the issue of delivering tangible developments to our population, we are guided by international benchmarks or milestones to help us ascertain our development goals. In this regard, the UN established the aid MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) which all member countries must aim to achieve by 2015. It is sad to note that already we are way off track on two of these goals, namely Goals No. 4 and 5, which are Goal No. 4 is to reduce child mortality and Goal No. 5 to improve maternal health. It seems we have work yet to do in order to reach a decent health standard for our mothers and children.

I am sure we are all desirous to offer the best of our ability to the service of our country and people. This, of course, applies to everybody holding public offices. In this particular regard, I cannot ignore the matter of political appointees. I am sure the Honourable Prime Minister is desirous to serve his country in that same spirit. In so doing, it is incumbent on the government that his office, the Prime Minister's Office must have the best brains to serve him. My point is that the practice of hiring people without the appropriate qualifications and especially those with a check-at-work history is not only a disservice to the Prime Minister's Office and the government for that matter, but more seriously to the people of Solomon Islands. How do we expect quality work from people who could not demonstrate any sense of work ethics, least of all, produce work anyway else? I leave that to the good judgement of the people of Solomon Islands.

Let me now comment on various reports that come to Parliament. During this meeting I sighted at least three of these reports, namely the Auditor General's Report 2009, two annual reports by the Ministry of Rural Development and Indigenous Affairs and the 2009 Annual Report for the Ministry of Forest and Conservation. I assume the officials who wrote these reports have spent many hours and days collecting data, collating these and writing these reports. I am sure they do not expect the reports to collect dust. The least we can do is to read them, at least the executive page.

The point is that I think it would be expected of the Ministers responsible to actually take such reports to the floor of Parliament. I think it is only proper and right that Parliament debates these reports. To me these reports are important mechanisms whereby the government would be accountable to the people of Solomon Islands. Hence I believe Parliament is the right place where these reports should be discussed. Simply having them in MPs pigeonholes is not good enough.

In closing, let me offer my personal thanks and appreciation to a number of people, and first to the chairman and secretariat of the two standing committees in which I am a member, namely the Public Accounts Committee and the Bills & Legislation Committee, which you have kindly appointed me and other colleagues to. As a new Member already I have learnt a lot through these committees. Secondly, I thank the Parliament office, especially the Clerk and her staff for organizing the induction program and looking after us during our meetings. I also thank the security staff, drivers especially the accounts officers and the ladies who work tirelessly to ensure the meetings run smoothly. Thirdly, I thank the Prime Minister and the government for taking us through the past week and allowing us to debate matters of importance to this country and our people. Lastly but not the least, of course, yourself Mr Speaker for the fine effort in guiding and ensuring the debates are constructive and that we members of parliament behave. With these remarks I support the motion.

Mr Speaker: I know that quite a number of Honourable Members of Parliament are committed Christians and since the end hours of the day are drawing closer, in accordance with the earlier resolution of the House and according to Standing Order 10(5), the House is now adjourned until 9:30am Monday 4th October 2010.

The House adjourned at 4.37 pm