

**NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS**

**DAILY HANSARD**

**SECOND MEETING – EIGHTH SESSION**

**TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2006**

The Hon Speaker, Sir Peter Kenilorea took the Chair at 9.30 am.

Prayers.

**ATTENDANCE**

At prayers, all were present with the exception of the Ministers for Lands & Survey, Fisheries & Marine Resources, Education & Human Resources and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, West Guadalcanal, Ngella, North West Choiseul, Ulawa/Ugi, and South New Georgia, Rendova Tetepari.

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND OF REPORTS**

By the Hon Prime Minister: Parliament Entitlements Regulations, 2006 (National Parliament Paper No. 1 of 2006)

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. **Mr KEMAKEZA** to the Minister for Home Affairs: Can the Minister for Home Affairs inform Parliament on whether or not this Government plans to increase the present number of constituencies in the country?

**Hon GHIRO:** Mr Speaker, I wish to confirm to the honorable House that the Grand Coalition for Change Government (GCCG) does not have any plans to increase the present number of constituencies. However, even if there were plans to do so, the current Constitution does not allow us to do so as section 54 (1) only provides for a maximum of 50 constituencies. In other words, to do so would require section 54(1) of

the current Constitution to be amended accordingly.

**Mr FONONO:** The Minister's answer stated that any changes would require a constitutional amendment to increase the number of constituencies. Can the Minister inform the House whether under his legislative program there are any plans to make that amendment so that there is increase of the number of constituencies in line with this question?

**Hon GHIRO:** Mr Speaker, the current Constitution only allows a maximum of 50 constituencies. But the draft Federal Constitution does provide for the amalgamation of the current Constituency and Boundaries Commission, and the Electoral Commission into one Commission. If the Commission is adopted the Commission may have the chance to review the current number of constituencies, boundaries, electoral system and make recommendations to Parliament.

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, since the number one priority of this government is the Federal System of Government, it is along that line, to avoid further duplication that this question was raised. If that is so, has that been considered along the new Federal Constitution?

**Hon GHIRO:** Mr Speaker, that question raised should be addressed to the Minister of Provincial Government because he is the Minister dealing with Federal System. I am only responsible for the Constituency Boundaries and Electoral Commission.

**Hon WAIPORA:** Mr Speaker, Question No. 9 deals with the Federal Constitution. The question would be asked to me by the same honorable Member, and so I will not speak on

the Federal Constitution at this time but I would like to deal with it when the question comes.

**Mr Kemakeza:** The question was raised because of the government's priority. And as I said to avoid that it will be best considered by the government as it's the number one priority of the government to introduce the Federal System. That is the basis of this question and therefore, I would like to thank the two Ministers for their answers which are not satisfactory.

2. **Mr KEMAKEZA** to the Minister for Public Service: Will the Minister advise if any former militants have been recruited into the Public Service?

**Hon SANGA:** Mr Speaker, the answer is, according to my knowledge, no.

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, before I thank the Minister, the basis of the question is what is happening in and around the Prime Minister's Office. The previous security firm appointed by the previous administration has been terminated and now a new security arrangement is in place. In that light Mr Speaker, it connects to this government and therefore, brings a cloudy atmosphere of the recruitment. But I thank the Minister for Public Service for his answer.

12. **Mr RIUMANA** to the Minister for Agriculture & Livestock: Can the Minister inform Parliament on the progress of the Auluta National Oil Palm Project?

**Hon OLAVAE:** Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the MP for asking about the progress achieved so far on the Auluta Oil Palm development project, a project of economic importance to Malaita Province and Solomon Islands as a whole.

I am pleased to report to this honorable House on the progress achieved so far in respect to the implementation of the following key tasks:-

(i) determination of technical feasibility and suitability of the Auluta Basin for Oil Palm growing;

- (ii) selection of a suitable development strategies;
- (iii) availability of adequate land;
- (iv) survey, mapping and registration of lands;
- (v) identification of investor;
- (vi) establishment of 2,500 hectares plantation.

Mr Speaker, let me expand on the key areas I have mentioned in order to give honorable Members a clear picture of progress achieved during the last 18 months.

Sir, on technical feasibility and suitability of the project area for growing oil palm - Field studies carried out by experts from the Malaysian Oil Palm Board and recently by our own Local Consultant confirmed 5,340 hectares in Auluta Basin and 4,530 hectares in East Fataleka are highly suitable for growing oil palm, a total of 9,870 hectares.

Mr Speaker, a suitable development strategy for establishing oil palm in the selected areas have been developed and approved by the previous government. Taking into account or consideration the high population growth rate and the need to conserve land for food production, protection of water and catchments areas and conservation of flora and fauna, a development strategy based on the nucleus estate model was selected.

Mr Speaker, the aim of the strategy is to develop over the next 10 year period seven 400 hectares of oil palm plantations comprising nucleus oil palm estates and 4,500 hectares to be developed by a foreign investor. Two thousand (2,000) hectares to be developed as mini oil palm estates by land trust companies owned by landowners or by the investor under the lease.

Mr Speaker, according to this development strategy one-third of the total estate will be owned by local landowners. It is anticipated that the Government will fund 2,900 hectares. Under the smallholder scheme, farmers will benefit directly by selling fresh fruit bunches twice a month.

Sir, the Land Mobilization and Awareness Program launched in March 2005 achieved impressive results. By the end of December 2005, 18 landholding tribes in the Auluta Basin and 23 in East Fataleka have been confirmed

free of land dispute, and have embarked on the process of recording their genealogies, land boundaries and right of ownership, a process which will lead on to registration of perpetual estate title by landholding groups under the Customary Land Recording Act.

Mr Speaker, altogether a total of 41 blocks of customary owned land will be recorded and registered for Oil Palm development by the end of 2006. This represents a land bank of 6,000 hectares.

As I have already mentioned a total of 41 land holding tribes are ready to record and register their land under the provisions of the Act having resolved long standing conflicts and disputes that previously hindered development from taking place in the constituencies.

Mr Speaker, the work required for finalization of recording and registration of these lands are being carried out jointly by my Ministry and the Department of Lands & Survey. Progress in this area was slowed down due to the fact that the absence of the subsidiary legislation and regulations required by the Act to facilitate the process of land recording and registration.

I have a few more pages of answer to this question which will take another 10 to 20 minutes. This is an important issue and since other speakers will be contributing in this House and so with your indulgence Mr Speaker, if you could allow me to photocopy the rest of the answer for distribution to MPs pigeon hole.

**Mr Speaker:** The honorable Minister has got answers on written paper and so he is willing to distribute answers to all Members of Parliament and I allow that.

**Mr Riimana:** Can the Minister inform us of the time frame of the completion of this project given the activities he has just mentioned? What is the time frame for each of the activity?

**Hon Olavae:** It is anticipated a ground breaking ceremony will be held in December 2006. Because of the importance of this project for economic revival of the nation, we are working tirelessly to ensure the ground breaking takes place in December.

**Mr Kemakeza:** The Minister stated in his answer that a few legislation or regulations slowed down the progress of this project. Looking at the time frame mentioned by the Minister, would any amendment to any legislation come before the House during this sitting of Parliament?

**Hon Olavae:** I have alluded to earlier that disputes by various landowners in Fataleka and the Auluta Basin have been settled. The legislation hindering the progress of this development will be taken to this Parliament. But in as far as settlement of disputes at the Auluta, they have already settled that and are ready for the ground breaking ceremony.

**Mr Riimana:** The Minister has just informed Parliament that there will be the ground breaking ceremony. He also informed Parliament that there is a study conducted by a Malaysian company. From what I know that study is a suitability assessment study and not a feasibility study. Can the Minister inform the House whether there has been a feasibility study to justify the feasibility of this project before the ground breaking ceremony?

**Hon Olavae:** When I was elevated to this post the Auluta Basin project had already been prioritized by the previous government. When I came in I only facilitated what has already been approved. Had there been not any feasibility study I do not think this project would have progressed this far.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, information reaching my office is that there are no funds released to officers on the ground. Even if funds are released it takes almost a month. Why is that so, Mr Speaker? Can the Minister inform the House as to why funds for this project although catered for in this year's budget were not released to officers doing the land recording? Can the Minister inform the House on the delay in releasing the funds?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, we all know the problem in terms of expediting payment at the Treasury Division. Although funds were budgeted for in this year's budget the process of

expediting payment does take time, which is an experience of the last 20 years or something like that. Therefore, it is the Ministry of Finance's problem to really facilitate payments as expected.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, if there is delay in the releasing of funds, how is the government treating the project? Is it a priority project for economic recovery process that we talked about? What status does the government place on the project as a national project?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, since this government came into power it also experienced what the previous government faced in terms of facilitating payments. However, when this government came into power it liaised with the Ministry of Finance not to unnecessarily hinder or holdup priority payments. I am with the Opposition Leader. But we are improving and we have improved so far. May be you are raising what the previous government has faced. Since we are under recovery programs and tightening of finances program we are slowing improving and it will improve as time goes on. Your concern is also our concern but we are trying to further improve on that.

**Hon LILO:** Mr Speaker, if I may assist the Minister of Agriculture. As we all know under the National Development Budget, the Auluta Basin Oil Palm Project has been included in the 2006 National Development Budget and the current government is treating it with high priority. In fact Mr Speaker, it will be covered in the statement that will be delivered in a few minutes time on priority projects the government will be embarking on to drive the growth of the economy.

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, in the light of what the two Ministers have mentioned according to the priority of the last government the ground breaking should be this month October. October is the time frame of the previous administration. My hardworking Minister of Agriculture and Lands should check that something must be wrong somewhere which needs his careful attention, and that is the reason why this question was raised, it is because of the

extension. When will the ground breaking take place since the Minister of Planning says it is a priority as well as the Minister of Agriculture and this side of the House also says it is a priority? We are assisting you wherever possible as this is a priority and important project, which is why this question was raised.

The timeframe of the previous government is October. The fact that it will now be December means you need to set yourself in some other areas. But the excuse the Minister made is legislation, regulation and that is why I asked the supplementary question whether or not any amendment will come before the House at this meeting because if you miss this meeting of Parliament then forget about the obstacles. However, the question is, which one comes first, is it money or the amendment?

**Hon Lilo:** Sir as I've said the government is placing high priority on this project. In terms of providing financial resources to ensure all the activities leading up to the signing ceremony must happen the government has put those in place.

In terms of why the government has extended the ground breaking ceremony to December, I think we should all understand that when the government came in it has to reschedule, prioritize and sequence the happening of activities leading up to the formalization of all the necessary requirements for the ground breaking ceremony. December is not far and in fact with all the resources required to ensure the ground breaking ceremony will happen in December, it will happen and this government is committed to ensure that the ground breaking for the Auluta basin must happen in December this year.

13. **Mr RIUMANA** to the Minister for Agriculture & Livestock: The Extension Support Division of the Department of Agriculture and Livestock has been dormant due to lack of financial support which consequently resulted in non performance of officers, yet it is accumulating great expense to the government. What has been the approach taken by the Government to remedy the problem?

**Mr Speaker:** I suppose as a matter of respect the Honourable Member will acknowledge answers to question No. 12 when he concludes question No. 13. I allow question No. 13 to be answered.

**Hon OLAVAE:** Mr Speaker, Honourable Member for Hograno/Kia/Havulei knows very well the very low priority given to the agriculture sector by successive governments. It is the policy of the current government to aggressively address rural development. To this effect Mr Speaker, my Ministry has been working in collaboration with other government departments, government and rural development to develop a comprehensive agriculture and rural development strategy. This strategy is jointly funded by the World Bank, European Union and AUSAID. Work on this agriculture rural development strategies started in October 2005 and the final draft will be put before the government in mid 2007.

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker is the Minister aware that much of the budget allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture is spent on operational activities in the urban areas rather than promoting rural development at the village level. What is the government's plan to divert most of these budgeted funds into the rural areas?

**Hon Olavae:** Sir, as we all know the 2006 budget we are implementing now was passed by the previous government under the old road map and therefore it is not different from previous budgets we have implemented. Because of that we will continue to face the same problems we faced 27 years ago. Whatever that is allocated in the budget only the con-men, only the people living in Honiara will come and knock on your door. That is why this government is gearing towards rural development strategies to pave way for 85% of our population to have access on their location when we will actually allocate to constituencies in the budget allocation next year. This government will pass next year's budget probably in January next year. The new roadmap we have been talking about will allow the 50 constituencies to have their own budgets for agriculture and other productive sectors in the constituencies.

Mr Speaker, my friend, the Honourable Member for East Are Are is quite right that when we were together we were believers of rural development strategies. Surely next year his worries will be taken on board.

**Mr Riumana:** Mr Speaker, the current extension approach is very routine and since independence until now no one has turned commercialize, no farmers in Solomon Islands turned commercialize. Does the Ministry any plan to change the Extension Support approach to our farmers so that the amount of money spent on farmers can be realized?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, I have already alluded to earlier during my previous answers that under the policy statement of this government, this government has found the solution to the problems faced by the extension services. In short I would say that the new rural development strategy policy will take on board all rural development strategies. If you come to my office I can give you the policy statements that take care of all your worries in terms of what you would like to do in your constituencies.

Please Honorable MPs if you have any queries come to my office or go to the economic planning offices so that they give you all the information about the policy statements.

**Mr Riumana:** Mr Speaker, policies are just policies, it is how you implement policy that matters most.

The extension approach that we are currently undertaking in the rural sector has not seen any tangible impact. Do you have any plan to change the extension approach or are you going to keep the same policy approach?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, this is very important. As you know this country's economy, its government machineries, extension services have been in tatters, have been like sick people for the last 28 years. How could you expect a sick person to jump today and tomorrow? You need to give him first, second and third dose before he runs. This government has just come in and we have first, second and third doses for these policy statements and it will

take another 12 years or 20 years. So, Mr Speaker, give this government 20 years to run because for the last 28 successive governments did not have the right doses for this country. We have good extension services during colonial times and the substations we have throughout the country have been deteriorating. So what are we talking about?

I believe successive government did not have the right policies. They gave lukewarm recognition to government's extension services and this government is going to address it. Just give this government time, time is in front of us, give us time and you will see, but surely you cannot see the result today and tomorrow or next year it needs time.

**Hon Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, I think the passionate way in which the Minister expressed the answers to these questions shows that we are serious. I thank the Member for Kia/Hogranu for that question. In fact he raised a very, very important issue, and I think it is part of the comprehensive review the government will be taking. I think the whole issue of extension services needs to be properly reviewed because as rightly pointed out by the Member it has not worked all these years. May be we need to take a more pro-active management supervisory approach than just a mere advisory extension approach.

Mr Speaker, we are looking at that issue and as rightly pointed out by the Minister, we are serious about it just as the other side of the House is serious. We are all concern about rural development and the welfare of our people in the constituencies. I would like to assure this House that your concerns are our concerns and we are all serious about it.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker, the extension support division of the Department of Agriculture is dead. Is it due to lack of financial support or lack of technical people not being properly qualified or staff are simply lazy?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, this government's policy is to equip necessary technical people by deploying all qualified people to those extension services. For your question, I am sorry Mr Speaker, I will not answer it because successive

governments did not give or did not deploy the right human resources or right qualified people to those extension services and that is why we are facing this problem. But this government is working on deploying the right and qualified people to those extension services so that the result that we have not seen for the last 28 years will be seen maybe for the next 10 to 20 years.

