

## THURSDAY 5<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2013

The Speaker, Sir Allan Kemakeza took the Chair at 10.07

### **Prayers:**

### ATTENDENCE.

All members of Parliament were present except the following: the Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Education and Human Resources, the Minister of Public Service, the Minister of Women Youth and children Affairs, the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Disaster Management. And members of Parliament for: Aoke/Langalanga, Fataleka, Ngella, North Guadalcanal, North-West Guadalcanal, North Vella la Vella, and South New Georgia-Rendova/Tetepari.

### SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS

"Solomon Islands Gazettes from 17th December 2012 to 19th November 2013."

*(National Parliament Paper No.24 of 2013)*

### STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### **BILLS**

#### **[BILLS – FIRST READING]**

"The 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013".

## MOTION

### [Special Adjournment]

**Hon Gordon Darcy Lilo** (*Prime Minister*): Sir as you know that, the main business that the Parliament will engage with in this Fifth meeting would be the consideration of 2014 budget. That is in the form of 2014 Appropriation Bill 2013. But I am sure Sir that you will also understand that until 8:30am this morning that we have just resolved an important aspect that is so crucial to the way that the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is organised in its function in scrutinising the budget where it has to have its Secretary in the position of the Auditor General of Solomon Islands.

The Auditor General as you know has reached the retirement age, and it is only recently that the matter has been resolved. But I have been informed that the Acting Auditor General has been sworn in at 8:30am this morning, and yesterday the Chairman of the PAC has written to me asking that Parliament be asked to adjourned to a later date to commence the consideration of the Bill so that it gives ample time for the PAC to start its hearing and the scrutiny of the “2014 Appropriation Bill (2013)”.

Sir, I am sure that we all know that the budget is so important to the lives of our people and therefore we must give the space that is required for us to ensure that all other related bodies within Parliament must function to ensure an effective consideration of the budget.

So in that regards this side of the House is proposing that we adjourn today, Thursday the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, until the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2013 so that we can give time for the PAC to undertake their scrutiny of the 2014 budget. With those remarks, I beg to move.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. Members, it has been moved by the Honourable Prime Minister that the adjournment of Parliament on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, Parliament shall stand adjourned until the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2013. Before I put the question I will allow any comments from any Member of Parliament.

**Hon Dr DEREK SIKUA** (*Leader of Opposition*): Thank you Mr Speaker. I stand to support the motion on the special adjournment that has been moved by the Prime Minister. Sir, the reasons that have been mentioned by the Prime Minister are very clear, and as we all know our business in this House is very much dependent on the business which the Government has put for us to deal with in Parliament. And as the Prime Minister has mentioned, the substantial business in the House for this meeting is to do with our “2014 Appropriation Bill (2013)” and the hearings having sorted out the issue of the Auditor General will now commence so that is an important thing to do.

Also if I can mention something on behalf of the Chairman of the Bipartisan committee on the CDF regulations, we have been to provincial consultations now but we were split up into four groups. I lead one group, the Minister of Finance and Treasury the other group, the Minister for Infrastructure and Development another group and the Leader of Independent the other group. I did three provinces and I have completed two of them and I only have Rennell and Bellona to do.

I think my good colleague the Minister of Infrastructure and Development has not yet even started. So, he needs to do Guadalcanal, Isabel and Malaita. So this week will give him time to do his province. I am not sure about my colleague the Independent leader and the Minister of Finance. But this week will really suite us, so that we can bring this CDF regulation in this forthcoming meeting. I am just saying that maybe the chair might have other views. But I just want to mention sir that this one week will help us to do our provincial consultations. But apart from that, I think this side of the House cannot say anything but to support the special adjournment motion that is moved by the Prime Minister. Thank you sir.

**Mr. JOHN MANENIARU**(*Leader of Independent*): Thank you Mr. speaker, I stand to support the motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister on the Motion of Special adjournment, I concur with what the Leader of Opposition has said and this side of the House has no problem with the motion. The reasons given are very clear and I would like to thank the Prime Minister for that because the PAC would certainly need time, and as the Prime Minister has alluded to, the budget is very important to this session as well as our people. And it will also give time for other committees as alluded to by the leader of the Opposition for them to complete their very important task for our parliament session as well.

