

Monday 16th DECEMBER 2013

The Speaker, Sir Allan Kemakeza took the Chair at 10.07.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

All were present except the Ministers of; Education and Human Resources, Justice and legal Affairs and the Members of; North West Guadalcanal, Fataleka, West Kwara'ae, North Malaita, Temotu Pele, South New Georgia- Rendova/Tetepari, North Guadalcanal, North New Georgia, Ulawa/Ugi and North Vella La Vella.

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, to allow the Public Accounts Committee Report to be confirmed and distributed to all Members of Parliament, I will suspend the sitting until 2:00 pm this afternoon.

Sitting suspended at 9.47 am

Sitting resumed at 2.28pm

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

- Report on the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013 (*National Parliament Paper No.25 of 2013*)
- National Transport Fund Annual Report 2012 (*National Parliament Paper No.26 of 2013*)
- National Transport Fund Audit Report for 2011(*National Parliament Paper No.27 of 2013*)
- "National Transport Fund Audit Report for 2012 (*National Parliament Paper No.28 of 2013*)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Mr Speaker: The Hon MP for Aoke/Langalanga has sought my permission under Standing Order 21(4) and I have granted him person to ask a question without notice. I understand he has discussions with the appropriate Minister who has agreed to respond on behalf of the Government.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

Mr MATTHEW WALE (*Aoke/Langalanga*): The Minister for Infrastructure and Development is not here but in the MPs lounge so can the Sergeant call him to come in then I could ask the question. Whilst we wait for him, for Members to appreciate the background to the question is with regards to the apparent impasse that has existed for quite a while now with regards to the Solomon Islands Ports Authority. I think it is good for the Minister to come and inform the House about the progress of this matter.

Mr Speaker: Yes, I have been informed that the Minister agreed to answer that question but unfortunately the Minister responsible is not available. Therefore, I will defer this question to the next sitting day.

Question deferred.

BILLS

Bills – Second Reading

The 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013'

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, debate on the '2014 Appropriation Bill 2013' commences. I would like to remind Honourable Members that according to *Standing Order* 61(2), a maximum of four days, including today, is allowed for the second reading debate. However, it all depends on Members of Parliament in today's debate and that debate starts today. When no further Member rises to speak on the Bill, the Chair will call on the Honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury to wind up the debate. The floor is now open for debate.

Hon. DEREK SIKUA (*Leader of Opposition*): In fact, I do not stand to commence debate but to raise a point of order. First of all, I would like to thank you Mr Speaker for suspending debate on this 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013 in the morning because of the unavailability of the report.

The report of the PAC was actually made available at around 1:40pm this afternoon and that makes it impossible for us, especially those of us on this side of the House to properly read the report and have information on the report to influence our debate on this 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013 in accordance with *Standing Order* 69(g), if indeed this report is going to be of any use to Members of Parliament, especially those of us on this side of the House.

As we can see, the report is pretty thorough and is quite bulky and although it only contains five recommendations, there is a lot of information in this report that needs to be used to inform Members of Parliament in their debate. My point of order is to ask you, Mr Speaker, if you if you could suspend debate on the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013 to commence tomorrow in order to give us more time as we would only have something like an hour and twenty minutes that is basically given to us to prepare our debates on this very important Bill.

As you know, the importance of this report is that it aims to draw the attention of Members of Parliament to matters which the Public Accounts Committee identified during its inquiry, particularly when it questioned senior

members of the public service; the permanent secretaries, chief accountants and undersecretaries and so forth. That is what this side of the House does not have and that is why I ask if we can suspend the debate now to start tomorrow because none of us on this side has the opportunity to really have the time to read the report including the information the Public Accounts Committee included in this report.

Mr Speaker: I think the honourable Leader of Opposition has raised a valid point so as to be fair to Members of Parliament. Would you be able to adjourn the debate on this Bill to the next sitting day, Prime Minister?

Hon. GORDON DARCY LILO (*Prime Minister*): Thank you Mr Speaker. As you know we have given sufficient responses to the various requests that have been made by the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee from the day the Bill was submitted to Parliament. This side of the House has actually responded to the request of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to give time to the Committee to meet. Sir, as you know, we have agreed to sponsoring a motion of special adjournment to give a week to the (PAC) to meet and scrutinise the 2014 Appropriation Bill and the related documents.

As far as we are concerned, we really appreciate the work done by listening to the radio on the engagement that members of the Public Accounts Committee and the Committee itself have done. Up until last week, as you know Mr Speaker, we have also sought the consent of the Parliamentary House Committee to allow Friday 13th of December to be a Government Business Day, and that was awarded. Fortunately, we had almost about the same time Parliament was meeting here, the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee made a special request that we adjourned the debate from Friday to day so as to allow the Committee and its officials to finalize the report of the PAC to be laid before this House.

This side of the House has taken seriously the commitment made by the Chairman of the PAC that they will make use of the weekend. Obviously, we all

know that officers who are engaged in providing the secretariat support from your office are almost about eight officials - very highly qualified officials. We are not talking about just one personnel involved in this task; including the Deputy Auditor General who has been sworn in as the acting Auditor General to provide that overall leadership to help in the secretariat work of the PAC. The team in itself is quite a huge team; quite incomparable to PACs that I have served with in the past and yourself too, Mr Speaker. I am not sure whether you have ever served in a Public Accounts Committee or not the past Mr Speaker, but I have served in the Public Accounts Committee in the past where we have a very thin secretariat serving the Public Accounts Committee during those times. In fact, it is only talking about just the Auditor General and one or two officers providing the secretariat service.

I really appreciate the Chairman actually detailing out the team of about eight qualified officers of Parliament serving in the secretariat to the Public Accounts Committee. When you put the strengthen of the Secretariat against the workload given here; I am sure you have also allocated some expenses for overtime, special duty allowance, night allowance and so forth; I am not too sure whether those allowances are applicable in this particular case. But if you compare the strength of the secretariat capacity serving the Public Accounts Committee now, it is not compared at all to the very weak team that we have in the past. I would have thought that the Committee would have been given very, very good support by the Secretariat here to be able to produce this report that was promised to us on Friday.

I took the assurance by both the Chairman and the Leader of Opposition that we will all have the report today, unfortunately, as we all know we have been advised by the Clerk that the Committee is yet to finalise the report as it has to go through editing and auditing of the text of the report itself and this is exactly what we have found out right now.