**Hon WAIPORA:** Mr Speaker, since that is talking about extension services in provincial governments in the provinces, I just want to explain the position of the Department of Provincial Government. The program of the Department of Provincial Government and Constituency Development is getting different departments in the provinces to capacity building to try and get people who are working down there, especially agriculture extension officers whom we understand are very weak.

I think what they need is logistics and so the program of my Department is to make sure we have these people together. My staff have already been directed to tour the provinces. They are touring our provinces now which they have not been doing before. I have directed my staff to make sure they go down and encourage the people working down there.

The work program of my Department is to make sure the people who work down there are strengthened, especially agriculture extension services in the provinces.

**Mr Taneko:** Mr Speaker, does the Minister knows that extension officers throughout the provinces and area councils have not been performing. What is he going to do to those people who have not been doing enough for the last 28 years?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, this is an inherited problem for the last 28 years because instead of successive governments facilitating agents to deliver services from provincial capitals, successive governments ran businesses. Most funds that are supposed to have equipped human resources so as to deploy qualified people with money to those substations or extension services were consumed up here. That has been our problem. And that is why this government is talking about the bottom-up approach. That is

why I am here on this side. All of you talking on the other side have a very big problem. You have been with successive governments, you were, and we talked about this. And it was only me who shifted his allegiance to this government because of the right policies this government has. You can talk there but you have been with wrong policies. You have been adopting wrong policies and you are now shouting and shouting. Why didn't you do it in the past? This government, as I alluded to earlier is going to do it but give us time. We can talk, talk and talk here for many, many hours but we will only be repeating the same old story.

Mr Speaker, the answer is that we are now in the recovery stage and we are going to tackle all your worries as I have said earlier. Thank you very much.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for Provincial Government for his intervention. I think agriculture extension officers have OBMs (outboard motors) but they only use them for fishing trips rather than doing extension work. The Extension Support Division of the Department of Agriculture is not doing its work, is it because of no clear directives coming from the Ministry?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, this government will now give proper direction to the extension services because under the bottom-up approach there will be more qualified people, and they will be equipped with constituency allocation of budget money. What is experienced in the past will surely be the areas to tackle for improvement purposes. Thank you.

**Mr KENGAVA:** Mr Speaker, we love to talk about the bottom-up approach so much. I want to ask the Minister if any provinces has ever given him a report informing him of problems why extension services have not been performing in the last 28 years?

**Hon Waipora:** Mr Speaker, as the Minister responsible for Provincial Government I do not need a report. I already know what the problems are.

**Mr Kengava:** Point of order Mr Speaker. I want to hear the answer from the Minister for Agriculture. Has he received any reports from any provinces advising him of problems why extension services are not performing?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, with your indulgence I would like to thank the honourable Member for North West Choiseul for his question.

Mr Speaker, for the last 28 years the problem has been that provincial members, national members and the rural populace have not been cooperative. They were doing their own things.

First of all let me say that I have not received anything from them because they have been in the provincial governments, politicians have been in the dark and even us as national leaders did not even know where we were going. We did not check each other, and so suddenly after 28 years we now know where we are now.

Mr Speaker, as new leaders now sitting down in the government side we have to take the lead to ensure we wake up all provincial members, wake up extension agricultural officers who have been sleeping, make them awake so that under the new rural development strategies they make sure to implement whatever plans each constituency has for its people to participate in rural development.

**Mr Riimana:** Honourable Speaker, thank you for giving me the floor to thank the Minister for Agriculture for the answers to questions 12 and 13.

Agriculture is one of the enterprises that will engage 80% of our people in economical activities, and so I expect the Minister who has been in this Honorable House for so many terms to perform better in his policies. Once again, thank you Minister for your answers and I will support you.

15. **Mr HAOMAE** to the Minister for Agriculture and Livestock: What is the progress to date, if any, of the research into papaw latex?

**Hon OLAVAE:** Mr Speaker, I would like to first of all thank the MP for Small Malaita for his question.

Mr Speaker, some initial work on pawpaw latex was done in 2001. A collection of different varieties of pawpaw sought at the Honiara Market was done. Ripe fruits were purchased from the Honiara Market, seeds extracted and this was to be followed by on field trials to test out the latex contents for the different varieties.

Mr Speaker, this project could not progress any further due to none availability of land to conduct the on-farm trials. Like many development activities this undertaking was not a budgeted item. The officer responsible was merely doing the work at his expense hoping his expenses would be reimbursed by the Department. Being an unbudgeted item Mr Speaker, he has to abandon the exercise. It was never a priority during previous governments as agriculture was never given any priority. Law and order, health and education were high on their agenda.

Mr Speaker, work of this nature needs more than just agronomic work as my office is doing. We need to know the market prospects, a pre-export quarantine requirement, technology required and sanitary requirements for export.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker, has the Ministry taken any measures to secure land for purposes of research on pawpaw latex?

**Hon Olavae:** So far I haven't seen any steps taken by my officers to that effect but since it is in your interest I will liaise with my officers if we could do that for further research.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker, why are there no steps taken to secure land to research this important commodity for export?

**Hon. Olavae:** Mr Speaker, this is the first time you have raised interest in this House and so you caught us by surprise because for the last 28 years no one in Parliament has ever raised this kind of interest. You have only so far shown interest for us to further research this commodity. Your interest will be taken on board.

**Hon Haomae:** Mr Speaker, the Minister seems to have contradicted himself. He said that

research on this commodity was already done in 2001 on fruits taken from the market and now he is saying this is the first time this issue is raised. In any case, I would like to thank my friend the Minister for answering the question.

16. **Mr HAOMAE** to the Minister for Agriculture and & Livestock: Can the Honorable Minister inform Parliament of the Government's policy and set criteria for the Ministry's disbursement of the cocoa and coconut rehabilitation fund to rural farmers?

**Hon OLAVAE:** Mr Speaker, may I inform this Honorable House of the established procedures put in place by my staff in assessing and approving projects funded under the 2005/2006 cocoa rehabilitation project.

Sir, application received covered cocoa processing units - that is cocoa fermentary units plus drier units, phases of wet cocoa beans, phases of cocoa dried beans, phases of wet dried copra, copra drier units, cocoa replanting units, copra crushing mills and virgin oil mills.

There is a steering committee consisting of all directors, a PS and a undersecretary with the Permanent Secretary of my department as the chairperson. This committee ensures all applications meet the following criteria. All Applications must be assessed by respective field officers and endorsed by the respective Chief Field Officers. Ensure equitable distribution of development projects. Ensure applicant's ability to manage and implement the project. All relevant extension staff are informed of all respective successful applicants.

The latest development on these projects is the drawing of an MOU signed by both parties. Commencing in August 2006 all successful applicants must now sign the MOU with the department. This MOU clearly states the Department's responsibilities in implementing and monitoring of the projects. It is clearly made clear to successful applicants that should they be found misusing the funds they can be prosecuted. Monitoring books have been prepared and distributed to all participating farmers. These monitoring books will provide the department with a wealth of information covering expenses, sales volume of places, locations etc. This information must be

submitted to the Department on demand every one to two months when the farmer comes to town to sell the produce. This information will go a long way in aiding us not only to effectively monitor the projects but also assist in future directions to take.

Sir, successful monitoring of these projects has been a problem area because of inadequate staffing in the Agriculture Planning Unit. My Department has taken action to recruit two trainer agriculturists to oversee the monitoring of these projects. Two more will be recruited soon. Extension staff also helps in monitoring these projects.

**Mr Haomae:** Supplementary question, Mr Speaker. Is the Minister aware that the bulk of the projects taken under the cocoa and coconut rehabilitation fund were given to people in Honiara and not rural farmers?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, what the Ministry so far knows is that most of the proposals received were on behalf of the rural populace. I do not know whether the applicants are from Honiara or from provinces but the budgeted allocation were purposely for rural farmers. There are no substantiated evidences as to whether most of the applications belong to Honiara people but rumors have it. Because the current allocation was budgeted for by the previous governments this government will next year allocate to all rural farmers in the constituency its constituency budget. Next year you will experience better results in terms of equitable allocation to each constituency. We are working on that. This year's budget as I've said is your budget and that is why all of us are now confused. You will see a better budget next year that this government will formulate. That is the answer to my friend, the MP for South Malaita.

**Mr Riumana:** Supplementary question, does the Ministry have the capacity and logistic to monitor the MOUs because even now the Extension Support Services is dormant due to lack of logistic. Does the Ministry have the capacity to monitor the MOUs?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker at the moment the Ministry is working at recruiting more staff to

meet all the requirements. That is what we have been doing. We are short of staff and we will be accommodating that purposely to ensure all our plans are fully implemented.

**Mr Haomae:** Is the Minister aware of an organized syndicate in Honiara targeting to get that money to be used in Honiara so that it does not reach the rural farmers?

**Hon LILO:** Mr Speaker, yes both the Minister of Finance and I have received a report from the Auditor General on the recent assessment of the use of this fund, and that matter is now currently being investigated by the office of the Auditor General and therefore it might be not proper for us to delve into the substance of the issues initially raised by the Auditor General. But, yes the government is aware of it and on reflection it basically reflects the way the current criteria in the system put in place in implementing this particular project. I do not want to dwell into all the politics of it but I think it is proper for us to say that, yes the office of the Auditor General is aware of this issue and is now currently investigating it.

**Mr SITAI:** Mr Speaker, I just want to inform Parliament hence the Minister that two years ago our constituency submitted a project to the Ministry for funding. So far we have never had any response from the Ministry. All we were asking for were empty drums for driers for our farmers with wire netting and staple nails. So far we have not had any response from the Ministry nor the committee. Can the Minister inform us as to why that is so? What is the status of our application? Secondly, of all the projects approved mentioned by the Minister can the Minister also inform this Honorable Parliament how many have been approved for Makira/Ulawa Province?

**Hon Olavae:** Mr Speaker, when we passed the 2006 budget last year the previous government started to implement the budgetary allocation in January.

When I came into the office, this Ministry most of the funds allocated under this year's budget have already been spent and already allocated to rural farmers. Around the

month of May I asked my officers whether there were some funds left for other rural farmers or other applicants, but I was told funds were already allocated to applicants who applied last year but were funded under this year's project. That is why most of the funds allocated have already been spent. I do not think there are sufficient funds for this year and that is why this government will take on board a good portion of money for each constituency next year.

As to how many projects were approved for Makira, I am sorry my Honorable MP but I will have to find that out from my officers and let you know tomorrow.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker I would like to thank the Minister for Agriculture & Livestock for his answers.

17. **Mr PACHA** to the Minister for Mines & Energy: Can the Minister inform Parliament if steps have been taken to ensure that samples obtained in the course of prospecting are retained or properly kept in the country as provided for in the Mining Act?

**Hon KAUA:** Mr Speaker, I wish to thank the Honorable Member for South Guadalcanal for asking this very important question. Sir, I wish to inform the House and the questionnaire that under the current Mining Act there are and still steps taking place for samples to be retained during the course of prospecting by companies retained in the Department of Mines after relinquish of the prospecting area.

**Mr KOLI:** Mr Speaker, how many years does the government, in terms of prospecting, permit a mining company operating in a particular area does sampling?

**Hon Kaua:** The first prospecting license normally takes two years and after that it can be extended for a further three years after which the actual mining should take place.

**Mr Abana:** Mr Speaker, I would like to contribute to this paper. In terms of prospecting it can take a number of years. If I may refer to Gold Ridge as one of the first mining companies we have in the country. When I was a child still

in primary school it started prospecting. Now I am an old man and the mining has just started. So it takes about 30 years of prospecting at Gold Ridge, and to find results before starting to mine. I am just putting to the House how long prospecting can take.

**Mr Kengava:** Mr Speaker, supplementary question. Why is it that mining or prospecting takes such a long time? Is it because of the land tenure system of this country or is it according to time allowed in the Act?

**Hon Kaua:** Mr Speaker, as you might be aware the work undertaken in prospecting is a very technical area which takes quite sometimes before results are coming forward. It has to take sometime because of the technicalities involved in the actual prospecting and the identification, and analyzing of all prospecting items. There needs to be time before the answer is known.

**Mr Pacha:** Mr Speaker, I would like to thank the Honorable Minister for the answers.

#### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order Mr Speaker. I have given you notice to ask a question without notice under Section 21(4) of the Standing Orders.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you very much for reminding me. I have forgotten it and permission is granted that the Leader of the Opposition ask a question without notice.

#### **QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE**

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, this question is directed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs relating to public media concerning the arrest of the newly appointed Attorney General. Can the Minister inform the House under what legal status is the newly appointed Attorney General of Solomon Islands, a foreigner is taking refuge at the Solomon Islands Embassy in Port Moresby?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Leader of the Opposition for asking the question. First and foremost whilst the person in question is a foreign national he has been appointed as the Attorney General under section 42 of the

Constitution, and so in essence he is an officer of the Solomon Islands Government. Therefore, the government has the obligation to give assistance where it can. His arrest in Port Moresby, whilst there are complications surrounding that particular case to which he is being charged, Solomon Islands is obliged to render assistance as much as possible until such time the High Commissioner under section 22 of the first schedule of the 1978 Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act, which is the Vienna Convention 1961 on Diplomatic Privileges. In fact he is kept at the High Commission at the discretion of the High Commissioner in accordance with Section 22 Schedule 1 of the Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities Act 1978.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, does this newly appointed Attorney General any diplomatic passport so that it qualifies him under the section quoted by the Minister?

**Hon Oti:** You do not have to travel under a diplomatic passport to enjoy the availability of premises of a diplomatic mission under the Vienna Convention.

**Mr Huniehu:** In the absence of the newly appointed Attorney General, who is now the legal counsel to Parliament? I understand the Minister for Justice is a qualified lawyer but at the same time the Constitution clearly provides for the Attorney General to be the legal counsel for Parliament. So who advises Parliament now?

**Mr Speaker:** Under the relevant provision of the Constitution section 42(4), it provides that it is only when the Minister appointed for the Minister for Police and Justice has no legal qualification that the Attorney General attends Parliament. Now that we have a Minister who is legally qualified to practice law in Solomon Islands appointed as a Minister, the Attorney General does not need to attend Parliament.

**Mr Kemakeza:** I guess the MP for East Are Are gets that answer before another supplementary question to my hardworking Minister for Foreign Affairs. Mr Speaker, the

Attorney General was actually ordered by the Magistrate of Papua New Guinea to be detained in custody. Since he now disobeyed orders what power does the Solomon Islands Government have to interfere in the judiciary of another country even if someone is a citizen or a foreigner working for the government or private whatever the case maybe, what power does the Solomon Islands Government have to act in contrary to judiciary proceedings?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, at this stage we have yet to give documentary evidence to confirm exactly where the order came from to arrest the person in question. We are working very closely with the Government of Papua New Guinea to establish whether or not it is an order within the jurisdiction of Papua New Guinea or from without. For example, I have here an order by the Magistrate in Queensland Australia for the arrest of the persons concerned to be seen in any of the states in Australia. Definitely from within the territory of Australia there is such an order. We have yet to be furnished with an order of similar nature coming from the Magistrate of Papua New Guinea. At this stage we do not have it yet. Mr Speaker, but definitely for his arrest in any of the states in Australia the issue warrant by the Magistrate in Queensland is to have him arrested should he be located anywhere within the jurisdiction of Australia. This does not extend to any other jurisdictions whether PNG or Solomon Islands.