So with this comments, I support the motion.

**Mr. DOUGLAS ETE**(*East Honiara*): Thank you Mr. Speaker, I stand to support the Prime Minister for this special adjournment until 12<sup>th</sup> of December. Seemingly as we know, the budgets are likened to a Christmas tree. Everybody is looking forward for the flowers that will bloom during Christmas. Also to enable PAC's task to go forward.

At this point I would like to thank the Governor General to resolving this impasse. I am saying that this is an impasse because it impedes the work of the PAC. We should start already but we could not, because of these issues. At this point I want to support the motion of the Honourable Prime Minister. With that, I thank you.

**Mr. MANASSEH SOGAVARE**(*East Choiseul*): I want to stand and join the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Independent group and the Chairman of the Public Accounts group to support this motion. In supporting it, I just want to comment like this. The budget is quite a very important business of parliament. Ideally it should come around October, November. So that it give us enough time for the Government to prepare the Ministries to start implementing the budget as from 1<sup>st</sup> of January- the budgets starts at the 1<sup>st</sup> of January. So ideally we should pass the budget in October.

Also we put a lot of strain on parliament. By the time that the Public Accounts Committee complete its work, by then it will be 15<sup>th</sup> December. And we have only two more weeks before the year ends and the budget should be operational on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January.

If we go strictly by the requirements of the standing Orders, you will probably need the whole two weeks. So that parliament can properly scrutinize the last and final budget of this government. It needs good time to do that and it is the practice when we give short time we give pressure upon members of parliament who wants to speak their minds on the budget- a very important document. We will not do justice too without the budget.

Regarding the secretary of the committee that is the Auditor general, we join the talks on views expressed by others that we sort this out but it goes back; this

parliament -it's been the confidence of this parliament to sort this out with the constitution. We do not see the wisdom of retiring people at the age of 55 or make them disqualify to the certain post of the government and for them not to hold the office. They are competent and it is right within the competent of this parliament to amend the constitution to allow things to happen. Instead of leaving it to the discretion for somebody else to do it, we have the power and we do not exercise it and so in saying that we must support this motion.

The Public Accounts Committee must sit down and must meet and must process this budget so that parliament can sit down. And use the full two weeks for us to deal properly with the 2014 budget, with that I support the motion sir.

**Hon Gordon Darcy Lilo:** Thank you Mr Speaker and I would like to thank the speakers on the opposite side of the House to support this motion. And the word of encouragement that they have given to ensure that every institution of parliament and government that should be given the responsibility to ensure that the budget is properly processed and scrutinised before parliament considers it. I am encouraged by the support that is given, that we should be given little bit time for the Public accounts committee to consider the budget.

Sir, just on the timing, the point that the member for East Choiseul makes about time, is well taken but our constitution provides for the avenue which we can address such issues. There is no reason at all for us to believe that there is no opening within our constitution which we can find the way to resort to resolving that situation if time is not on our side. I am sure that, that can be done but I think what is more important is to give ourselves time to think more seriously about this budget. Because it is rightly pointed out by the other speakers that this would be the final budget of government and probably the final budget that we could have this parliament to consider.

On the issue of the secretary of the public accounts committee we must know that we try to find a way to accommodate the circumstances of one individual and we have to be very careful about that. Situations in the past which we know the position of the Auditor general went through, this is the not the first time that this position is like this. There are two Auditor General's in the past that reach the retirement age of 55. They went out at the age of 55. The third one unfortunately

could not make it to 55, so I do not see any reason why we could just amend the Constitution to cater for one particular case.

But sir, coming back to whether or not the Public Accounts Committee can be well served with a Secretary that is required under the Standing Order, I think we have achieved that by 8:30am this morning. I am sure the Public Accounts Committee can meet.

Apart from that, I do hope that with space that we have given for the Public Accounts Committee to meet, I am sure that we should be able to have this budget ready by next week.

With those remarks, I beg to move that at the adjournment of Parliament today, Thursdays the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 2013, Parliament shall stand adjourn to Thursday the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, 2013. I beg to move.

*Parliament is adjourned until 12<sup>th</sup> December 2013.*