I think it is also fair to say that the bulk of the materials that are required for us to make any effective contribution to the debate have also been provided to all Members of Parliament. I am told that all the relevant documents have been served

to all Members of Parliament through their pigeonholes; the budget bricks on recurrent, the bricks on the development budget and other related documents including the budget strategy, the establishment and so forth. But, of course, we all recognize the importance of the Public Accounts Committee and its role as required under the Standing Orders to provide further analysis on the budget estimates and, of course, that has been produced.

I think the time we have thought to allot for the considerations of the Budget includes today. We have estimated this a long time ago to be part of the time that would be allocated for Parliament to consider the 2014 Appropriation Bill. In as much as we do appreciate the concerns raised by the Leader of Opposition, this side of the House is very much committed to proceed with the business of the House. If there are Members who wish to contribute, they can contribute; in fact others can contribute tomorrow. But I think we should utilize all the time that is available to us now to allow Members to contribute.

And as you rightly pointed out Mr Speaker, the Standing Order allows a maximum of four days but, of course, it depends on Members who are willing to speak on the subject. I think without having to underestimate the preparedness and the ability of other Members of Parliament who wanted to speak on the matter, I think it would only be fair that we allow Parliament to continue and then those who are willing to speak can do so because we still have a long time yet up until 4.30pm and others can have tonight to prepare for their debate tomorrow. The position of this side of the House is that unfortunately we will not support this particular motion. Thank you.

Hon Derek Sikua: Mr Speaker, point of order, this is not a motion I raised, so I can speak again. Can you allow me to speak again Mr Speaker, because it is a point of order that I have raised?

Mr Speaker: Yes, I want to inform the House that the Secretariat through my office was available to the Committee. However, it was committee members and the Chairman that decided not to work over the weekend and that was what made it more difficult. But I will allow the Leader of Opposition to say something before I can decide on the point of order.

Hon Derek Sikua: I have noted and taken into account the arguments put across by the Honourable Prime Minister on my point of order. I have also noted his mention of the Secretariat team that you, Mr Speaker, have given the Committee very good support. But I think this weekend was quite a busy one for all of us, for the government side and as well as those of us on the Opposition and Independent side, as well as Parliament itself. We know this is the festive season and somehow we have programmed our office parties this weekend and that has taken us a fair bit of time. And so I think it is a little bit unfair to expect the Secretariat team and the Public Accounts Committee to work over the weekend when this is the festive season and our Christmas parties are schedule during the weekend.

The decision by our group is if the government wants to continue with the debate, they can go on to debate but this side of the House is likely going to begin tomorrow. Therefore, if none of us stands up to debate then it means we have not had the opportunity to look through the report, like I have said, we only have an hour and 20 minutes to look at the report and factor in any new information into our debates. But I hope if there is no one from this side, both from the Independent and the Opposition side standing up, it does not mean we do not want to take part in the debate because we will be ready tomorrow and not this afternoon. It is up to those on the other side if they want to debate, they are most welcome because we want to listen to the debate of the ministers and backbenchers of the government. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Thank you Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I am afraid Honourable Members that time is not on our side; we will be running out of time as everybody knows and so to be fair, we will allow somebody who wishes to speak on the Bill this afternoon to do so. We will go by the time factor and the floor is open for debate. The floor is open for debate.

Hon CONNELLY SANDAKABATU (*Minister for Development Planning & Aid Coordination*): Thank you for availing me the opportunity to contribute briefly to the debate of the 2014 Appropriation 2013.

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate the Minister for Finance and Treasury for presenting the 2014 National Budget to this honourable Chamber. Likewise I would also like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to the permanent secretaries and officials of the Ministry of Finance & Treasury and the Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination for their fine efforts in putting together this Budget under the government's policy guidance.

It is also appropriate to acknowledge the work done by all permanent secretaries and officials of all ministries, who have also worked hard preparing both recurrent and development budgets. I believe the quality and detail of the budget presentation done within line ministries has enabled and improved budget to be prepared this year.

I also wish to thank the Chairman and members of the Public Accounts Committee for their careful scrutiny of the Budget within the tight timeframe available. The 2014 Budget is being prepared and delivered in a very challenging fiscal environment, as outlined by the Honourable Minister for Finance and Treasury, particularly as we look forward to the next decade. Aggregate real growth of the economy in 2012 was only 2.6 percent compared to 6.5 percent in 2011 and 10.5 percent in 2010. Looking forward, it is estimated that growth will be about 2.9 percent in real terms this calendar year and that it will accelerate to about 4 percent

in 2014 and continue to grow in the 3-4 percent range over the period that runs to year 2018. This will enable only modest real per capita growth of between 1.5 percent and 2.5percent per annum over this period. As a consequence, it is estimated that the domestic revenue growth in 2013 will be only about 5 percent compared to an average of 22 percent between 2006 and 2012.

The main cause of revenue growth decline is the fall of logging revenues and the fact that non tax revenue growth is also falling. As a consequence, revenue growth is not expected to keep up with nominal economic growth. Yet this budget supports all key priority areas for the developments committed to by the government. In particular it strongly supports rural service provision, rural infrastructure development and rural livelihood development. It is this investment that will underpin future economic development and government revenues to support our development priorities.

In aggregate terms, the total budget comprising both recurrent and development estimates totals for \$4.4billion, there is \$2.9billion for the recurrent budget and \$1.6billion for the development budget. The development estimates for 2014 of \$1,552.3million comprises \$631.1million for the appropriated development budget and \$921.2million of the development partner supported non-appropriated development budget. The appropriated development budget for 2014, largely financed by the Solomon Islands Government is lower than the planned budget of \$901.1million for 2013 because we have had to reduce the domestic resource available for development while also constraining recurrent expenditures to maintain a responsible budget due to the economic circumstances we find ourselves in, as I have outlined. We acknowledge the \$80million in support of the appropriated development budget by the Republic China. I also want to acknowledge the strong support of our development partners more generally in support of both our development efforts and in support of the recurrent budget, which ultimately also supports key services to our rural people.

In 2014, development partners will finance \$921.2million presented under the non-appropriated development budget heads. This is lower than previous years in large parts because an increasing share of development partner financing is now reflected in the recurrent budget appropriations under Ledger 3 heads of the expenditure in support of recurrent expenditures.

For 2014, development partner support totals to \$586.9million appropriated in support of eight ministries. In 2014 for the 2015 budget, these appropriations will be reviewed to decide whether some parts of this support not of recurrent nature should be appropriated under the development estimate. In addition, we acknowledge \$586.9million in tied budget support. This is \$522.7million from Australia and \$61.7million from New Zealand. This is mainly in support of our education, health, finance, fisheries, police and judicial services, which are all key services of our people in supportive of our development priorities.