**Mr Fono:** Why is the Government so concerned and insisted in getting this person in question given the wide publicity about his dubious character?

**Mr Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, the Government also has the same concern too. The case in question here is alleged to have been committed nine years ago. This individual has been in and out of the states of Australia all these years and no attempt was made by Australia to arrest him if this issue is something that Australia is concerned about. However, it did not. It is only after this Government appointed this individual to take up this important office in Solomon Islands that Australia moved to arrest this

person, and so there are a lot of funny things going on here.

The same thing applied to Justice Marcus Enfield Mr Speaker. This person serve the Australian judicial service for 40 years, colorful service and no attempt was made to arrest him or to question his legal qualifications. It is only after the Solomon Islands Government appointed him to the Commission of Inquiry that Australia moved to start question his qualification. This just goes to prove how far Australia can shoot its own citizens. It does not care about its own citizens if they are taking up responsibilities the Solomon Islands Government is giving them. And in the case of the Commission of Inquiry that Australia is so concerned about, and it will be in the Statement the Minister for Foreign Affairs will give this morning to explain the position of the Solomon Islands Government on this.

Equally so, the Solomon Islands Government too has concern over this and the extradition laws are very clear. If the move to extradite this person to Australia is of a political ground then the government that protects that person has no obligation to allow that person to be extradited to that country. We are concern both in here and Papua New Guinea that this thing is moved by politics and these two countries have the obligations to protect the person. Mr Speaker, thank you.

**Mr Fono:** Further supplementary question. This really shows that the Government has not done any diligent check on the characters of the individuals it appointed for these posts.

**Hon Sogavare:** Mr Speaker, if institutions, legally established institutions are something to go by and decisions that the legal institutions made are something to go back, the Vanuatu Court has made a decision and acquitted that person from this crime. This move is seen as the Australia Government having no confidence in the Court System of Vanuatu. What is that Mr Speaker, a foreign government playing a bullying tactic to small countries like Vanuatu and Solomon Islands? We are equally concern.

**Mr Kengava:** Mr Speaker, earlier on the Minister of Foreign Affairs alluded that there are

no documents received by the Government to prove any convictions by PNG. I want to know if such documents were in the government's hand or with the Solomon Islands Government. If the designated Attorney General is convicted in PNG what is the Solomon Islands Government position, will he still be employed as the Attorney General?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, depending on the cases which he will be convicted on. His being detained in Papua New Guinea was basically on extradition arrangement between Papua New Guinea and Australia based on the crimes that he was acquitted of in Vanuatu in 1997, about nine years ago. He was arrested and detained. This really is not on this case because the crimes committed in Vanuatu, New Caledonia for which he has been acquitted, now the order to arrest him only dated on the 29<sup>th</sup> September, which is last week for crimes which he was convicted in Vanuatu, tried and acquitted. He is being held in Papua New Guinea to be extradited to Australia to be tried in Australia for these crimes which committed in Vanuatu for which the Vanuatu Courts have acquitted him. Can you see the other side of the system, networking or what? Crime committed in Vanuatu, acquitted in Vanuatu by the Vanuatu Courts, ordered for arrest 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006, held to be tried in Australia, held in Papua New Guinea to be extradited to Australia for these trials. So the case in Papua New Guinea is about extradition, extraditing him from Papua New Guinea to Australia to face the charges for which he has been acquitted in Vanuatu. You don't have to be a NASA scientist to work out what this is all about.

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, is the Minister aware that the decision made by the Australian Government to re-examine him was based on new revelations that the newly appointed Attorney General must have tampered with the court's decision in Vanuatu and therefore the Australia has the right to demand its citizen to be tried in its own country to face its own laws. Is the Minister aware of these new revelations or he is just giving defense of a person who must be tried.

**Hon Oti:** If there were indeed new revelations that are not contained in these charges, have you got them.

**Mr Speaker:** The Honorable Minister does have a point that if you make a statement you need to substantiate it. If there are any new revelations mentioned in Parliament could the honorable Member substantiate them?

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, I can substantiate what I said in Parliament. I can substantiate.

**Hon Sanga:** Point of order Mr Speaker. I think if we make reference to court proceedings it would be helpful for this Parliament to obtain documents from the appropriate courts.

**Mr Haomae:** The newly appointed Attorney General of Solomon Islands seeks refuge at the Solomon Islands High Commission Office. Is he staying there as a government officer or just like any one seeking refuge in the grounds of our High Commission in Port Moresby?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I thought I made that clarification when I answered the question. First of all, the government is obliged to assist him since he is the appointed Attorney General of Solomon Islands under section 42 of the Constitution.

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, did the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister follow or even the Minister of Public Service follow proper procedures of recruitment to get a due diligence of this individual before considering him as the Attorney General? I say this because the same individual was brought up during my administration to appoint him in the Government service. What I did then was get a due diligence report from the country he was a citizen of, in this case Australia. The question is, does this government done likewise before deciding otherwise.

**Hon Sogavare:** The body that does the appointment of the Attorney General is the Judicial and Legal Services Commission acting on the advice of the Prime Minister. Relevant documents were submitted to the Commission.

In fact there are exchanges of communication between the Prime Minister's Office and the Judicial Services Commission over these issues. At the end of the day, the Judicial and Legal Services Commission is satisfied and did the appointment.

Mr Speaker, this issue is more involved than just Mr Moti and I don't want to go into all the details in here.

**Mr Haomae:** Mr Speaker, there are rumors that Australia had cancelled the passport of the Attorney General. I would like to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs for his indulgence whether that is true or not.

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I will not answer rumors.

**Mr Fono:** Before thanking the Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Honorable Prime Minister, I think the Opposition is so concerned about events which publicly tarnished the image of Solomon Islands, not only the Government but the nation for having appointed a Legal Advisor to the government who has very dubious characters. And not only that but for a foreigner to take refuge at our Embassy when the High Commissioner is away in Fiji can be seen as abusing sovereignty that we talked so much about. However, Mr Speaker, we leave it as events are still happening and so we will find out what steps will be take. I hope the Government is going to be serious in reconsidering the appointment that is already tarnishing not only the individual himself but the government and our nation.

#### **STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF PLANNING AND AID COORDINATION**

**Mr LILO:** Mr Speaker, thank you for granting leave under Standing Order 24 to present a brief on the current state of the national economy.

Mr Speaker, I am delighted to report that the National Economy has continued to rebound during this year. Domestic economic growth is forecast to remain stable at nearly 6% for 2006, and more than 6% is expected for 2007 economic growth.

Mr Speaker, this is by far the fastest rate of economic growth in the South Pacific. The

high economic growth is mainly attributed to growth in the forest sector. Strong growth has also been recorded in distribution and utilities sector.

Mr Speaker, the global economy by comparison is forecast to grow by around 5.1% in 2006. Nevertheless growth in the global economy is expected to slow marginally in 2007 at around 4.9%. The growth forecast for our major trading partners in the Asia/Pacific region however, are also strong. This is good news for Solomon Islands. We are a small trading nation directly affected by the world economy. In this connection Mr Speaker, I am pleased to report that all of our major export commodities have so far registered increases in 2006. In the June quarter exports of timber, fish and copra were significantly higher than the same period in 2005. This is record high export receipts, more than double export receipts in 2001.

Mr Speaker, the overall balance of payments for the first six months to June 2006 is a surplus of around 13.2million. This reflects increases in export receipts and positive outcomes in services, transfers and capital accounts. In addition donor assistance has remained strong. The gross internal reserves are currently estimated at 755million, which is equivalent to about five months of import cover. This is an increase of around 5% from the December quarter in 2005.

Mr Speaker, amidst these very encouraging and promising developments there are a number of immediate risk and shocks to our economy, most particularly oil prices and inflation. Mr Speaker, the global oil price has continued to rise over 2006 and is expected to remain high. This is mainly attributed to strength in the world economy particularly from growth in China and India as well as constraints on supply. Higher oil prices have also contributed to upward price pressures in the national economy both for our domestically produced goods and our imports.

Sir, annual inflation continued to increase throughout 2006 rising to almost 10%. Much of this is attributed to the high oil prices feeding into cost of transport and utility. Also contributing to price pressures in the economy is our recent experience of strong growth together with capacity constraints. Domestic or

international pressures are expected to diminish in the near future. Accordingly inflation is expected to remain around 10% through to 2007.

Sir, in terms of medium term economic outlook, the national economy is making good progress. However, major challenges remain if we are to raise the living standards of all Solomon Islanders over the medium term. Sir, the biggest single pressure comes from our fast growing population. Currently the population is growing at around, as we all know, 2.8% per annum. This is one of the fastest population growth rates in the world and to maintain our current level of income per head the economy needs to grow by the same rate as the population.

Mr Speaker, one our biggest challenges is to generate the broad base road necessary to provide enough opportunities for our growing population, especially for our young people. A big contributor to our economy for many years has been the foreign sector. Currently it provides around two thirds of our export income and around 15% of our economy. Its contribution to national income and growth of the economy has offset weaknesses in other sectors of our economy.

Mr Speaker, presently we are exporting around 1million cubic metres of timber a year. We cannot afford to be totally dependent on this one commodity for growth of our economy. Without investment and growth in other sectors and industries any decline in incomes from forest industries will reduce incomes for our people, particularly those living in rural areas and resulted in a decline in our rate of economy growth. This situation could occur within the life of the current Parliament. Moreover sir, failing to create the conditions necessary for strong growth of all key sectors of our economy could result in a significant decline in our real annual growth rate.

Mr Speaker, if on the other hand we pursue vigorous reforms combined with prudent and physical and monetary management, the real annual growth rate in the medium term could remain high at six percent and raise the living standards of all Solomon Islanders.

Mr Speaker, we cannot afford to wait. We must act now. This is a role and responsibility the government must take head-on

in order to provide an enabling environment which our economy can grow and thrive upon.

Mr Speaker, the path to achieving sustainable national development is to ensure diversified growth across the economy. Sir, the government has developed a comprehensive economic development strategy. This strategy is to maintain macro economic stability, increase the return to Solomon Islanders from our natural resources, address key barriers to growth and take a bottom up approach to rural economic development.

Mr Speaker, macro economic stability is the most important condition for economic growth. The government is committed to maintaining macro economic stability and good macro economic management. This entails working towards a low inflation environment and a stable financial system. The Central Bank of Solomon Islands has proved to be an able steward of these key elements.

The Government is also contributing to macro economic stability through its balanced fiscal policy. This means all of our spending is fully financed without borrowing. The government has been actively pursuing initiatives to help Solomon Islanders increase the return from their natural resources. During 2006 we saw the re-establishment of a number of major businesses such as the Guadalcanal Plains Palm Oil Limited and the Pacific Timbers Sawmill. Also important was the reopening of the Gold Ridge Mine.

Sir, the Government is also involved in active negotiations to develop mineral projects in Solomon Islands. There are ongoing negotiations with landowners at Mase on North New Georgia Island about a gold mine. The Government is also continuing to support the Bugotu Nickel Mine on Isabel although negotiations with landowners and the Isabel Provincial Government have been delayed because of legal proceedings. Also the Government has received a progress report from Sumitomo Corporation of its phase 2 prospecting license report at Suri on North East Choiseul of its findings which should lead to another gold mine in three years time.

The Government has continued to support our tuna industry. Earlier this year the Government announced an agreement with

SOLTAI to stabilize its debt situation. Without this agreement SOLTAI would have had to cease trading, but now SOLTAI can move ahead as a major employer in the Western Province of this country.

The Government has also continued to show commitment to the Auluta Basin Palm Oil Project in East Malaita. We are currently engaging landowners and the Malaita Provincial Government to discuss the strategy of this project. As stated earlier during question time the groundbreaking ceremony will be done in December this year. Mr Speaker, in addition to all these initiatives the key to unlocking the economic potential of this nation is to address barriers to growth in particular rural Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, there are three main areas to growth in our economy. First, is the distance – our rural areas are disadvantaged by isolation and distance from markets. They also lack access to telecommunication services, electricity, water and sanitation and reliable transportation.

The second key barrier to growth is our regulatory and tax environment. Businesses in our economy are strangled by high tax rates, excessive regulatory costs and uncertainty when dealing with the government.

The third key barrier to growth is inadequate business skills and entrepreneurship among our people. The Government is committed to removing these barriers to growth through the strategic framework for rural development and other related economic initiatives. To remove the barriers of distance that hinder the growth of our economic and living standards of our people, we have put in place comprehensive reforms to the transport and communication sectors.

Mr Speaker, transport is at the centre of the government's economic development strategy. The Government's objective under the National Transport Plan is to provide effective transport infrastructure and efficient services and to support, sustain economic growth and social development. This will include regular reliable and privately operated shipping services to all areas. Shipping services will be supported by both improved roads and air services. These

initiatives will help our people access markets for their produce.

Mr Speaker, the Government has an ongoing agenda to improve affordable access to telecommunication services by introducing competition. The Government looks forward to working productively with Solomon Telekom on this matter for the benefit of our people.

The Government is also forging ahead with moves to improve the regulatory and taxation environment facing business in the country. The Government has recently gazetted the Foreign Investment Act on the 26<sup>th</sup> June of this year and since then I am delighted to report that there has been surge of new investment registrations across almost all sectors of our economy.

Mr Speaker, I am also happy to report that the Business Law Reform Project launched this week is part of the Government's commitment to create a better business legal, regulatory environment to ensure our people participate in business and contribute to the national economy.

The National Tax System has become outdated to the point that it works against business development. The Tax System increases business input cost for local business operators. Worse still, some businesses and families have to pay high rates of tax while others get special deals through exemption and remission. We need a simpler system where everyone pays the fair share. A number of steps have already been taken including exemption guidelines and cessation of round log export duty exemption. Soon the Government will announce reforms that will reduce the cost of import duties for local businesses. Over the coming months the government will further progress the tax reform agenda by pursuing its commitment to abolish the Goods and Sales Tax and substitute it with a better tax system.

Sir, the Government is also committed to providing support to local businesses particularly in the rural communities. We have been concerned that assistance currently provided is not well targeted and not supporting businesses that need it most.

Sir, the Government is working on a range of measures to provided effective assistance to local people to start and run a

business including business skills training with focus on rural areas and provincial centres.

Mr Speaker, action is also being taken to expand access to financial services for those in rural areas. The government recently announced a new credit guarantee scheme to help people with robust business proposals to access commercial bank loans.

Sir, steps are also been taken by commercial banks to expand their services to rural areas. More automatic teller machines or ATM machines are now being installed; mobile banking is reaching rural villages with savings and micro credit products; the post office is offering banking services; and new bank branches are operating in rural commercial centres. The government is seriously looking at options for supporting the spread of these services.

Mr Speaker, the final element of our economic development strategy and the key pillar of our strategic framework for rural development is the government's constituency development model. This model will mobilize local communities in planning and development. This will provide a basis for better targeting government and donor support for our rural communities, and thus building private sector culture in our rural communities.

In summation, Mr Speaker, our economy has continued to rebound. However, our future growth will very much depend on unlocking the economic potentials of our nation. It will depend on helping our people particularly our rural people to actively participate in growing our economy. It will depend on raising the incomes and standards of living of us all and not just a few.

This government has an economic strategy for our economy and people, particularly our rural people. The strategy will remove the barriers to growth.

This strategy will help our people to access greater opportunities in an environment that encourages participation in the economy rather than being mere spectators. This strategy will also help to provide the transport links our people need to access opportunities and markets. It will help to provide better communications. It will help our local entrepreneurs access finance and build the skills necessary to run successful

businesses. It will provide a regulatory and tax environment that encourages business and investment.

Mr Speaker, this government's strategy is for us all. We will not leave anyone behind. Our rural development strategy will make sure of this. Our strategy and vision is for every Solomon Islander, from the biggest town and cities to the most far flung villages to enjoy improved services, better infrastructure, greater opportunities and a higher standard of living.

Mr Speaker, this government's strategy will help Solomon Islanders to work and invest for the future – for the good of us all.

Thank you Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members would realize that statements are not open for debate. If one or two questions are essential they can be received obviously but it is not for debate.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, under section 24(2) of the Standing Orders questions can be raised. Can I ask a question to the Minister?

In his statement on the economy I have not heard anything about repayment of our loans. Have they been paid up to date or have we fallen back into arrears?

**Hon Darcy:** Mr Speaker, I think I did refer to that when I spoke on fiscal balance strategy that the government is maintaining at this point in time and that is to avoid further borrowing and to look towards reductions in our total public debt stock.

Mr Speaker, to date there has been a significant reduction in public total debt of this country. We have made a lot of progress in terms of our domestic debts with repayments made to major financial institutions. There have been redemption of a lot of bonds and treasury bills and some have also been restructured into new strategic securities that have been re-floated into the securities market. On external debts we have made quite a lot of progress in terms of repayment to some of our strategic lenders, financial institutions and donors, and therefore has continued to receive very good and favorable response and communications from them.

A lot of this and the ability of us in meeting our debts has been made possible because of the cessation of exemption that has been inherited over the years including the previous government which the current government has put a halt to. That has made a lot of impact in terms of our fiscal revenue. That has given us a good ability to meet our debts at this point in time. Thank you.

**Hon Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, I want to ask the Minister on what is the government's position in relation to the national economic recovery reform and development plan 2003 – 2006 in which wider consultation was made between parliamentarians, provincial premiers, provincial governments, all government departments, multilateral and bilateral donors, private companies, organizations, NGOs and individuals looking at the five important key areas, which are normalization of the law, order and security situation in the country. Strengthening democracy, human rights and good governance, restoration of fiscal and financial stability and reforming of the public sector and the list goes on. I would like to ask the Minister if he has deviated from this important plan agreed to by this House, by all premiers, all departments, non governmental organizations as well as private companies? What is the position of the present government when this important plan was charged by non other than the Minister who is making this statement?

**Hon Darcy:** Mr Speaker, the status of the NERRDP 2003-2006 is still very much intact. A lot of programs and activities that have been identified and carried out under the NERRDP are still continuing. In fact, they are doing a lot of good and positive outcome to the country, the economy, and the social conditions of this country in terms of priority areas stated by the honorable Member for Savo.

But at the same time, Mr Speaker, we have to move on to create new grounds to build opportunities that have been made over the past and building them in a stronger way so as to build a stronger future for this country. That is basically what the government is doing by introducing the Rural Development Strategy that featured three key major elements I stated in my

statement, which we believe will really drive the economic growth of this country, not only at the urban level but right down to the rural areas. Mr Speaker, some parts of those new activities that will be incorporated into a new plan which is now currently been carried out by all permanent secretaries with close supervision by the Office of the Prime Minister and my department, is the incorporation of corporate plans that will really unveil some of the key strategic areas the government will embark on, building on to this very strong intention of the government to approach development in this country from a rural development strategy.

**Mr Kemakeza:** In the light of the Minister's statement Mr Speaker, is the government prepared to review the development plan to take onboard the policy directive of the new government? Is that your intention?

**Hon Darcy:** Exactly Mr Speaker. It is not a review to sideline NERRDP. It is a review to capture the good and strong programs out of NEDRP and build it into a new program under the Rural Development Strategy the government is undertaking.

**Statement by Hon Patteson Oti, Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade on the Diplomatic Impasse between Solomon Islands and Australia, Under Order 24 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders, on the occasion of the Eighth Parliament – First Session – Second Meeting, 3 October 2006**

**Hon OTI:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to make issue statement on behalf of the government, under Order 24 of the Parliamentary Standing Orders.

Mr Speaker, at the outset I would like to take this opportunity to thank those in Solomon Islands, more so particularly abroad, those who have stated privately in support of actions the Solomon Islands has taken.

Sir, at the outset, I wish to stress and remind us, that this Honorable House is not only the highest law and decisionmaking body in this land, but is also a symbol of the sovereignty of our people and country, Solomon Islands. All

Members of Parliament are therefore duty bound to uphold, cherish and defend this sovereignty.

Sir, it is the government's conviction that our people be appropriately informed through this House about what transpired over the last few weeks in regard to the bilateral relations between Solomon Islands and Australia, in particular what is now seem to be a diplomatic stand-off between the two countries, following the expulsion of Australia's High Commissioner to Solomon Islands on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Mr Speaker, respect for state sovereignty is the cornerstone and the basis of international relations. This is a fundamental principle that sovereign states and governments, whether large or small or weak, uphold in conducting their diplomatic and bilateral relations. It is also a conventional practice and norm that diplomats are at least expected not to interfere in the domestic affairs of their host states. While they pursue their countries' interests in the receiving state, they should not undermine the policies of the host government. One must demonstrate mutual respect and understanding. Sir, the expelled High Commissioner, in the judgment of the government violated these norms and practices, hence was declared persona non grata on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Mr Speaker, declaring a diplomat persona non grata is of course a very serious matter in diplomacy, hence Australia's strong disappointment and anger over the action taken by Solomon Islands. However, Mr Speaker, the government firmly believes that it took the right action. The former Australian High Commissioner blatantly undermined the policies and initiatives of the Sovereign Government of Solomon Islands. He was expelled because he supposedly was campaigning against the Government's Commission of Inquiry established to investigate the April 18 riots, contrary Mr Speaker, to claims publicly advanced by Australia wherein it was said that the High Commissioner was declared persona non grata because he (the former High Commissioner) was talking to the Leader and Offices of the Leader of Opposition. Mr Speaker, that is not the reason for his expulsion.

Mr Speaker, as Minister responsible for Foreign Affairs and as a matter of duty within the portfolio I am in charge of, I feel obliged to inform Parliament and only through Parliament, not the media and the people of Solomon Islands the events culminating in the expulsion of the former High Commissioner on the 12 September 2006.

Mr Speaker, prior to taking the decision to expel the High Commissioner, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands telephoned on 11<sup>th</sup> September, courteously requesting his Australian Counterpart to recall the High Commissioner. The Prime Minister of Australia Mr Speaker, blatantly refused to do so. Our Prime Minister henceforth has no choice but to declare the High Commissioner persona non grata in accordance with Article 9 of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic and Consular Relations which are quite in order. The events, I have just relayed to you, happened in just two days – 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

Sir, it is now common knowledge that Australia has taken retaliatory action by immediately canceling Australian multiple entry visas issued to all Members of parliament, pursuant to section 1278 of the Australian Migration Act 1958, and other subsequent enabling subsidiary legislations currently in force in the Commonwealth of Australia. I have my letter here dated 21<sup>st</sup> September 2006 where I was informed that my visa has been cancelled within the provisions of the relevant laws of Australia, and I am sure other Members of Parliament who have Australian visas might have also been issued the same letter. I have replied the letter and said thank you very much. I acknowledged the letter and I appreciate and I comply with the laws of Australia. I have no qualms about it.

Mr Speaker, Australia has also threatened to further punish Solomon Islands in the international arena, and indeed this is continuing. Sir, the detention that was questioned this morning of the recently appointed Attorney-General last Friday in Port Moresby on his way to Honiara, is again read by the Government of Solomon Islands as Australia's efforts to undermine the decisions of the Sovereign Government of Solomon Islands. The fact that the person in question was

exonerated from all charges in the Republic Vanuatu about 10 or so years ago, has been traveling to Australia since he was discharged, without incident is a clear indication of what I would like to call 'political persecution' by Australia aimed at the Government of Solomon Islands for its appointment of the individual as Attorney General.

Mr Speaker, it has also become common knowledge as was alluded to earlier by the Prime Minister that Australia has also smeared the standing of one of its own retired judges when that person was appointed to chair the Commission of Inquiry to look into the April 18 riots.

Mr Speaker, what we need to be consciously aware of is that Australia's actions to these cases are deliberately targeting and painting a negative image of the Government of Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, while in New York two weeks ago for the 61<sup>st</sup> Session of the General Assembly, the Prime Minister and myself took the opportunity, in fact we had appointments lined out particularly because of what transpired here in September, to meet with a number of leaders including the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea who is the current Chair of the Forum, the Foreign Minister of Australia, which I met personally, the Foreign Affairs of New Zealand which I met personally, the Foreign Minister of Fiji, and of course the Prime Minister had an audience with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vanuatu. The Secretary General of the Commonwealth, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific, and lastly but not the least the United Nations Under Secretary for Political Affairs. We took this opportunity to explain the Solomon Islands position on the apparent divide between Australia and Solomon Islands. The Australian Foreign Minister drowned in his anger took the opportunity to label all political leaders in Solomon Islands including those who have already passed away as corrupt. Might I also add that my colleague and Australian counterpart, in my view demonstrated a lack of respect and accused us of not showing the Pacific Way when we expelled his country's principle representative. However, Mr Speaker, I very much regretted to have observed the

demeaning of the much talked about “Pacific Way” by those less qualified to discuss what the “Pacific Way” might have meant in essence to Pacific indigenes.

Mr Speaker, it is important that Solomon Islands maintains a consistent and clear position. The Government has adopted a position on the matter, including charting a possible way forward. The point of contention here is basically the terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry.

In this regard, Australia as we all know, has been actively campaigning against the establishment of the Commission of Inquiry, particularly those paragraphs which relate to the case of the two Members of Parliament who are in custody. It has been heard before the courts of high court of Solomon Islands and cleared by the way.

Mr Speaker, a Commission of Inquiry is a normal mechanism established under the laws of Solomon Islands, laws of this Parliament to investigate the circumstances surrounding a particular event or situation. As far as this Government is concerned, the establishment of the Commission is not only for the sake of transparency and accountability, the very same principles that members of the international community including Australia have been preaching about, but also as part of its genuine efforts to address the root causes of the riots and the recent ethnic tension, thus enhancing long term peace and stability in this country. We need to address the root causes of these events if we are to ensure sustainable peace, stability and development in our country.

Sir, it is in our national interest to proceed with the Commission, a point reiterated by His Excellency, the Governor-General in his speech to Parliament yesterday. In this regard, the Government welcomes and accepts the offer by the Government of Papua New Guinea to provide a Chairman and a member of the Commission. It is the Government’s hope that the findings of the Commission will not only shed light on the events of April 18, but also assist the government in initiating the necessary measures to prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

Mr Speaker, the current diplomatic impasse is primarily a bilateral matter between

Solomon Islands and Australia. It should not be linked to RAMSI. We must avoid dragging RAMSI into the debate since RAMSI is a regional initiative under the auspices of the Forum’s Biketawa Declaration.

Closely analysed, the stand-off is more to do with the conduct of Australia’s principle representative (the former one) than the overall relations between the two countries, let alone the wider Pacific region. (We hope would not be drawn into the cobweb). Australia however, has been standing firm behind the conduct of its former High Commissioner and considers the action taken by Solomon Islands as a big slap on the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Furthermore Mr Speaker, Australia seems to have brought RAMSI into the stand-off and threatened that any moves by the Solomon Islands Government to redirect RAMSI will lead to the disintegration of RAMSI. The Australian Government has openly criticized Solomon Islands for failing to acknowledge its 800 million Australian dollars assistance to Solomon Islands under RAMSI. While we recognize and acknowledge RAMSI’s contribution to restoring law and order in the country, it would be interesting to know how much of the 800 million is actually spent in this country. But I guess Mr Speaker, we cannot expect to have our cake and eat it, as far as Australia is concerned.

Mr Speaker, as the main financier of RAMSI, Australia will continue to use RAMSI in its dealings with Solomon Islands. It is becoming difficult to differentiate between Australia’s traditional bilateral assistance program through AUSAid in Solomon Islands and Australia’s contribution to RAMSI in this country. The bilateral package should not be tied to Australia’s contribution to RAMSI and vice versa. There needs to be a clear demarcation between the two. It must be noted that RAMSI is a partnership between the Forum Island Countries and Solomon Islands, and it must remain so. The fact that a particular country pays for most of RAMSI’s operations should not be a license to do whatever it wants to do with RAMSI. At least, this is the view of the Solomon Islands Government.

Mr Speaker, the Pacific Islands Forum through the Forum Chair, in our view, must now take charge of the overall monitoring and

supervision of RAMSI and coordinate any discussions and dialogue concerning the future of RAMSI. It is the position of the present Government that Solomon Islands and Australia should not discuss RAMSI matters directly but it must be done so through the Forum and its chair.

Mr Speaker, the review of RAMSI must also determine whether RAMSI is operating on the basis and principles of the Biketawa Declaration. If it is not, then RAMSI could lose its regional nature, which would be most regrettable and hence the answer to the question of whose interests it really serves becomes more obvious.

Sir, the Government will be raising this issue at the upcoming Forum Leaders Summit in Fiji later this month, in particular the need for an independent body to review the operations of RAMSI, with a view to strengthening RAMSI and in order for the people of Solomon Islands to sustain their trust and confidence in RAMSI.

Sir, in my meeting with the UN authorities in New York, two weeks ago, I stressed the need for the international community in particular UN agencies and UNDP in particular to take a proactive role in implementing some of the development related aspects of RAMSI. Indeed, Mr Speaker, the UNDP Council approved the upgrading of the UNDP sub-office in Honiara to country level status in 2007 last month. We hope this initiative will see more the United Nations involvement in our rebuilding and development endeavours.

Sir, moreover, Solomon Islands needs to explore and utilize the opportunities under South-South Cooperation, and that is cooperation between developing countries. That is working closely with other developing countries, as I said. The government in this regard is *in the process of exploring*, I repeat, *in the process of exploring* a number of technical cooperation framework agreements with developing countries including South Africa, India, Cuba, and we are in the place of concluding one with the Republic of China in Taiwan. Mr Speaker, these would complement the existing cooperation and support we derive from our traditional development partners including Australia.

Mr Speaker, the Government is now prepared to enter into dialogue with Australia to find an amicable solution to the current diplomatic impasse. The expulsion of the former High Commissioner, in our view should now be a non-issue. The Government is prepared to consider Australia's replacement for the previous one and hope that he or she would demonstrate a better sense of understanding and mutual respect including respect for the principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of Solomon Islands or any sovereign state for that matter.