Additionally, there is also a total of \$144million from the Asian Development Bank for the Solomon Islands Oceanic Cable Project and \$94.4million for the Honiara Electricity Network Upgrade from the World Bank. These are both critical national development projects with government share of their financing appropriated under the recurrent budget. There is also \$15million from the Republic of China in support of debt servicing. In total, our development partners' friends financed a total of \$1,841.5million of almost 42 percent of the total budget. The Government appreciates this strategic support for our development priorities.

Notwithstanding the challenging economic and fiscal circumstance, we have delivered a responsible budget that lives within our means and devotes considerable resources to the development efforts. It takes time and critical analysis to make hard decisions on how best these limited resources can be efficiently and optimally allocated to support development in different sectors that would meet the development needs of our people. Nevertheless, it is my firm belief that the 2014 Development Budget will continue to deliver on government policies and national

development objectives, as articulated in the National Development Strategy 2011-2020.

I would also like to inform this Honourable House that the country's National Development Strategy 2011 to 2020 is and will continue to be the guiding roadmap for development in this country in the next 10 years. This is to ensure that the government is moving development forward in a strategic direction towards achieving National development Objectives and delivering on government policies. The Government through my Ministry has continued with its effort in 2013 for the 2014 Budget to develop processes designed to improve the implementation of the national development strategy, building on the efforts initiated in 2012 to improve the capacity of both central and line ministries to analyse public expenditure and to develop and implement projects and programs consistent with the National Development Strategy.

At this gesture, I would like to take this opportunity to inform this Honourable House that the country's first Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP) 2014-2018 designed to focus on concrete and immediate national development strategy priorities has been completed with the support of all ministries under the guidance of my ministry.

The first year of its implementation is fully reflected in the development program contained in this budget. My ministry, the Ministry of Development, Planning and Aid Coordination has engaged with line ministries throughout the year to identify priorities which underpin the development of this MTDP. The overarching theme fully consistent with the priorities of the Government has been and I quote, *"Making a difference in the lives of our people"*.

There are six medium term priorities identified and reflected in the document, which are:

- (a) Sustainable economic and rural development covering impacts on the lives of our rural people, support for their productive sectors, institutional

development to facilitate private sector activities and infrastructure development;

- (b) Improved governance including improve quality of policies, programs and activities and the promotion of political integrity and stability;
- (c) Education and human resources development;
- (d) Health and medical services;
- (e) Enhanced public order and safety including assuming the responsibilities transferred from the Regional Assistance Mission (RAMSI);
- (f) Other social and cultural services

Under this plan, 70 percent of planned development expenditures over the next five years will be devoted to sustainable economic and rural development impacting on the lives of our rural population. We plan to keep our promises to our people.

The development of the first rolling MTDP by ministries was completed prior to and forms the basis of ministerial submissions and decisions for the 2014 development budget. Together with significant reforms to the development budget processes implemented this year, We have been able for the first time to ensure that the 2014 development budget submission from line ministries included full costing according to the chart of accounts and detailed project work programs, which include monitorable project targets, project implementation and procurement schedules and a detailed 5-year project cost. By bringing forward the work plan processes and associated project planning, it is expected that project implementation can be speeded up.

The appropriated development estimates for 2014 that are before Parliament for deliberations are now detailed according to the chart of accounts and show two years of forward estimates. This will enhance capacity for ministries to forward plan implementation of their programs. This will also significantly increase the level of

transparency of budget, enabling all stakeholders including Parliament to see exactly how the Government intends to spend its resources.

I believe this is a significant improvement over past practices and we will expand these budget processes to fully cover the non-appropriated development budgets from 2015. It is my firm belief that with the on-going budget and accountability reform now underway, there will be improved confidence of our development partners to support us in this endeavour and provide the same level of information in 2014 onwards in corporation with each ministry. These new budgets and project work plan processes will enabling much closer monitoring of project implementations by and with ministries, closer project and program monitoring with careful focus on both expenditure and outward outcomes will now become a regular feature of the annual development budget processes managed by the Ministry of Planning and Aid Coordination.

May I on behalf of the Government thank the technical support rendered by the Asian Development Bank, other development partners and the commitment of the National Taskforce for taking their leading role in this important activity in ensuring the necessary activities towards formulating the MDTP 2014 to 2018. The reforms to the budgetary process and the preparation of the budgets remained on schedule.

May I also call on this House and the ministries to fully support these reforms, which are designed to improve our performances in delivering services and expending opportunities to the people of our country. Before we consider the new spending measures for 2014, please allow me to reflect on the implementation of the 2013 development budget. As we are aware, the implementation rate of the Development Budget has been a matter of concern. Last year, I committed to budgets and project approval reforms designed to improve implementation. In recent years spending rates have been as low as 40 percent to 50 percent. We hope there is some improvement this year after considerable efforts made to speed up the

work plan processes historically required after parliamentary approval of the development estimates.

As at the end of October 2013, we have been able to spend over 46 percent of our total 2013 development budget. It is expected that by the end of this financial year, this rate should well exceed 50 percent. This is improvement but more needs to be done and we are doing more.

Let me now turn to expenditure priorities in our SIG financed development budget. Just over 70 percent of our development resources or \$458.6million is allocated to sustainable economic and rural development. That is the stated first priority of government and the MTDP. Of this \$458.6million, we have allocated \$175.4million or over 19 percent of the total appropriated development budget allocations to directly improve the lives of our rural people. In addition, we have allocated \$79.8million for activities designed to improve the productive sectors, some 7.8 percent of the total appropriate development budget. Another \$2million is allocated for institutional development. Infrastructure is the key to providing an enabling environment for rural economic activities and service delivery is allocated \$201.4million or 32 percent of government's 2014 development budget.

These figures show we are keeping our promises to our rural population, and on our promise to build our nation even when resources are scarce. We are strongly committed to improve governance. To this end, we have allocated \$46.5million of our development budget to this sector. Education and health services are instrumental in improving the lives of our people. In this regard, we continue to strongly support education and meeting the skills needs of our economy. All allocations of \$27million for the support of basic education is included in our support to improve rural lives mentioned earlier. In addition, we allocated \$67million for tertiary education and training. In total, education receives \$94million or 15 percent of the development budget.

Health remains a core service delivery need for our people. A healthy population is a key indicator for enabling a productive population free from

preventable diseases. An allocation of \$6million for primary and public health programme is included in our support for rural lives. And allocation of \$24million is for improved hospitals and tertiary care. In all, some \$26million is allocated for health.