In looking for a way forward, Mr Speaker, the government is now engaging the kind support and services of officials from MSG countries as a "go between" for Australia and Solomon Islands with a set of options which they will be putting to Canberra this Friday for its consideration. We will await Canberra's response before engaging in further dialogue. We hope the issue will be resolved prior to the Leaders Summit in Fiji later this month so that both countries (Australia and Solomon Islands) can rebuild their relations based on mutual understanding and respect for each other's sovereignty.

Finally, but not the least, Mr Speaker, later this week we will be debating the motion by the Leader of the Opposition on no confidence on the government. In debating the motion and I am not debating the motion now, I am just reminding us before that motion comes that in casting our votes, we must do so based on our sound judgement of what is best for this country.

The current diplomatic stand-off should not be used as a factor in influencing ones position or vote. The stand-off is basically a tug of war on sovereignty. It is about a so called fragile and weak state reminding a big and powerful neighbour to observe and uphold the principles of respect and non interference in the domestic affairs of another state or government.

This Parliament, Mr Speaker, as I have said must remain a symbol of our country's sovereignty and we should be proud and passionate in defending this sovereignty including defending it from outside influences and interferences. The onus is on every one of us to make the right decision, and the right

decision is to support a government that is working diligently against all odds to maintain its sovereign rights including shaping the destiny of its people and future generations.

I thank you Mr Speaker sir.

*(applause)*

**Mr Speaker:** Are there any one or two questions anyone may wish to raise?

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, the same Member of Parliament who is now the Minister for Foreign Affairs moved a motion against my government in 2001, 2002, in fact two motions over the issue of sovereignty because it was claimed that sovereignty is in the hands of a few individuals in Solomon Islands and not in the hands of the people of Solomon Islands. That was the meat of the motion.

Here you are, the same Member of Parliament, now a Minister is now questioning the word 'sovereignty' Mr Speaker. To me sovereignty must first of all be demonstrated at home likewise in 2001 – 2002.

Where do you draw the line, Minister in situations of that nature? First of all sovereignty must be in Solomon Islands before the outside world is recognized. In this case that was the meat of your motion that very few people of Solomon Islands have, and this is looking at your statement. Where do you draw the line in situations like this where very few people in Solomon Islands hold the sovereignty of this nation? My government then cannot operate in the hands of a very few people. Here we have other people coming in to help us bring back our sovereignty in Solomon Islands.

The question is Mr Speaker, where do you draw the line in situations like this?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I can draw the line only in terms of the difference of the situation that he made reference to and the current situation we are in now. These are two different situations and I will have to excuse my memory if indeed that was the gist of the motion made reference to by the honourable colleague MP for Savo/Russells.

I just like want to say here that sovereignty does not lie in people. Sovereignty

lies in institutions, laws and the constitution of this country. That is where sovereignty lies, regardless of who. It is the laws that are enacted by Parliament – the constitution, the regulations is where our sovereignty is based on. When I said defend the sovereignty I mean defend the laws of this country including the laws to appoint who we want to appoint which is contained in the provisions of our constitution. Thank you Mr Speaker.

**Mr Kemakeza:** The Minister mentioned other countries for bilateral assistance or multilateral like Cuba and Africa. During that time Mr Speaker, the same Minister for Foreign Affairs ended up in Cuba. What was the response at that time when you were in desperate need as compared to this time that has not come to our assistance?

**Mr Oti:** Mr Speaker, nothing is static. Nothing is static in this world, forever it is just moving especially in the age of globalization. In particularly what is now happening globally is that more and more and developing countries are finding it easier for them because of their similar situations and circumstances to work laterally and that is across themselves than opposed to vertical cooperation, which is developed countries against developing countries. Because of the experiences and situations that a lot of developing countries including we in Solomon Islands, some of our situations cannot be addressed by developed countries. They can only be assisted through the assistance with cooperation engaged with developing countries because of similar situations that exist and we see it from the same lens, understanding each other and more so when we come down to the region and then go further down to the sub regions. Like in the MSG you will see that cooperation is very easy. It does not really need us thinking about it very much. We are just one people. People like to work better with people you know than those you do not really know. I think this is a new paradigm in international relations in so far as cooperation between developing countries is concerned, and that is what I made reference to as in the South-South Cooperation.

The MP for Savo/Russells made reference to the case of Cuba. Yes, in 1998 and we were in the process of concluding something then when events overtook us. We met again with Cuban officials in June 2006 at the ACP Council of Ministers in Port Moresby and they are interested to revisit the areas that we want to cooperate in. Mr Speaker, while we were at the United Nations for 61<sup>st</sup> General Assembly the Prime Minister had audience with the Vice President of Cuba. Perhaps with your indulgence Mr Speaker, I will ask the Prime Minister to just clarify the kind of discussions that took place between himself and the Vice President in terms of what I mentioned in the statement – “exploring”, we are exploring options. We are not concluding anything, but we are exploring what we can get and what we can give. Thank you Mr Speaker.

**Mr Huniehu:** Mr Speaker, it is a pity that the bilateral relationship between Solomon Islands and Australia is taken on the floor of Parliament when the whole question really started with the stand-off between the present government and the legal fraternity. The stand-off between the present government and the legal fraternity then snowballed into the issue of a diplomatic relationship with Australia and Solomon Islands. The Minister of Justice is sitting very quietly not knowing what to do I guess or maybe waiting some questions for him to clarify.

I think the bilateral issue is very secondary. What this Government needs to clarify to the floor of Parliament and to the people of this country is the stand-off, the relationship between the legal fraternity and the government. It is the independence of the judiciary that is in question here.

I want one of those good Ministers to give Parliament some qualified and dignified answers please.

**Hon Oti:** Point of order. In regards to statements issued under Order 24, I think the honourable Member should make short questions. I cannot respond to the questions because they fall outside the purview of the statement that was made.

**Mr Speaker:** I was going to say that too honorable Minister.

**Mr Kemakeza:** Mr Speaker, because the Member for East Are Are is outside of the question, let me come into the question.

Mr Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs graduated in foreign relations, and that is his profession. He is very experienced on this issue, and I thank him for his understanding.

These organizations have syndicates Mr Speaker, and similar situations and thank you for driving at Africa, Zimbabwe. What is the different situation, still on diplomacy area, the situation in Zimbabwe that you look at as future focus for Solomon Islands?

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I've not really heard what the MP was saying but is he is saying of the behavior of Zimbabwe in the international community especially within the Commonwealth, of course it has been expelled I think from the Commonwealth. What the Honorable Member is saying is how this situation is developing that we might end up like the case of Zimbabwe.

Mr Speaker, in our discussions, Zimbabwe's case is currently dealt with under CE because that's the Commonwealth expert advisors Secretary General. That is why we had an audience with the Secretary General of the Commonwealth in the Commonwealth at New York last two weeks basically to measure up and to inform them of the situation here, and they will have the right to carry out their own assessments and when they think we are now qualified to be put as Zimbabwe on this matter then they will tell us. But in the interim I think it does not warrant any action to be taken to that extent. Thank you Mr Speaker.

**Mr Fono:** Mr Speaker, I thank the Minister for clarifying the involvement of the outgoing High Commissioner. It is not so much on talking with the Leader of the Opposition or Members on this side of the House as propagated by the media before he left. Thank you for clarifying that.

My question is, Mr Speaker, can the Minister inform the House that he has personality differences with the outgoing High Commissioner during the last Government when

he was also a Minister, which maybe those personality differences gave rise to advising the Prime Minister to expel the High Commissioner, and not so much his political influence. I would like the Minister to confirm whether he has any personality differences during the last government when he was a Minister in the previous government.

**Hon Oti:** Thank you Leader of Opposition for that question. Yes, unfortunately I would not like to be read along those lines because personality does not come in the conduct of government business. Of course, we might have differences outside but that should not be the basis.

**Mr Fono:** Point of Order, Mr Speaker. Human as we are a man can use his personality differences to influence government decisions therefore compromising sovereignty.

**Hon Oti:** Mr Speaker, I would like to be informed of any particular time that I revisited the problems that arose between myself and the High Commissioner in December 2004. I have not. I have been dealing with the High Commissioner on official business and encourage him in terms of dialoging on bilateral issues. Of course, I am in a weak position to defend it, but I think you can get a view from the former High Commissioner whether in fact in his reading it has to do with it.

In the statement I issued I simply made reference to particular issues that he has been involved in, and I do not see in those any personality clashes come in so far as my person to person engagement. In fact I am a very good friend of the former High Commission, only as a matter of principle this is where we apply the laws. There's nothing dubious, there is nothing illegal about it as they are all within the laws of Solomon Islands. Australia also abides to the same Vienna Convention and all the International Community. That particular provision has been applied to Australia in the past in 1947 in Korea, in the 90's a representative of New Caledonia. In fact in Vanuatu a while ago the expulsion of the First Secretary of the Australian High Commission also happened. These are normal practices. In

our research we found that countries take this opportunity to check each other and to size up, measure up and as everyone knows we can start again based on mutual respect for one another. Where we have committed mistakes we can revisit those and rebuild on where we are currently at. But I'd like to dismiss any claims or any insinuations that it has to do with a situation that I was involved in, in 2004.

**Mr Speaker:** That is the end of questions to that particular statement.

## **BILLS**

### Bills – First Reading

The 2006 Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2006

## **MOTIONS**

**Hon TAUSINGA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the motion before us to offers words of thanks to the Speech from the Throne delivered by His Excellency, the Governor-General on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006. Perhaps, Mr Speaker, to start my discussions on the Motion, I want to share an anecdote that I had previously. My first overseas official duty since the inauguration of the Solomon Islands Government on April and May this year was a trip to Japan. The meeting was for leaders of Forum Countries, the Prime Ministers and Presidents to discuss Japanese Aid Assistance to the Forum Countries and to advance the Pacific Plan. Except for Fiji represented by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Solomon Islands represented by myself, the Deputy Prime Minister, all Forum Countries were represented by the Heads of Government, Presidents and Prime Ministers. I had a suit on, a mandarin collar, the collar-less all the days of the meeting. The suit I wore, Mr Speaker, the mandarin collar might have given the impression to my colleagues that I was a Minister of the Church or perhaps an evangelist, and so after the second day's meeting my secretary came and told me that my colleagues were curious and asked whether or not I was the Minister of the Church. I asked the Secretary what did he tell them. I was much more interested in how much my Secretary knows about me than what my

colleagues would want to know. "I told them that you are not but that you came from a missionary family background" he replied. I was amused of his straightforwardness; he pulled no punches because there are times that I love to pull people's legs. Secretary, I said in reply you have just made a great mistake. He looked at me with some bewilderment. How, he responded. You know, I continued, you should have told them that I am a Minister and I represent the Universal Church of Solomon Islands, the Solomon Government. But the difference between the ordinary church and the universal church that I represent in the meeting, I went on, is that the church collects offerings from members whilst the government collects aid grants from strangers. The church speaks to the hearts of members whilst the government speaks to the minds of strangers. The church speaks from the Holy Scriptures whilst the governments speaks holy from constitutional liberator and policy manuals. The church speaks with charisma and straightforwardness whilst the government speaks with diplomacy that many times goes wrong. I ended my little dialogue with my Secretary that next time they ask please do tell them that I am a preacher, an advocate on almost anything and a Minister. The opportunity did not come our way, my Secretary gave up my obscurity and so I missed what should have been my amusement. With that story to begin the day, I am duty bound now to accept the formality of this meeting.

Mr Speaker, I am indeed delighted to have been given the opportunity to respond and thank his Excellency, the Governor-General for the Speech from the Throne that was delivered at the opening of Parliament yesterday. This is the fourth time that I perform the duty to offer thanks to his Excellency, the Governor-General for the speech from the throne for the past years.

The opening ceremony of the Parliament and upon which the speech was pronounced though simple was indeed significant. It was significant not because it was traditional in its deliverance, not because it was a speech from the throne thus represents the monarch, neither it is significant because it was addressed to the assemblance at the opening, but rather the speech from the throne promises the citizens of the country, Solomon Islands that the

Government has identified their development needs and new political directions that summon all citizens to help each other improve their lives thus the country.

Mr Speaker, I hold the view that men who seek to alter life for living usually find themselves in vicious circle and usually live in illusion and can outrun by time. It is illogical also to even contemplate the notion to seek to alter living for life. The reality is, it is easy for life and living to alter man. And so those who seek to improve their lives do so because they want improved life from the experiences of discomforts of their everyday lives. The pain of not having sufficient food for the family and children on the table, the inadequate basic comforts the family failed to enjoy, lack of fuel for lighting, inadequate household needs, inadequate medical attentions or services for a sick child, lack of medicinal provisions, the poor health of a family, the banishment of a student from school because of the inability to pay school fees, are sufficient reasons to men's earning and strive to improve life.

Thus, Mr Speaker, the logic is that improved life of every individual is the improved welfare of the country and a testimony to economic and social advancement of the country. In the context of Solomon Islands an improved life of an individual is the improved life of communities, thus a testimony to social and economic progress put together and becomes scanty wide make the outcome a sovereign state of Solomon Islands. Therefore, the fundamental development consideration in focus expounded by the speech from the throne aims at improving the life and lives of our citizens. The new political directions necessary to take the nation forward, the pressing issues facing our people, the identified prospects that will help our people and the nation to achieve improved life and thus national prosperity. This consideration, Mr Speaker, the speech testified are the basis upon which the government advance its governance to provide for the environment conducive to people's participation in activities that promised them an improved life and living. There can be no better choice then to identify the involvement of the people, the real people in making Solomon Islands propel into the future.

The bottom up approach is indeed recognition of the participatory role by the people and their resources, and to use the quote from the speech, 'a bottom up and holistic approach that encompasses the empowerment of the villages through appropriate rural advancement strategies'. This, Mr Speaker, is what I term putting human face into the economy. It is now time that all of us give our support and immediately identify areas where our rural people can engage in economic activities, the appropriate infrastructures to facilitate these activities and the adjustment of related institutions both public and commercial to give importance to these initiatives.

The intention to work on the pressing issue as well as the identified prospects is a result of our desire to put in place appropriate measure that can enable us to provide for the improvement of life and the lives of the people. The choice of the theme "creating a new and better Solomon Islands" is relevant and important indeed. It is relevant and important because the theme relates to the question of "how can we make Solomon Islands better for ourselves and our children". I am satisfied that the Government is putting policies sufficiently aggressive and people related as well as resources utilization focused to help in creating a better Solomon Islands.

Creating a new and better Solomon Islands or to put it in a question "how can we make Solomon Islands better for ourselves and our children". The speech from the throne expounded on the premises of the government that sought to create a new and better Solomon Islands. But to make a new and better country requires that we must develop our resources and thus the theme is important because in creating a new and better Solomon Islands it relates to the development of our natural resources, the management of our natural resources and our usage of them to better the lives of our people. Quite often we start to develop these natural resources and quite often we are blinded by economic and profitability that we sacrifice our resources with minimal gains and unsustainable exploitation that insignificant gains by the people. But we must allow the development and utilization of these resources both living and non living. Their development is significant for

purposes of improving and providing quality life and lives for people in Solomon Islands. Though living and non living resources are usually considered to be separate, however, both are inextricably interlinked as they are both basis for the advancement of human life and welfare and the strength of a country.

I concur to the fact, Mr Speaker, that we have immense wealth in Solomon Islands from the beautiful people to beautiful sceneries, from land and under the land to the sea and under the sea, the marine life and fisheries. It maybe conceived that we are reminded of the vast and immense wealth that Solomon Islands have on land and in the ocean - the land, the forest, the fisheries and marine resources. But to be reminded is to stay focused and to remain focused for purposes of development of the natural resources come many challenges.

Because, Mr Speaker, the development of these resources is indeed a testimony of human activities and with human activities come environmental and conservation issues. In other words, the development of natural resources is human activity for human needs. Human activity and human needs are environmental and conservation issues, environmental and conservation issues are resources management issues. Resource management issue is a national duty and national duty is every body's duty and everybody's duty makes it relevant that we have the duty to meet the challenges on the development of this resources. This consideration my honorable colleagues make it all more appropriate for the theme to be relevant and important.

I am in agreement to the view that the immense wealth we have from the land and the sea must be properly managed. The national policy emphasizes clearly policy directions, legislative instruments, institutional strengthening and sustainability. Our deficiency to advance the national policy statement is on technical and human resource capacity, and it is of importance that the government continues our important partnership with donor countries and to also seek from them where possible assistance of these limitations.

But I suppose, Mr Speaker, that the significant single determining factor for natural resources development is land. Land, its

ownership arrangement, its usage and potential usage, is the base upon security and comforts of life and lives of individuals, families and the country can be improved. And thus we all recognize that land is the foundation upon all other developments to improve life and lives can be sourced from and so it is right that we consider ways and means to properly use it to better the life and lives of the many subjects we profess and assign to serve throughout the country. In other words, land is the basis for the survival of people in the country or all life forms or humanity on earth. But we tend to see land for self and disregard the sacred nature of land that is shared by genealogies and relatives and support individual who reside on it.

The many litigation over ownership of land, disputes about chieftaincy over the tribes that own the lands, litigation about investment interests on the land and the many disagreement between brothers, uncles and members of the tribes and landholding groups of the activities on the lands and in respect of the cash benefits, sum up our self importance and above all the life support nature of land for all who are entitled to live on it. Often we are short in our memory that the many endless disputes we have over customary ownership are hindrance to developments. Many people, particular expatriates suggested that customary tenure of land in Solomon Islands is not conducive to economic and commercial development. Yes, such observation maybe true because of comparative analysis with other contrasted ownership in other countries. Such reasoning is from a mind set that is from the state ownership frame of mind. Such a mind set failed to seek to understand the customary tenure and to make efforts to assist in reform that can help in the freeing of the land for the people and the tribes to use but without alienating the owners.

The common law of settlement of land disputes, the court adjudication that is based on evidence is relevant though the general application in the customary ownership concept is indeed a mismatch. The test that is usually applied in litigation so that many people should have rights and who are from the same genealogies in many circumstances, become landless. This is the mismatch of our customary

tenure and common law principles that was based in state ownership concept.

In Solomon Islands, Mr Speaker, no one should be landless. Customary ownership and rights do not allow this. But I suppose the question before and the subject of the government's future consideration is not the mismatch of customary ownership of land and state ownership concept embodied in our land policies or development policies and legislation. Not a landless that the law made out of our people, nor the other nation of customary land in the early years of colonization or the inadequacies of land usage and development but rather the question of how we can organize people's potentials and it led them to the land, and in view of making both the land and the people become productive and thus improved their life and lives thus contribute to social and economic advancement of the country.

Yes, land is important for it is the basis upon which all developments are founded, and so it is pleasing to note that the government is keen to find ways to get people to actively participate in developments and opted for relevant land reforms that can advance the life and lives to a standard reasonable and comfortable for the families.

Sir, I have briefly mentioned the potential we have in terms of mineral deposits and the development and development focus and the challenges that generally come with development of the resources. Solomon Islands, for example has high potentials for the discovery of high grade mineral deposits - copper, oil, nickel, possibly call it the gemstones and offshore oil and gas deposits as well. But you will agree with me, Sir, the development of any deposit of any minerals is a complex process that involves good knowledge of our geology, its effective promotion and facilitation of exploration activity and of course the land ownership and lease arrangement of the land. Hand in hand with these is our ability to monitor projects, their progress, economic and social impacts so that we can ensure the development is sustainable and environmentally friendly as much as possible.

All these require an appropriate policy and legislation be put in place and technical capability to effectively implement and monitor

the progress of mineral exploration and development must be provided. If what we called the Solomon Islands first mine at Gold Ridge in Guadalcanal was commissioned in 1998 and as an omen of improved life for the people and an economic bonus to our evolving trade and industry sectors. The closure came about two years later as a result of the ethnic unrest - a demonstration of what man can do to himself and the country. The closure and the consequent damage to the infrastructures had far reaching repercussions for the exploration industry with the Solomon Islands being tagged with a-too-difficult to deal with image. It is satisfying to note that serious attempts have since been made to have the mine reopened and it is the desire of the people and the government to reach some understanding and have the mine opened as soon as practicable. Essentially preparatory works are now in progress that should see the reopening of the mine in mid 2007 or as soon as practicable.

Mr Speaker, our people and our country strive towards greater economic stability and better livelihood for the people. A major impediment has always been the continued rise of energy costs and the immediate future does not promise us any reasonable hope. It affects both small atolls and large islands in our country. And as the demand for better and quality services from our people continues, the government must execute the implementation of the national plans for greater use of renewable energy options – winds, bio fuels, coconut oils etc, etc.

The vast distances within and between islands made transportation additional to the costs. This therefore reinforces the urgency of the option for renewable energy.

On education, Mr Speaker, it is the duty of the people and the government to provide quality education for the children of the country. Many believe that education is the powerhouse of the country. I think those who believe so have every reason to tag education as a powerhouse because it appears that it is the ticket to cope with modernization and a passport to improved life and lives of the people.

The skills that children learn shall enable them to face challenges in their lives and make life reasonable and comfortable. However, there must be a balance between

educating the children of the country and the creation of opportunities for the exercise of their skills to better themselves. Our concern must also be those who are pushed out and who will end up as fishermen, farmers, shop owners in the villages. These are people that need our support in marketing their products. I am pleased that the rural approach initiated by the government is a vehicle upon which such considerations can be advanced.

On health services, I had the opportunity recently to co-host the handing over ceremony of equipments from the Republic of China to the Peoples' Referral Hospital, popularly known as the Honiara Referral Hospital. Present at the handing over ceremony were the Taiwan Mobile Medical Mission, the Republic of China Ambassador, medical professionals and executives and the public. The donation of equipments and medicines spoke volumes about the concern of the Republic of China on the health of the people of Solomon Islands. It is indeed gratifying to note that though these people are from a far away country, they are important to the health of the citizens of the country. But that is one side of the coin.

In that occasion Mr Speaker, and on my remarks are attempted to establish an understanding which I want to share with you. Solomon Islands is interdependent with other countries of the world. Traveling from countries is now made easy and as the world becomes smaller because of modern transport and technologies, the influence of global communities have a direct impact on the health of people. The eating habits, the choice of food we eat, the many choice over the many drinks we have, the diseases that respect no territorial boundaries, HIV/AIDS, tuberculoses, diabetes and other contagious diseases. These diseases are threats to human lives. But if there is anything I need to establish perhaps it would have to be the fact that medical and health services are usually provided for individual whose physical health are in need of medical attention and cure.

However, this must not be misconstrued to mean that the National Referral Hospital or the Ministry of Health and Medical Service is solely responsible for the health of every citizen of the land. This contemplation is misguided

understanding because men as an individual alone is responsible for his/her own health. What do you do with your own health is what you decide to do with your life. In other words, the health you choose to enjoy is the life you want to live. So whilst we are being assisted by donor countries in our medical and health services we must not be complacent and forget that the health of Solomon Islanders must be controlled and regulated from within the country. This simply means that health is an individual duty and thus one must care for ones own health. If everybody does care for their own health, the cost of medical services can be greatly reduced and men can become simple and enjoy life to the fullest.

Mr Speaker, my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs had just informed the House of the current diplomatic impasse between Solomon Islands and Australia. I wish to make a short observation though I am not an expert in diplomacy. I tend to observe that there is a misunderstanding that exists on the part of the leaders of Australia. The Commission of Inquiry into the riot is an exercise to identify the causes of the disorder that saw the devastation of our capital. This consideration emerges forth from the rationale that the country needs to know what went wrong in order to avoid the same mistake in future, simple as that.

The concern that the Commission of Inquiry will interfere in the Judiciary is a consideration that had been determined by the Court and therefore a non issue. The fear that RAMSI officers or the Solomon Islands Police Force will be implicated is insignificant, particularly if one holds the view that we are attempting to identify our role and seek to put things right.

I think as a sovereign nation we are entitled to peace in our country, and for those who love peace, we should help each other to make peace a reality and for the solace of our children. I am always reminded of relevant songs to relevant situations and one that came to mind is, "*Oh freedom, oh freedom. Oh freedom over me, over me, and before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave and go home to my Lord and be free*".

Mr Speaker, if freedom is fundamental and a basis of sovereignty, and if sovereignty is

seen to be tampered with then I submit that my freedom to decide for my country is tampered with. In such a situation the option available for both Solomon Islands and Australia must opt for a win- win situation and must not have hard feelings towards each other.

Mr Speaker, I will now come to the conclusion of my discussion on the motion, and as I said the motion is a vote of thanks to His Excellency, the Governor-General for the Speech from the Throne. It does not require me to submit argumentative debates. Debates argumentative can come later in the supplementary appropriation bill that is being set down for second reading in days ahead.

Sir, I wish to reinforce that the observations I made in my remarks is merely to thank His Excellency the Governor General and the Speech from the Throne.

I wish also to reinforce that the observation that I have made on my remarks to the Governor General focused on the need to improve people's life and lives. People make up the country and thus if people's life and lives are improved then there is improvement in the country. To this extent, the observation made by his Excellency the Governor General and I quote, "*The future of Solomon Islands passes through the family*" holds the truth.

Mr Speaker, I wish to again thank His Excellency the Governor General for the Speech from the Throne once again. I thank him on behalf of the people of North New Georgia constituency and I wish him and his good lady God's blessings and happiness. God saves Solomon Islands from shore to shore. I beg to move.

*(applause)*

*The motion is open for debate*

*Sitting suspended for lunch break*

Sitting resumed at 2 pm

**Mr KEMAKEZA:** Mr Speaker, as noted there seems to be no quorum but since nobody would like to take the floor I will take the floor.

Sir, the other side of the House is empty. Mr Speaker, before I touch on the speech from the throne, I first of all would like to thank the mover of this motion for introducing this motion for us to thank his Excellency the Governor-General.

Mr Speaker, in doing so I also would like to reiterate what the mover has said. However, I am a little bit confused whether I am going to debate the speech from the throne or the speech from the Deputy Prime Minister. It is quite unusual, Mr Speaker, as it seems to be that there are two statements from the Government and so it confuses if not this side of the House then myself.

Mr Speaker, also I am not a Minister or Pastor or Priest or Bishop as the mover has said but I am a very committed Christian.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to join the mover, the Deputy Prime Minister in thanking his Excellency the Governor-General for taking the trouble or the decision to deliver the speech from the throne. I also would like to thank the Government for making this important speech outlining the policies of the government. In doing so, Mr Speaker, I would like to congratulate the government which I have very high respect on the members of the Grand Coalition for Change.

Great leaders are on the other side, which the Member for Savo/Russells has every respect for them, especially the Prime Minister and the Deputy who is a long serving Member of Parliament.

I also would like to congratulate the Prime Minister for appointing advisors to government departments especially the Permanent Secretaries and for further endorsing my appointment. Almost all Permanent Secretaries that I appointed during my time have been reappointed. I thank the Prime Minister for that because they are the backbone of the government machinery and they are advisors to the Ministers in the important portfolios they look after.

But I am rather disappointed that the Secretary to Prime Minister and Cabinet is not here in Parliament for the second time. No wonder the Prime Minister made some very, very ill decisions because he does not have an advisor, likewise the Special Secretary to the

Prime Minister and the Chief of staff. If these three important qualified officers cannot give advice to the Prime Minister then there is break down in political direction.

These are very important people in the Prime Minister's Office. You have been a Prime Minister in the past, Mr Speaker, and you know this. I thank now the Minister of Mines and Energy who used to be my Secretary to Prime Minister and Cabinet. He is very experienced in that post. I wonder why the Prime Minister did not seek his advice as well as the Minister of Public Service and many other great leaders on that other side when making this statement.

If I were on that side, Mr Speaker, I would consider their future because if they advise the Prime Minister wrongly then they deserve to be disciplined or if they don't advise the Prime Minister then the Prime Minister must explain where he gets his advice from.

Mr Speaker, when you look at this speech I would like to thank the government for taking my advice during the first meeting. I said that if there are some good policies of the previous administration it would be good to take them on board. They are not bad but are for the good of this country and people. They are collectively formulated policies, especially the NERRDP, the National Economic Recovery and Development Plan of the previous administration and so is the policy of the government.

Mr Speaker, I called this speech from the throne an acknowledgement of what the previous government has done. There is nothing new in this speech. I haven't seen any single area in the speech that talks about political direction. No more, no less. It is just empty statements.

The performances and activities of the government now as stipulated in this speech, is only talking too much and doing very little or if not nothing at all.

I am even surprised Mr Speaker, that His Excellency the Governor-General has seen it fit to come and deliver these empty promises for this country and people. It is a mockery of the Head of the State with all high respect to that office. I must warn him that he ensures that office is not politicized.

Let me say this with justification. The last speech from the throne was in 1998. You were the Speaker at that time. And do you know what happens to that speech from the throne in 1998, the country collapsed, the end of it, back to zero. For that reason my government who has been in power for four years did not want to make a mockery of the Head of State to deliver a speech from the throne.

I know this speech is untimely, it is uncalled for and it is all about acknowledgement of the previous administration. That is all I have seen in this speech. I will go into the details of the speech later on, Mr Speaker.

There is no meeting, no highlight of the government's achievements, nothing. It is just talking too much with doing very little. No wonder the Minister of Finance said he has no time to formulate the 2007 budget. Why, may I ask? I am at home when I heard my friend, the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa, the Minister of Finance talking saying he has no time because he wants to put a new policy directive.

Let me inform this House that the policy directive the Minister of Finance talked about is this one, the Aoke/Langa Langa Constituency Apex Association. That is what he would like to talk about because inside it talks about 50 constituencies, and let me quote. He said, "in order to make development planning people centered it is recommended that 50 constituencies become a community based units/organizations to be charged with planning of either people or communities for the purpose of facilitating, coordinating and supervising the implementation of that development plan". It is a project profile for this.

Further on, on page 7 who is to fund this? It is aid-donors and this is quite different from the old roadmap. Sir, the new roadmap for economic recovery and development for the building of the nation Solomon Islands is not a new idea. This was formulated by my government in 2003, this one here, by none other than my friend, the Minister of Finance for having given the task to do that under the policy of the government then Mr Speaker.

But these two policies are different. One is aid-donor driven and the other one is private sector driven. That's the difference between the two policies, because that confirms

the Aoke/Langa Langa's Apex Association - aid-donors driven.