We acknowledge the importance of good public law and safety. We appreciate the support of our development partners in this area, and believe improvements are being made. We allocate \$30million in this government finance development budget to support this critical area. Another \$5million is allocated for the social and cultural services. I believe this clearly demonstrates our determination to set clear and sound priorities in our development budget, even when resources are constrained. It is the right thing to do.

I wish to highlight a number of important individual projects being supported in this Budget. On the infrastructure sector, through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development, the Government supports the Rural Transport Infrastructure sector programme with a total funding of \$36million in 2014. This program will help stimulate economic growth, enhance rural advancement and service delivery under this program. The focus will be on roads, wharves and bridges.

This Government also recognises its responsibility to provide quality health care services at the National Referral Hospital and this why the tertiary health care development program under the Ministry of Health and Medical services has been allocated \$15million in 2014 and \$23million estimated projection over the next two years. The program aims at rehabilitating, improving and upgrading of the hospital's facilities.

In the education sector, the transition of SICHE to university remains a priority for this Government. This program in year 2014 will receive a total funding of \$15million and \$150million spread over the next three years. The provincial government development program has been allocated \$30million in 2014 and \$90million over three years which aims to support, improve and enhance good governance at the provincial level and building provincial capacity.

Looking forward to improve budget coordination, this Government will also look at how the recurrent and development estimates can better complement each other in delivering results. This will not only improve the understandings and coherence of the budget processes, but make it simpler and easier for all concerned. The result will be a more efficient budget process and better use of our scarce resources.

Finally, I would like to wish the Prime Minister, all Ministers and their respective ministries every success in implementing 2014 Development Budget. Before I take my seat, I would like to take this opportunity to also thank my good people of Northwest Choiseul constituency for their continuous support and prayer and I wish them a Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year and so too this chamber and your good self, Mr Speaker.

Hon BRADLEY TOVOSIA (*Minister for Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology*): Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to contribute to the debate of this very important Bill which shall have outputs, effects, implications and repercussions on the operations of the government in the lives of the people of Solomon Islands in 2014. The Bill proposes for authorization to expend over \$3billion for government services in 2014.

The theme of the 2014 Consolidated Budget is *“Making a difference in the lives of our people and striving to do better with existing resources”*. In other words, we need to make a difference to the lives of our people with existing resources. Whilst this theme may be construed by some to be a complacent one from a revenue generation perspective, it reminds this honourable House that we can do better with existing resources by being serious with our priorities.

The task of doing better with existing resources rests squarely on the shoulders of all sides of this chamber. More than \$140million in this draft budget is to be expended with our oversight and therefore the task of development and

provisions of services are to be also borne by you and me. With elections around the corner, I urge all of us to keep the theme of this budget in mind.

Let me dwell on the work of the Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Disaster Management and Meteorology in relation to this Bill. Since its formation about five years ago, the MECDM usually accounts for about 1 percent of the entire budget, yet the formal and informal economy of this country rests mainly on the natural biophysical environment. Our biophysical environment in addition to our ingenuities is the only sustainable safety nets for our people. MECDM's mandate concerns with managing our interaction with the biophysical environment and coping with its aberrations. MECDM has the potential to invigorate sustainable development and assist transform the lives of Solomon Islanders. We can do more and better with a little more resources, however, we have to be also considerate of the needs that lie in other ministries and sectors.

The essence of the focus of my contribution is to highlight the need to prioritise the MECDM if we are really serious about the long term sustainable economic development.

In this budget, the ministry has a total budget allocation of just about \$41million inclusive of appropriated recurrent and development expenditures. I commend the additional measures amounting to \$21million which has been allocated to the ministry. The bulk of these new measures are for our office complex, rentals and expansion to provincial centres in terms of meteorology and Disaster Management capabilities. I must, however, point out that resources allocated to us in this budget are inadequate for us to be transformative with our ministerial programs.

The allocation in this budget for climate change work inclusive of recurrent and development is just about \$4million. The allocation is a "drop in the ocean" when considering our present vulnerabilities to climate change and sea level rise. This is especially so for adaptation (adjustments to cope with impacts of climate change) work. The issue of relocation is often perceived as a last resort in the field of

climate change adaptation, yet for some parts of the country it is the only reasonable option now and should not be deferred.

Our low lying atolls and artificial islands are the most obvious ones, yet our domestic allocations of adaptation work are inadequate and do not commensurate with the risk and impacts presently experienced in low lying atolls and artificial islands. However, relocation is a sensitive and delicate issue because it touches upon a variety of other contentious issues such as land tenure, physical relocation of people and properties which also have political, social, economical and cultural consequences and implications for people who will move and those who will receive them. Therefore, we need to plan it carefully.

The ministry is working on a framework for relocation but we are also keen to pilot relocation to inform the framework, however, resource allocation to us is our major setback. On the other hand, I also challenge Honourable Members from constituencies, which include communities in highly vulnerable areas to utilise parts of your RCDF to initiate relocation. This is part of my earlier assertion that the task of doing better with existing resources rests squarely on the shoulders of all sides of this House. We have to do our part colleagues.

There is a perception that since climate change is caused by countries with large economies and therefore high level of greenhouse gas emissions, it follows that this country should also fully bear the responsibility of adaptation in Solomon Islands. On the contrary, we need to allocate more domestically raised resources for these purposes. Since when did we have outsiders caring about our needs and problems through OUR "lens" or conception of needs and problems? Resources from external sources intended to address climate change and other risk and development issues do have conditions that are intertwined with, which complicates access to those resources and affects the timely availability of resources when we need them. Therefore, reallocation of national resources for climate change adaptation offers an opportunity to transform our responses and anticipative actions to address climate change now and into the future. On this note, I commend the

allocation \$2.5million for the Solomon Islands Climate Adaptation program, which also linked to the European Union general budget support.

In terms of disaster, our allocation of just above \$10million for both recurrent and development expenditure is noted, but unfortunately it is inadequate to improve the state of preparedness and reduce our response time to disasters. The dependency on contingency warrants to meet relief and recovery work following disasters is administratively sound, but it is operationally ineffective because it delays our response time to disaster. As we all know, when there are delays in response, we get a get a backlash from our people and others. For the past six years disaster relief alone hovered above \$5million on an annual basis and this trend is envisaged to be entrenched, yet our recurrent disaster relief is just under \$2million. We pressed for a minimum of \$5million for the recurrent allocation for disaster relief with the intention of improving our state preparedness and response time.