The roadmap by the previous administration is private sector driven and the model for that is the former SIPL. That's how we started it and the second one is the Auluta Basin which the Minister for Agriculture cannot give proper answers to this morning. It seems that he loses touch of the policy directives of this undertaking.

Mr Speaker, I cannot understand why the government cannot draw up the 2007 estimates, and instead said it is a new concept by the Minister of Finance, my good friend. I would like him to harmonize these two reports. I will assist him do that, and I will not talk like the Deputy Prime Minister who is out of the concept by going back to old dreams. So there is nothing in this speech and I will justify this later on.

Sir, this is the 1998 speech from the throne, but by different well respected people but the same. The SIAC Government is the government for change and now there is also another government for change that comes up with this speech.

I thank you for acknowledging the SIPL. I thank you for acknowledging SOLTAI. I thank you for acknowledging the Gold Ridge. I thank you for acknowledging the roadmap. I thank you for acknowledging the services. I thank you for acknowledging law and order. I thank you for acknowledging the economic growth of the country at 5.5%. I thank you for acknowledging the services that are now provided. I thank you for acknowledging the infrastructures. I thank you for all these. But what have you achieved from April up to now? Nothing but creating enemy, enemy, enemy, and doing nothing. You will end up nowhere when you create a lot of enemies. You talked too much and doing nothing for this country. This is exactly what happened in 1998 Mr Speaker, and the 2006 speech from the throne is a repetition of the 1998 speech from the throne. No more no less.

Mr Speaker, talk about God fearing for what? Who is not a Christian on this floor of Parliament? Any may I ask? Is there anyone here who is not a Christian? Is there anyone here not baptized? Is there anyone not a

Christian on this floor of Parliament? Solomon Islands is a Christian country according to your statement, the founding father of this nation, and I thank you for that.

That statement alone justifies that all of us are God fearing people. Remember Mr Speaker, that upon on your advice, according to his Lordship, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Get back to your Bible and read it. So who is not God fearing in this country and who is not God fearing on the floor of Parliament for you to start question it? Even in your program of actions before independence and under successive governments program that I have read, just for the benefit of Parliament I have those reports here, every successive government talked about God inside their programs because this is a Christian country and so who are you to tell us. Who are you? Maybe you yourselves are not Christians. No wonder you made decisions that made us go from bad to worse. You seem to run this country like cowboys' countries when people of this nation deserve your respect and so you should respect these people.

Remember, Mr Speaker, the 34 Members of Parliament in the Government side, if at all that number is correct, must know that this country does not belong to them alone. No. Who said this is your country?

Mr Speaker, this country belongs to more than half a million people of Solomon Islands. We all have our parts to play so do not think that when you are there you can run the show. Not at all, but it is happening in this speech from the throne.

I am surprised at whoever drafted this speech? Who writes this speech? I am not surprised because the Secretary to the Prime Minister is still in the United States of American. He is still there today and even during the last Parliament he was there - a highly paid public officer who cannot even advise our Prime Minister.

I am not surprised because directives come two parts and let me tell you that both are political directives. One is from the Secretary to Prime Minister (SPM) down to the ranks and files in the operational area directed by none other than the Cabinet. The job of the SPM is to pass on directives to Ministers and Permanent

Secretaries of all departments and down the ranks and files. That is another political direction. Don't tell me that what you talked about in this speech is political direction. The second one is the executive direction. The Cabinet gives the directive and this is where changes come about. You are now five to six months in power but you cannot even bring a small amendment to take care of your changes. I thank you for maintaining the departments that I formed. Where is your change here? Where? There is none in this speech. There is nothing. I was asking who drafted the Speech for the Head of State to read in here. This person must go for further training on how to write a speech and must be a person who understands and knows the English language a bit.

Let me make some observations because the debate is about the speech. First of all the color of the book is cloudy and it is not like yours sir. This is yours (*shows a copy of the book on the speech from the throne during the Speaker's term as prime minister*). Compare them. One big cloud lay across here. The Minister of Mines or the Deputy Prime Minister should advise the Prime Minister's Office to make a better one next time or are you just sitting down there watching the pot cooking.

Coming to the addresses, Mr Speaker, one golden hen that lays the egg is not acknowledged and that is the private sector. All the others are acknowledged but the person who pays our wages, the private sector is missing. This is an address from the Head of State and it is embarrassing if I do not acknowledge the private sector's part in this nation. That is why I said this country does not only belong to you but it is for more than half a million people in Solomon Islands. So to miss a very important sector talked about this morning by the Deputy Prime Minister during the course of introducing this motion is not acknowledged in the speech from throne but you acknowledged yourself. God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble.

There is nothing that convinced me in this speech. I guess it should be redone again. If you go further down on pages 1, 2, 3 & 4 there is nothing there but only acknowledgements, which took half if not two or three hours.

I also look at the priority areas in this speech. I would say there are three - new political directions, pressing issues, identifying prospects for the future – on what. What are the prospects for the future? Is it the bottom up approach or the land tenure system? You talked about land tenure system but how are you going to address this? May I ask another question? Is it the white paper of the former Member for West Are Are or the paper of the now Commissioner of Lands or is it the bills that I put to the office that you do not introduce? How are you going to deal with this issue because it is the key factor to any development? Mind you that 85% of land in Solomon Islands belongs to people - customary land.

I am not even surprised that the Bina Harbour does not take off the ground because caveats after caveats were made until today. How are you going to do your bottom up approach and your aid donor driven policy? Here you are creating enemies against aid donors. That is the reason why I said earlier today that it is a syndicate where you slap the face of another one, the one who comes to help and you will end up like Zimbabwe.

The statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs does not convince me, not at all. We say Solomon Islands people are very strong in wantok business. I tell you they are worse off than us. So when you are talking about the World Bank, when you talk about the European Union, when you talk about the Asian and Development Bank, when you talk about the International Monetary Fund you have to be careful because they are a syndicate.

They will say it is all right and tap your back. That is diplomacy but inside it is very hot like fire. You must train to be a diplomat. You are a very good Minister thank you for doing the right thing. We will help you but I think there is one string still tied in here. ‘You do this and we will consider’. When the word ‘consider’ comes the MP for Rendova/Tetepare knows this very well as he was my Minister of Finance. He is a very good dealer, he succeeded in all his negotiations. I do not put him off from office but he puts himself out of office. I have all the respect for the MP for Rendova/Tetepare. He is a good negotiator like the MP for Aoke/Langa Langa, now my colleague Minister for Finance.

They are very good negotiators like yourself too, Sir. Because you use your humor, your humbleness, you talk very kindly and soft but inside you are hot. That is the character that you also have, not like me sometimes when I am angry I told you to get out, I do not want to see you, which is wrong. May be the Prime Minister has that same character but his attitude is different. That is the key factor.

You talk about the land tenure system but how are you going to address this so as to make your dreams come true. The bottom up approach of our government in 2003 called the new based roadmap for economic recovery allowed resource owners to deal direct with investors and the government is only there as a facilitator. Is that true the Minister for Fisheries? That was our approach in the past. It is your paper, Mr Speaker, but now he said it is not good and so he ran away to the other side. Try to teach your people as this is your people and ideas. The Minister of Mines, and the Minister of Public Service are all great leaders on the other side. I have every respect on you. You can do it, nothing is impossible. Remember what I said in my profile that nothing is impossible in this world. If you are having difficulties, as you are now, I am surprised you must not be a human being, you must be living in a different planet.

Sir, political direction and I want to reiterate it now when many Ministers are here does not come from anywhere else but from two very important areas only. The Secretary to Prime Minister gives directives to Permanent Secretaries and Permanent Secretaries expect clear directives from the Secretary to the Prime Minister who is not on the floor of Parliament today and he is not in the office either. That is his job because he is the boss. He is the one who is supposed to give directives to all the Permanent Secretaries. All Permanent Secretaries are waiting eagerly to get directives from the SPM either be it an executive directive or a policy directive issue on operational matters. That is a direction, and there are only two directions to make things happen, which is in the Cabinet and the Office of the Secretary to the Prime Minister. Nowhere else everyone in this country are hoping and wishing to see directives coming out from there. Do not tell me

it will come out from other place. Not from you Ministers because you are scared otherwise you will be fired, and no wonder some have already been fired. You are awaiting directives from the boss and if the boss is not giving clear directives to you how are you going to move. Is it only day in and day out?

You may be thinking that this will make people of this country think you are doing something instead you are not doing anything for us. We expect you to deliver goods and services to the people and this country. That is what we are expecting from you and yet you are giving us a bad to worse situation. I do not know where this country is heading to. Unless you decide otherwise we are going for disaster and this will be a repetition of 1999 – 2000. I bet you because people are now getting frustrated. Take a simple analysis by walking from KGV1 to White River and you will hear conversations in the street saying this government is not good, that person is bad. Not every one of you is bad. You are very good people but the fact that you are wearing that hat you are considered bad by people in the streets. I thought I was worse off but I am a much better. This is true.

From day one – when you appointed the SPM - this person I have all the respect for him. In fact I awarded him with an honor. Is this true, the Minister of Mines? He deserves that award for being instrumental in the Solomon Islands Development Trust (SIDT). But do you know what happened, Mr Speaker, he was a total failure, a total failure. Where is SIDT, where is the Iumi Together Holdings now, a subsidiary business arm of that non government organization. Where is it now? To take another failure to come and be the SPM will surely and truly make this country to fail.

You are saying foreign influence, foreign influence. Kemakeza Government is a foreign influenced government. But look at the Prime Minister's Office now, the Secretary to the Prime Minister is a foreigner, the Attorney General is a foreigner, the Chairman to the Commission of Inquiry is a foreigner. But why are you telling other people that my government is foreign influenced. You better look around yourself. Who is giving these wrong advices?

The Economic Advisor is a foreigner and these are the books he has written. One is called '*Debt Free Money*' given to me by the advisor on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2002, and another one on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2000. This is the same Economic Advisor of the Prime Minister, who is Secretary of the SOCREP Party. Only people in this country with no right sense will follow this book. No wonder we are also tempted to go for another scheme. Tomorrow I will ask a question to the Minister for Finance on the Charity Fund. It was claimed that the funds are there but it was diverted by Kemakeza. I want you to answer me properly tomorrow.

Mr Speaker, where are we going from here? Who is causing these pressing issues for this country? I would have thought you would just continue on making sure there is law and order, infrastructure, and there is no priority either. There is no priority on these areas. Where do you start? Is it the Federal System when provinces go from bad to worse that you wanted to do this? Where is your priority on the infrastructure program? I know the Minister is working very hard on this. He has already received my letter on this. Infrastructure should be the priority of any government. Why Mr Speaker? That is where the economy is going to lay. Throw it back to infrastructure. Why start on the Federal system when those people do not have money yet?

I fully support you on your bottom up approach because you are continuing with this except the funding aspect of it. You got my support on that.

Mr Speaker, we must quickly settle this impasse so that the pressing issue is answered. If not identify the prospects for this country and go forward.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs said that it must not be separated. Do not separate RAMSI and this impasse with Australia. Who is meeting the bill? Is it the Solomon Islands Government, the Forum countries or the Forum Secretariat? The real person you had the impasse with actually meets the bills. She meets the bill, the cost of RAMSI in this country. You do not need to research this to find the answers. You do not need to get another two degrees to find the answers. This is purely common sense.

Can you just sit down idly if one of your relatives slaps your child and he cries to you because one of his arms is broken? Do you think you would look after your relative for doing that to your child? I do not think so because he slaps your son. This is basic human logic.

Sir, get another course for us so that we can learn about ethics although we write about ethics in this paper but we need some more training. Your office and my office should try to organize another training so that we keep human ethics.

I agree with page 6 of the speech because it is the continuation of my policy. Pages 7 and 8, there is no sense. Page 9, the Deputy Prime Minister talked about logging companies but I acknowledge his hard work for his reforestation plantations. In fact if there are other people like him and his group this country will develop. Thank you for acknowledging that. I also acknowledge that.

Sir, I do not wish to talk very much because there is nothing in here for me to discuss. This speech should be a good report for the end of my term of four years. If anyone of you here still is not certain what I left behind, this is the report on that. This is the report on my work because there is nothing new. You just continue on with what the last administration has put except you are going to destroy it, last time with weapons but now with the economy.

The only thing I see is the increase in the salaries of Members of Parliament. I am happy that I get that increase but I am not happy that my people are going to suffer more. That is the only record I have for this Government of Change. You are just making inflation to go high. I say this because who is going to follow up next after looking at the price index. Unions will come in saying now that you are getting big salaries they too must receive big salaries.

Teachers will come, public servants will come, lawyers will come and then the private sector is going to say that it cannot meet the price index and so pay us as well, increase our salaries too. So the person owning the company can only make two decisions. He will either close down or increase his products – increase the price of his products. Who is going to suffer? Who are the consumers? Our voters.

Then comes 2010, and that is why I do not want to be in Honiara, I do not want to be a Minister but I stay at home so that I start to campaign – day one for four years. You live in paradise here with your fat salaries to the inflation. When you walk pass people are going to say this is the man causing inflation and so one term for him. Goodbye because that is the price you are going to get. Not like the Deputy Prime Minister who is unopposed because he is a Minister, but most of us are not Ministers.

Sir, this decision again has what I called multiple effects to our country. It also goes on to decisions that I could not believe. Argue with the Attorney General, sacking of the CBSI Governor General, argue with judges of the High Court, argue with diplomats, argue with business people, argue with other foreigners. What is going to happen to our country?

Sir, no wonder you are our founding father, a God given grace, which should be an example to those of us coming after you. I have done my part, now it is your turn, and so do it. People are expecting you to deliver the many promises you made.

You talk during the launching of your money program of action, you talk at Lawson Tama during independence, you talk in the media, you talk to the press, you come and talk in Parliament and keep on promising, promising and promising but nothing done so far. You have not delivered anything yet. Those of us getting the RCDF we are okay. That is what I have been dreaming about and saw.

I asked the Minister for Infrastructure for my wharf at Savo but he is yet to do it. I asked the Minister for Health to go and make my water supply but not yet. The Police Station at Savo is not yet built the Minister for Police. But anyway these are in your good hands and I respect you. The people of this country think highly of you. In fact all of you are graduates, degree holders with high expectations. I hope and pray that you will do better for this nation.

But I will warn you again for the second time that if you mess it up, you will reap it yourself. With these Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

*(applause)*

**Mr KWANAIRARA:** Honourable Speaker sir, let me join in the debate to contribute to the Speech from the Throne moved by His Excellency, the Governor General of Solomon Islands, Sir Nathaniel Waena on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006.

Indeed it is my privilege to take this opportunity to contribute to the debate of the Speech from the Throne moved by His Excellency the Governor General in Parliament on Monday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2006.

The Speech which covers a total of twenty pages is a Traditional Speech moved by His Excellency in National Parliament at the beginning of the Session of Parliament, especially when the new government was elected after General Election. It should contain materials which provide bird's eye view of the government of the day statement of policy and development strategies.

According to the national constitution as Leader of the Independent Group let me make some observation of the issues which the speech raised, and in doing so, I'm fulfilling my duty as Leader of the Independent Group.

The Speech has covered wide range of issues and I shall try to offer my congratulations to the government, and where needed, I shall make constructive criticisms and advice to the government of the day.