It is pertinent that attention is given to support the provincial disaster management preparations and operations where the majority of Solomon Islanders are. Disasters as with any other emergencies require quick mobilisation of funds/resources and therefore provincial disaster offices must be also resourced accordingly to also improve the state of preparedness and to carryout disaster risk reduction work. We, at the Ministry are also concerned with the increasing demand placed on the government to provide food relief following events such as flash floods even though they are not officially declared as disasters under the NDC Act. This practice is also fuelled by politicians, which is indicative of our increasing inability to be self reliance and a live-demonstration of the dependency syndrome which is gripping this country and encumbering self-reliance and attacking our people's will to solve problems on their own or with limited external assistance.

Meteorological services are pivotal to the development of this country. Budget support for meteorological service next year is just above \$9million. Nevertheless, we commend the support given, especially in our development allocation which shall enable us to expand our manned weather observation

network. The manned observation work will be complemented by installation of automatic weather stations through one of our ongoing external funded projects.

On the other hand, I would also like to point out that Solomon Islands only has three qualified meteorologists and the ministry needs to be supported to increase the number of meteorologists in the country. I further call for increased allocation to meteorological services so that weather observation can cover more parts of the country. This is also important because our metrological network is also the bedrock of our early warning system for all forms of disasters (e.g. tropical cyclones, tsunami and earthquakes)

The sustainable management of our natural environment and the resources it accrues to our people now and to the future also lies with the ministry. However, our mandate cannot be implemented effectively by ourselves because the decisions to use, alter, restore, protect and conserve lie with resources. Budget support to the Environment Division in this budget is inadequate and incognizant of the national environment safeguard responsibility this division carries for this country. It is a mere \$4.3million inclusive of development and recurrent allocations. For example, our capacity to monitor development consents granted under the Environment Act has been severely compromised by meagre allocations over the past years. This budget allocates after several years a mere \$80,000 for monitoring, which is grossly insufficient to cover the whole country. If we want development that is sustainable and to reduce our vulnerability to natural risks, disasters and better our response to climate change, the ministry has to be appropriately resourced. With these remarks I support the Bill. Thank you.

Hon CHARLES SIGOTO (*Minister for Health & Medical Services*): First and foremost, let me take this opportunity to thank my colleague, the Honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury for taking this very important Bill to this honourable House and especially for the 2014 budget theme, *“Making a difference in the lives of our people and striving to do better with existing resources”*. My Ministry fully concurs with the

theme and fully supports it and therefore is reviewing and re-strategizing our key policies, strategies and activities through our work plans to ensure that we deliver the much needed health care services so that we can contribute towards making a difference in the lives of our people, especially with current existing resources that we have.

Let me sincerely thank the honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury for yet again prioritising the Ministry of Health and Medical Services in the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013. As per the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013, the Ministry will receive an additional \$38.3million in health and I would like to express my sincere gratitude for this very important commitment by the NCRA Government. The important priority areas that will be especially addressed in our Budget for 2014 includes:-

- \$5million for Primary Health Care Development program
- \$3million for Secondary Health Care Development program
- \$15million for Tertiary Health Care Development Program
- \$2million for Public Health Development Program; and
- \$7.4million for additional staff and retention package for specialist doctors.

My ministry's key policy that will help to implement next year's budget theme is universal health coverage through the role delineation policy. Briefly, the universal health care coverage and role delineation policy has been developed as a tool for better defining the range and level of services or packages of care to be delivered to given populations across the country. This policy forms the basis of the universal health coverage and role delineation program that aims to further develop, upgrade and extend rural health services under primary health care in this country. The priority development areas mentioned above will address and better deliver health care services to our people. We strongly believe that the 2014 Budget will facilitate my ministry's priority policy that aims to achieve the overall goal and theme of the 2014 Budget.

This year 2013 has been a very difficult and a challenging year for my Ministry. We started off with the tsunami that hit Santa Cruz in Temotu Province, followed by the dengue fever outbreak and finally the alleged fraud resulting in the suspension of several officers in my ministry. Despite of the above challenges, the ministry will continue to strengthen key health systems that will ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively to bring services to reach our people, especially those in remote rural areas. The universal health coverage and the role delineation policy that my ministry has put in place will establish four tiers of services to deliver health care services. The four tiers basically will consist of the National Referral Hospital, general hospitals, the area health centres and rural health centres. My ministry has put in place an operational plan starting with the 2014 Budget to implement this very important policy, and my ministry is fully committed to these new initiatives and to ensure that we deliver this very essential service of health to contribute towards the theme of the 2014 Budget, "Making a difference in the lives of our people and striving to do better with existing resources".

Since we are going towards the Christmas festivity, I also want to take this opportunity this afternoon to extend my Christmas greetings to my people of Ranongga/Simbo. I want to wish them a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2014. With these few remarks, I fully support the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013 and hereby resume my seat. Thank you.

Hon CLAY SOALAIYOU (*Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade*): In support of the 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013, I will try my best to make some general assessments and keep the details to the committee stage that will be coming up after the debate. But let me join my other colleagues who have spoken before me to congratulate and thank the colleague Minister for Finance and Treasury and his staff for preparation of the 2014 Budget and its presentation to this House.

The Ministers of Planning and Public Services must be also commended for the supporting role they played in the formulation of this Budget, for the documents

they have prepared in order for the budget to be put together. I commend these three able ministers for their dedication and also hard work in ensuring the budget comes before us, at least before Christmas. As all of us know, the process of budget formulation gets tougher every year because of many reasons. One of which is the fact that our priorities sometimes compete with each other and when everything becomes priority, it becomes very challenging to really identify what should be done first. But I would like to believe and think that this Budget is based on the priorities this Government has identified for us to implement in the coming year.

One of the many reasons apart from competing priorities is the fact that resources is becoming very scarce with reasons known to all of us including the slowing down of some important sectors but fortunately, we are seeing improvement in some other sectors. But I think we need to do our best to ensure we broaden our revenue collection base in order for us to be able to implement the priorities we have identified, not only in the budget but also when the need arises for us to be able to attempt to urgent matters such as those identified by my good Minister of Environment, Climate Change, Disaster Management and Meteorology. But those kinds of situations do occur and we need to be prepared for the unexpected.

With those challenges, this government has put forward what I would like to believe as a sound and responsible budget of more than \$3million. The theme "Making a difference in the lives of our people and striving to do better with existing resources", is very appropriate. In identifying the theme, I hope the government was focusing on ensuring that rural development reaches and touches the lives of rural communities in order for us to rightfully claim that we are making a difference in the lives of the very people we represent in this Parliament. So that is the reason why I wanted to commend my colleague Minister for Finance & Treasury for doing a very fine job, especially for being able to come up with a budget because I can understand the pressure he was in before finally filling in the gaps. I have a lot of

trust and confidence in him in filling in the gaps so that he does not fall into the gaps himself. And so the Minister for Finance did very well.

The Minister for Finance was able to do that because of the reforms that are happening in the Ministry of Finance. As you are well aware, we were able to pass a number of important acts on this floor of the House that enabled the Ministry of Finance to be able to, not only efficiently forms itself but also efficiently ensure that government resources, donor resources are implemented in the manner and fashion they are meant to be.

In saying that, 2014 will be a very important year for all of us including myself and I think you would all agree with me that the amount of investment put into the Ministry of Home Affairs in ensuring the elections are free and fair is a worthwhile investment. And I thank the Minister for Home Affairs who is also our Deputy Prime Minister for ensuring that work on voter registration has been launched because I learned about this when I was still overseas and I was pleased to see the Leader of Opposition's photograph on the newspaper on the day of the launch. I think the Leader of Opposition did very well in ensuring this reform started when we were still in the government side and so I wish to pay tribute to my good friend, the Leader of Opposition for that. I think if the elections are free and fair, we can fully claim the right to represent our people here in this Parliament.

As you know, the system that we are currently operating in this country is called '*first-past-the-post*' and I think some of you are here by minority. But whatever the result is, is the result and we are pleased that our people have decided to put us in this Parliament and it is only them too to vote us out and so we really have nothing to fear going to the elections. The only people to vote us out are the same people who voted us in. I think we are moving closer to having a free and fair election. Nothing is perfect in this world but we are doing our best to ensure that mechanisms put in place are being utilised to ensure that our people have a fair say in the election of leaders to this very important House. Having said that, as already alluded to by my other colleagues and as I have said, we have competing priorities,

but out of those priorities education and health are very important social services that the government must continue to deliver to our people.

As a government, we took the bold step in moving forward and established the Solomon Islands National University (SINU). I think we are at a point where we cannot turn back. Criticisms can only help the responsible ministry to be more determined to do things right and let us all help the ministry to ensure that SINU, which is our university grows to be one of those universities in the region that attracts students from outside the region and also provides the necessary tertiary learning to our own citizens. I think our young people and our nation deserves such an initiative. On that note, I wish to thank the Minister for Education and the government for that matter for seeing it fit to make a start and I think we are doing very well. Meanwhile, I wish to encourage the reforms that are happening in the Ministry of Education to ensure the challenges we have met and will continue to face are addressed. I do not need to mention those issues as they are public knowledge but we will improve in the coming year because this is reflected very well in the amount of investment the government has put into the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development.

Before I forget, let me now turn to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade's budget priorities in 2014. And you will note that we do have our own priorities and sometimes ministers become very disappointed when their bids are not awarded or reduced. But we do have priorities that require wisdom for any government to allocate resources and also give a fair share to all the government sectors or ministries that we have. I have been saying in some of my speeches and I can also remember saying it several times already here that our foreign policy is an extension of our domestic policies. And therefore what we do in our engagements outside of Solomon Islands are not just for the sake of attending meetings, co-signing of documents but it is an extension of our domestic policies, pursued as a sovereign nation existing in an interdependent world and inter-connected world as well. We will all agree that because of that nature we are dependent on each other as members

of the global community, and what happens in this globe do affect us. And as you know, what happened to the world economy in the very recent past has also affected us and so as our ability to deliver services to people. We need to be able to exercise wisdom in where we put our resources so that our people continue to receive services.

Sir, closer to home, Solomon Islands is also a member of some regional and sub-regional organisations. This region's geopolitical and socio economic landscape has changed dramatically as you also may have noted. We do have big players that are making their mark in the Pacific. We can see China asserting its political influence and we can also see the United States of America's re-engagement being flagged over and over again in some of the meetings we have attended. I think this is public knowledge to us. We are also seeing Russia making its mark in the region with some of our members in establishing trade links, and Solomon Islands is a member of some of the regional organisations. That calls for Solomon Islands to continue assess its position as a sovereign nation and be able to manage both its bilateral and multi-lateral relations with our allies and at the same time safeguard and promote our interest in wherever we are located.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs thinks that 2014 will not be business as usual. I think it is time to take stock along the way and make decisions that will be economically beneficial to our country. And when that time comes the ministry will make announcements of what we will be doing in ensuring that we monitor what is happening at the international stage and adjust ourselves so that we are not only members of regional and international organisations but we get benefits from those organisations.

Solomon Islands risks lagging behind some of our least developed countries because as a fragile state we do have our own challenges that we need to overcome. When I arrived last week I was pleased to note the work that has been done in the Ministry of Reconciliation and the Prime Minister's visit to the areas affected, and the role that RAMSI and the Royal Solomon Islands Police continues to play in

reconciling our people. We cannot turn a blind eye to those challenges but we must continue to address them in order for development to happen.

Having said that, you would note from our budget some allocations for our engagement in international and regional organisations. It is our belief that multilateralism will continue to be the cornerstone of our foreign policy. And I think it is only appropriate that I highlight some of the key priorities for next year, which are not the ministry's own making but they are the results of our leaders' decisions in some of the meetings that happened this year 2013.

At the sub-regional level, Solomon Islands is an active member of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG). The Honourable Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and other ministers have attended that meeting that was held in Noumea, New Caledonia this year. As you know, before that summit there was a review on the MSG on its vision and future. This country has made a huge contribution to the MSG by one of our very own citizen and former Prime Minister, the Member of Parliament for North East Choiseul who was a member of that review team. I wish to congratulate him for his contribution towards that very important work carried out by the Eminent Persons Group on the vision and future of the MSG. That report was tabled during that meeting and our leaders were able to speak on the realities and challenges faced by our sub-region and decisions were made based on that report.

If I may, allow me now, to touch briefly on the case of West Papua on its application for membership to the MSG as captured in the Noumea Declaration. Let me use this as an opportunity to briefly explain the processes that MSG leaders and ministers have agreed to take in addressing the issue of West Papua. The outcome of that meeting was for MSG Foreign Ministerial visit to be made to West Papua and to defer the issue of membership to MSG until assessment is carried out and a report prepared.

I also wish to inform the House that arrangements are underway for that visit to be conducted in January next year. I am sorry I cannot give you the exact date

because they are still making arrangement but they have assured us that it will happen in January 2014.

Solomon Islands remains clear and decisive on this issue. The issue of West Papua has implications for us on two fronts. One is the human rights issue which we continue to condemn. As a member of United Nations and not the Commonwealth, we do strongly condemn those human rights abuses in the province of West Papua.

The second is the issue of sovereignty. We believe that West Papua in spite of their desire for self-determination, it is still part of Indonesia. We respect Indonesia's sovereignty over Indonesia as a province and is a matter that is best addressed through dialogue with Indonesia. We do not want to be seen as disrespecting the sovereignty of Indonesia nor do we want to risk the MSG because MSG's reputation in dealing with the issue of sovereignty in West Papua and Indonesia. The process we have agreed to go through is that we do appreciate the desire for self-determination. If there is anyone around the world and on this planet with that desire, we are going to support them as we did with our friends from French Polynesia which, of course, is a bit different in nature but we do support the desire that people have concerning self determination. With West Papua we want to go back and start the process with consultations, and of course that has to be done with the Government of Indonesia. We have agreed on that, our leaders have agreed on that and so we are waiting to start that ministerial visit in January 2014. And I do hope that Members of this House and people of Solomon Islands will appreciate that we have been careful in ensuring that we do things properly, taking into account that West Papua is not only a people that desires self-determination but it is also a province of Indonesia.

Also at the regional level, we continue to benefit from our membership with the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). The 44th Pacific Islands Forum Meeting held in Majuro, was attended by the Prime Minister and myself. Pursuant to Forum leaders'

decisions during that meeting, the PIF Secretariat has taken some important programmes in addition to ongoing programmes before that meeting.

The launching of the Pacific Island Development Forum (PIDF) is a new initiative of the Fiji Government. This will replace the “Engaging with Pacific” meeting that Fiji used to host every year. Now we have the Pacific Islands Development Forum and I understand that Solomon Islands has been invited to be a member of the board or board of governors. I think Fiji has invited Solomon Islands to be in the Board. It is also anticipated that this will be a platform for consultation between Fiji and the region until it is re-admitted back into the Pacific Islands Forum and also other organisations that Fiji is currently being suspended from.

We are making careful assessments as to what levels of engagement we should be engaged in, not only regarding the PIDF but also other bodies that are creeping up, not only in our region, but also in the international arena, taking the money for value approach as very important for the Ministry and government. Apart from that, Solomon Islands continues to maintain cordial relations with neighbours in the region. As you know, this year we had two heads of governments in the region that visited us. Firstly the Honourable Prime of Papua New Guinea visited us and then the Prime Minister of Fiji. I think those two visits are very unique and show the reaffirmation of the strong ties that our Melanesian countries share or are still sharing today.

Other important visits too were done this year, such as my counterpart Minister from New Zealand who was here this year, and also the Parliamentary Secretary of Australia also visited us this year. And as you know Mr Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Australia is arriving tonight, and I am sure that some of us are being invited to attend the business breakfast that she is hosting tomorrow morning at the Heritage Park Hotel. I think our neighbours are committed to Solomon Islands and it is pleasing for me to note the high level engagement by our neighbours with Solomon Islands. All these frequent visits as I said are not taken very lightly by Solomon Islands because our neighbours put very strong emphasis

not only on our development but also in our participation on the goal of enhancing regional peace and integration as an effort to increase our participation in the international arena.

Having said that, Solomon Islands still remains pragmatic in the broadening of its foreign policies and the establishment of its diplomatic relations with other friendly countries. Our target, as I have already said many times on this floor is to establish diplomatic relations with at least two thirds of UN members by the end of 2013. Up until now we have relations with 114 countries out of the 92 member countries of the United Nations. Some UN members that we establish ties with may be seen as very controversial but it is our wish that we extend and increase our diplomatic ties with as many friends as possible to increase our bargaining and negotiating power in the organisations that we are a member to.

Colleagues you will note from our budget that \$4.5million has been allocated for the Cuba and Malaysia missions which are now running. So up until now we have a total of nine overseas missions which are now running. Up until now we have a total of nine overseas missions and I am also pleased to inform Parliament that as I speak, preparatory work for our office in Wellington is near completion and we are preparing to open the office as soon as time allows and when we are free after the New Year. When we come back after the festive season, one of the many first things we will do next year is the opening of the Solomon Islands New Zealand mission in Wellington.

We also continue to strengthen our "Selective Look North Policy" more vigorously and strategically, especially in trying to be proactive through direct engagement with countries that we have established diplomatic relations with since independence. In doing that, Solomon Islands has opened its office in Malaysia on the 14th of October 2013. As you note, we do have quite a substantial number of Malaysian investors in this country, especially in the logging sector. And if I can inform Parliament there is tremendous opportunity for investment in a lot of sectors like agriculture, fisheries, mining and tourism that we can pursue with the country

of Malaysia. I have had two bilateral meetings with my counterpart so far and what we will be doing next year is to link our SMEs with that in Malaysia so that we can improve or at least resurrect our businesses. It is our belief that by doing that we will be able to revive once again our economy and increase our growth rate for the coming year 2014 and beyond.

I think we have to know as well that the Honourable Prime Minister visited Indonesia and we are doing the same with Indonesia. These countries have very strong private sector, especially the small and medium enterprises. It is our belief that once we connect theirs with ours, we should be able to have very successful businesses, at least starting with the small ones and build a very strong foundation for our businesses to support our economy.

There is currently work on finalisation of a technical cooperation agreement with Indonesia that will capture important areas such as agriculture, fisheries, tourism and education. These things are currently being pursued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we need the support of responsible ministers to ensure that we do not only announce this but people are actively engaged in ensuring that we implement these very important arrangements.

Solomon Islands and the Republic of China (Taiwan) remain to be very strong allies. This year, as we know, we celebrated 30 days of Friendship week. The Taiwan Foreign Affairs Minister was also here for the 30th Independence Anniversary, which the Solomon Islands Government reciprocated through the visit by the Prime Minister to Taipei this year.

Solomon Islands has been a long standing member of the United Nations and our participation at the UNGA remains very important for the country. I wish to report that we sent a delegation to the 68th UNGA led by our Honourable Deputy Prime Minister who is also Minister for Home Affairs and I wish to thank him and the ministers that accompanied him for a job well done based on a report sent to my office by our New York mission.

I will conclude but allow me to share just a few things before I finish. The other important international engagement for us is the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. The last time we were represented by a head of government was in 2003 and we were fortunate to have our brothers attend this year's Heads of Government Meeting in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Before that Solomon Islands used to be represented by Foreign Ministers. I think as a member of the Commonwealth and being a member of the Commonwealth Ministerial Task Force, I am pleased that the Prime Minister decided to attend this meeting. I must thank him for showing commitment to a very important organisation which Solomon Islands is a member of. It is also my wish to announce that next year Solomon Islands has been selected to be in another committee - the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, which we used to be represented by Vanuatu and next year onwards Solomon Islands is going to represent our region in that committee.

We also value and place great importance in the multilateral engagement we have been having, one of which that is very common to us is the European Union (EU). We have been negotiating an economic partnership agreement with the European Union which has been going on now for 10 years. However, we have decided that it is time to take stock of where we are, what we have spent, how we have come and decide on whether to continue or look at other options. But I am pleased to report that after being informed that the talks were suspended in October 2013, we were able to convene another meeting that was held in Honiara last week chaired by myself, where we were informed by the European Trade Commission that negotiations were not suspended. That is one of the positive things that came out from the meeting may be because of the way we started talking and the European Commissioner decided to make a commitment to us by telling us that the talks are not suspended. We have made commitments in that the European Union will formally write to us before the end of January, we will be submitting counter proposals on the issues that has been under discussions for a long time and we referred to those issues as contingency issues. Some of them are referred to by us as

redline issues; European Union has its own redline issues though there are a lot of things that will require flexibility and understanding from both parties.

I am pleased to report to the House that after the meeting, even though our good friend, Fiji, walked out from the meeting that did not deter us from continuing on with the meeting. I think the outcome of the meeting was very successful in that we were able to pin down the real issues and be able to know to what is still outstanding for us to sort out. As I speak Sir at least we do know our final position, and the European Union also knows what it needs know in order for us to address those very important issues that has drag us for about 10years, since it was launched in 2004.

Having said that, it is my wish to mention something which I also mention that is now progressing in the Ministry towards formulation of national trade policy framework. We are anticipating that this should be completed by March next year, and from that then we will formulate a trade policy framework; this document have not been in the Ministry and we think that by having this framework should be able to help the ministry to do its work more effectively.

Sir, there are very important trade negotiation that this country has engaged in; if I can briefly mention those ones, they are the PACER PLUS which is in the regional seen, where of course which I have already alluded to is the EPA with the EU. And this negotiations; say if they end up in agreements we belief that they should be able to promote development in our Pacific Economies.

Solomon Islands has played a very important role in the negotiations both at the international and regional level. We have play a role as a spokes person for the pacific island WTO members at the recent WTO meeting in Bali which was very successful and it is now called Bali Package and that is history for WTO since it was started in 1995. So WTO's first agreement, now referred to as the Bali Package is a result of 18years that ended in Bali. In fact we have to meet day and night to be able to convince countries with very offensive interests in some of the chapters of that

agreement and we were able to make progress and compromises and that enable us to agree on the Bali package.

Having said that I must not forget the where I come from, it is my wish now to briefly say that my constituency is very pleased to have been benefiting and continue to be benefit from the Solomon Islands Government.

Sir there are things that I do that but I do not announce it. I only wish that people go and see for themselves but we are very pleased for the assistance that the Solomon Islands Government has rendered to our people, you know in the past those very things and the absence of delivery to that part of the country from some friendship calls from our former leaders to look at other countries but Sir, I am very pleased to inform the House that my constituency has benefited a lot from the Solomon Islands.

And as yet rightly said by the Leader of Opposition the only thing people will want to see is; Sir, I don't think they want to see me as you can see after travelling I am very disappointed to note that I am losing some of very beautiful hair but things do change Mr Speaker.

I am hoping Sir, the so called uneconomical routes of this country will very soon start contributing to the economic development of Solomon Islands and we will all be pleased to be equal partners in the development of our beloved country.

Sir, in saying that in the same token I wish to take this opportunity to thank my people for their support during this year, I was also planning to reach them Mr Speaker but it's not easy for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to make any domestic visit but I am still committed to seeing my people. But you know, one of the things I believe in that if you cannot see my face at least what you are receiving should enable my people to see me because we spend the same resources when we go for constituency visits. So instead of visiting I spent those resources to pay for the freights of those things which I have sent it to my constituency. Next time I will be asking for extra just for the freight.

But having said that, I think my people have been very understanding, I have been a very strong defender of their right to say whatever to say about me and also

of the rest of Solomon Islanders. When they criticized you don't be angry, those people they have the right to say what they want to say, just like you do. So I think our people have been very helpful in redirecting us in some of things we do, some of the new techniques we have applied over the years, some of new life style we have adopted along the way but I must thank the people for at least helping to navigate and also help us to change for the better at least.

So with that my good people of Vattu constituency, until I make that visit I wish you a very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year 2014. I can only hope for the best for you and Mr Speaker, I am not forgetting you Merry Christmas to you too. If I don't make it home I will spent my Christmas in your very beautiful resort. So very Merry Christmas to you and family Mr Speaker.

To the Prime Minister as well, Merry Christmas to you and family, colleague ministers, members of parliament it is my prayer and hope that we enjoy and share the Christmas with our families, please we share that happiness with the Christmas and when we come back with renewed vision the commitment to do things better.

With that I must not forget the staff of my ministry who been very hard working at least when I was away they were able to look after the ministry and continue to implement the program of the Ministry.

And I must also thank my colleagues who have been supervising Ministers in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, I think you did very well. When I stayed at home, those are the ones that I sent. Only this time I am absent for a little longer. But I do not normally travel, I sent my colleague Ministers, depending on the subject matter of the meetings.

I think this is my first time I went, I do not know, maybe it will be the first and last one. But I must thank my Ministry staff for their hard work, without their hard work and advice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would have tried in vain, but the achievements this year must be also accorded to my staff in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade.

Not forgetting our development partners, I must also thank them for the support during this year 2013. In fact, I am pleased to note their commitment to our country. As you know, I have just said that the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia is visiting us and is arriving tonight. I am pleased to know that our development partners are still very committed to us, and we must thank them for their assistance in the development of our country.

I must also thank our public servants who have been very helpful as well. I think they need our commendation. I thank them for that.

Lastly sir, I wish to thank your staff for ensuring that we are able to meet again. This one is not Sine Die motion, but I wish to do that because I might go home earlier. But let me thank God for being with us until now, as you can see sir, in spite of what is happening to us, we are still very friendly, we are very energetic. I can see the Leader is still very much awake and alive; we must thank God for his guidance and Spirit that continues to be with us.

Sir, I can only attribute all those things that we do and succeed in today through the guidance and protection given to us by God. Having said that, I wish to once again express my support for the 2014 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2013 and I wish to resume my seat.

The House adjourned at 2.43pm