Firstly the national motto "To lead is to serve." The process of selection of national leaders was made during the last general elections, and this House is made up of the selected fifty from among the hundreds of candidates who contested the national election. Each of us is duty bound to live the motto: "Lead is to serve".

I wish to observe that the quality of leadership promoted by this House over the last twenty eight years after independence has left me with no option but to state that as a nation we have failed to instill the quality of national leadership as required of us by the nation motto.

The dark history we have been through during the ethnic years from 1998 to 2003 reflected very badly on the quality of leadership. The process of selection of leaders to this honourable House needs to be reviewed to reflect the quality of leadership available in the community, and encourage party education to

educate the electorate to select leadership group in Parliament after careful scrutiny of each individual and their leadership qualities.

In short sir, we have to blame ourselves in our leadership struggles over the last decades, for the problems we have experienced during the ethnic years and the recent Black Tuesday in April at Honiara. These are reminders to us all of the quality of leaders we have in this Parliament. It has been written that whatever shall a man planted he shall reap the consequences of that.

On resources both human and natural resources, indeed, the nation is blessed with both human and natural resources God had provided. Our population although is just under half a million mark, it is growing at a national average of 2.8% per year a highest in the South Pacific Region and by world standards.

There are so many features of the human resources, first it is youthful population where 50% is below the age of twenty years. Secondly about 85% of this population lives in the villages scattered across the provinces and islands of this nation which poses a challenge to any government on how best to provide goods and services to each of our people to better their rural livelihood.

One of the features which attracts my attention is the national population density give the finite size of this nation, is about 13 persons per square kilometer. However the provincial population distribution and density in 1999 census is a challenge because population pressure given the land availability is a problem in Temotu, Central including Renbel provinces. Given the land tenure system where 80% of the lands are customary held, distribution and density of population is a threat to any government.

The other observation sir, is that Honiara urban constitutes 12% while 84% live in the rural areas.

Population growth impacts on economic and social development is given the rate of population growth, the provision of goods and services have to be the same in order just to keep pace with the natural annual increase of population.

This nation as we know is blessed with natural resources, the land, forest, the sea and

the air, and we can adequately provide the need for each person to improve his livelihood. Unfortunately Mr Speaker sir, over the last 30 years as a nation we have failed to provide better development policies and strategies, institutional constraints which includes structural one as well.

Mr Speaker, there are signs of widening disparities in income standards of living among the population and increasing levels of disadvantages and poverty among the people of Solomon Islands. It is here I acknowledge the government statement of policy which tries to address the problems of the development impacts on population and resources. However sir, we need clear strategies on how best to deliver goods and services to the population.

On national diversities and unities, under the national constitution we are but one nation and one people living within our geo-political areas where God during His creation process put us where we are.

Again it is my observation that “Top – To Bottom” had not worked since independence, and how much we try to make us one nation and one people we will find it difficult to impose to the people the notion of One Solomon Islands nation without due regards to the geo-political and realities and recognition of our rich cultural heritage, and enormous diversities.

There are in my view needs to recognize the three levels of independent nations. The first nation is the people in their cultural setting; living in their villages, having their own cultural identities and social norms. The second nation is at the national constituency level. The clusters of these make up the provinces. Their nation is the national government. There are enormous diversities that naturally exist with us in our villages, constituencies and national government level. These, I agree Mr Speaker, must be enhanced as basis for national unity. Without recognition of these levels of nations, national unity and respect will merely be a political slogan by planners and bureaucrats.

The new political directions, issues and prospects. Honourable Speaker the high turn over of governments since independence 28 years of independence and weak political system we have had made it difficult to accomplish the new political directions promoted by political government over the years. Over these years we

have seven Prime Ministers and seven governments, which mean each leader on average, provided with four years of leadership, this too short a time to see these new political directions bear fruits. We need strong political parties and quality leadership to lead these reforms.

The bottom-up and holistic approach will not work unless there is concerted efforts and mechanism in place to empower the 85% of the population living in the rural areas or villages. There is a need to ensure that challenges that inhibit improvement in rural livelihood are addressed; some of these impediments are customary land issues, lack of infrastructures, lack of adequate provision of services, and non availability of “growth centres” within the villages to stimulate rural economic and social growth.

Whilst I do appreciate the government, Mr Speaker, the statement of policy on bottom-up-holistic approach” to development, the government had not identified clear strategies on how best to implement those policies.

The improvement of government finances which is the last political leadership instituted would make savings to enable the government of the day meet its rural development initiatives. Unfortunately the huge salaries and wages increases brought about by this government will leave less for rural development.

The rural development needs direct government intervention. In my argument above sir, I have alluded that we need to recognize the villages as first set of nations hence the need to allocate resources to enhance rural and village growth.

The village people owned 85% of all the customary lands in this nation and unless direct allocation of funding for their development is provided by government budgetary allocations, this House will be liable for raising false hopes among our people in the rural community.

In my view allocations of millions of dollars to rural development over and above RCDF and Millennium Poverty Funds, I am afraid sir, nothing will happen. There needs to be a direct partnership with the first nation, the village people.

Talking about pressing issues sir, government needs to revisit list of pressing issues of Constitutional Reform, Ethical Leadership, and Truth and Reconciliation are development issues, but not “pressing issues”.

On the need to improve relations with development partners, in my view sir, the most pressing issue is the need to transform village and rural livelihood, and in order for the government to allocate substantial resources both human and funds as well is to review our relationships with all our development partners as far as budgetary support is concerned.

There is a need for improve relationship with these development partners let alone mending the relationship with Australia, which is strained each day as we go on. The contribution by Australian Government to development budget over the years 2005 and 2006 amounts to \$314.3 million, highest by any bilateral development partners.

Mr Speaker, if the government continues to allow the diplomatic row between Australia and Solomon Islands continue unresolved, I am afraid the government priority for rural development will be badly affected.

Mr Speaker sir, while I appreciate the general sentiment expressed by the speech to assure the development partners the desire of the government of Solomon Islands and people to enhance the need for development cooperation, there are leaders in the government who have hidden motives to see RAMSI exist from Solomon Islands. *(There is therefore, it seems a contradiction between the Government Policy on RAMSI and recent statements and press releases by the Honourable Prime Minister on the issue of RAMSI).*

The development of rural areas will depend very much on the law and order situation, and participation of Regional Mission to these islands is vital to enhancing rural development.

Mr Speaker sir, the most important issue now is the need for rural development and the government will do well by allocating resources to assist the village livelihood programmes.

Federal system of government. I know Mr Speaker, that government hopes to finalise the new federal system of government by mid 2007. While I do appreciate that wish appeal to

the government to embark on a wider sector consultation with all the stakeholders.

We need a federal system of government Mr Speaker, if it recognises the levels of nations I describe these are the village as the first nation, the constituencies as the second nation and the national government.

I shall move on to the Commission of Inquiry and Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. The establishment of Commission of Enquiry is provided for under the Constitution, and I do not see any controversy over this establishment. The problem is Mr Speaker, that it seems certain government leaders have vested interests in the whole affairs. I suggest the politicians should stay out from interfering with the object of this Commission.

Mr Speaker sir, the government should facilitate enough resources to enable the commissions to do their work and bring their findings to the government to take appropriate actions.

Government policy framework and interpretation of the same. Mr Speaker, let me now to sectoral development policy of the government and offer these advice and criticism in good faith to assist the responsible Ministers take appropriate actions:

#### 1.1 Development Challenges

There are four crosscutting growth factors (investment, labour, land and political governance) and five productive sectors (agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining, petroleum, and tourism) that need to be addressed as government implements its development policies.

##### (b) Growth Factors

- (i) investment and private sector development

Honourable Speaker, the government needs to facilitate private investment, not crowd it out directly involved in commercial activities or by imposing burden some regulations or excessive taxation. Talking about private investment, we need peace and security in the place. The world

wide television images of China Town burning broadcasted each week is affecting the potential investors to come to Solomon Islands.

- (ii) Tackling the problems of political instability, law and order, and corruption.

Honourable Speaker sir, we need to pursue good governance programmes and continue to strengthen government institutions. Nobody is above the law Mr Speaker, so why should some leaders in government continue to interfere with the judicial system and independence of courts. Let justice prevail.

- (b) The national infrastructure deficiency

Mr Speaker, transport and telecommunications cost in Solomon Islands are one of the highest in the region. Power and water supply unreliable and non-existence in the rural areas. The other areas that government needs to address are in the followings: developing financial markets where credits in the rural areas are impossible to obtain, need to reform legal and regulatory systems, since most of our systems are outdated, reviewing the government position with state-owned enterprises, and finally to work with private sector to build dialogue and capacity.

On Land issues, land issue is more contentious in the country, however sir, in order the bottom-up approach policy implementation, government must introduce land reform for change is essential. The customary ownership for land groups in the community need to register their perpetual titles in order to lease to commercially develop the lands. There are other important areas that the government needs to address. These are; improving land recording of land rights, establishing an effective legal framework for land dealings, establishing dispute settlement machinery such as special land courts and procedures, and improving land registration. And finally improving land administration service issues.

Mr Speaker, on political governance, the current political arrangements in the Pacific including Solomon Islands are not delivering the desired economic outcomes. It is said in the

region there are too much corruption, political instability, and too little pursuit of public good.

Mr Speaker, we need effective political leadership at all level, be it in the family, community, provincial, churches and in the national government. Solomon Islands sir, is not exception into the rule. There are few ways we can achieve our political governance roles, these are in strengthening our electoral system, improving parliament and oversight institutions.

In this regard, Mr Speaker, the government should present to Parliament as soon as possible legislation to counter party fragmentation and frequent party – hoping, and also sir, to assist the political parties to improve their administration. There is one other thing Mr Speaker, that I would like to mention that is the need for partnership with all the developmental stakeholders, be they the civil society, churches or community base groups to improve governance, together we can promote transparency and increase the amount of information put into the public domain.

The importance of productive sectors Mr Speaker, agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and tourism cannot be over emphasis. The agriculture ensures the nation for its food security and rural employment of the 80% of the population who live in the rural areas. Yet in this country agriculture is operating at well below potential.

In this stance Mr Speaker, I urge the government not to delay further the opening of Auluta Basin and East Fataleka Palm Oil Project. These projects are very important to the rural development of Malaita Province for it will act as a development catalyst upon which many other rural activities will flourish.

On fisheries we need to ensure that local cannery at Noro is producing to the maximum capacity in terms of tuna products.

On forestry when natural forest is been depleted within few more years, the government should turn to assisting small holders plantations to cushion the natural forest is exhaustibly harvested.

On tourism we need to do more to attract visitors from other lands. In so doing we need to address the internal and external constraints, develop a well defined national tourism policy, and provide tourism related

training and funding and finally improve marketing.

In concluding, Mr Speaker, I have covered what I wanted to cover and I shall leave other Members of my group in Parliament for that matter to address other areas.

Thank you.

**Hon ULUFA'ALU:** Thank you Mr Speaker for giving me this opportunity to join fellow colleagues in contributing to the Speech from the Throne.

Mr Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is normal prescribed in the practices of Westminster System Parliamentary Democracy that we inherited. Henceforth Mr Speaker, no one should be alarmed at its relevancy or irrelevancy or on the point or outside of the point Mr Speaker. It is a matter of procedure just fulfilling the requirements

Mr Speaker, the Speech from the Throne is supposed to give each session of Parliament in terms of its four year that opportunity for any new incoming government to state categorically clear to all the people in the nation what it intends to do in the next four years. That is what the speech is all about. That is why it is given at the opening of each session of Parliament and it would be honourable for all of us to respect that in the future while annual budgets is just reviewing of the implementing stages of the four year program the government gave itself. In the past Mr Speaker, each government tried to limit its programs to its lifetime so that it can implement its programs. It moves away from the five year development plan to a four year program of action. That is what transpired over the years Mr Speaker, and therefore it should not come as a surprise to all of us in this Chamber because it is the tradition of Parliament. Honorable Colleagues like the Member for Savo/Russells should not jump up and down about this matter of process and procedures.

Mr Speaker, the Speech from the Throne sets out what the Government intends to do over the next four years. That is exactly what this Speech from the Throne which this motion to give thanks to the Head of State, the Representative of the Queen is. This motion by the Deputy Prime Minister is in order and hence is in compliance to the practices of our

parliamentary democracy and therefore we should not be jumping up and down about it as well.

Mr Speaker, we have made certain remarks regarding the system we have inherited. Sir, the country we now called Solomon Islands is not the same country we knew, and not the same country our ancestors knew about. The country our ancestors knew was quite different. They were autonomous independent on their own right. For example, we in Aoke Langa Langa are used to be called the Walas. That is a nation of its own with its own institutions, its own constitution, its own money and its own structure. The Arekes is also another country, and so you have different countries in the past and so they are no longer the same as what we have today.

What we have today is a creation of the colonial powers and it was for them this country Solomon Islands was created and the three pillars of that creation is one, divide and rule, two - alienation and third is dependent growth. No wonder this country was not made for us. We in this country were supposed to be perpetual slaves. We are supposed to be under slavery because divide and rule, alienation and dependent growth had the pillars that countries used to suppress those people.

Ever since the creation of Solomon Islands are not different from those we read about in the Bible in Egypt, in Babylon, and Syria. We are the same; we are the products of divide and rule, alienation and dependent growth. That is why we find it difficult to achieve unity. Those are the pillars of colonialism. So what do we do?

In the Speech the government of the day endeavors to come up with replacement to the three pillars of colonialism which created Solomon Islands as we know it today. And the replacement of those three pillars of colonialism is diversity in unity for nation building. That means diversity is the essence of unity. Without diversity there is no unity. And it is unity that is the pillar for doing things. If there is no unity we cannot do anything and so if we are divided we cannot do a thing. A nation that is divided will fall.

Throughout the Speech it was trying to put that slogan in, diversity in unity for nation

building. And then the second pillar of colonialism is to be replaced by legalization that instead of alienation it is legalization. Legalization means our way of life becomes our law. At the moment legitimacy is not the same as legality. Legitimacy is our way of life but that is not the law. The law is something different so our way of life is not alive, it is dead it has no value. And something that has no value cannot be grown. No wonder our way of life is dying because it has no value. It is not recognized by the law. You cannot walk to the banks and use your properties in your home to secure your loans. You cannot because as far as the law is concern your property does not exist. It is void. This is why the second pillar is to legalize, to make our way of life becomes the law so that our way of life has value and when it has value it means it is alive and can grow.

The third pillar, Mr Speaker, in the Speech is interdependent growth. In other words, everything grows because they need each other. Through diversity we need each other and our specialty through the diversity principle is what creates interdependent growth and interdependent growth is the third pillar of a sovereign nation. That is what the Speech from the Throne is trying to put across to all of us. Unfortunately we fail to see it. Unless we replace the three pillars of colonialism we can never be developed, we can never be civilized. We will be perpetual slaves, and that is the truth.

For the last 30 years Mr Speaker some of us were privileged to be associated with development in this country we have seen this, and your good self, Mr Speaker, is fully well abreast with this. As we proceed from independence day matters get worse and worse. Compliance to law becomes a bigger problem. Why? Because of the creation, people who created Solomon Islands are gone and Solomon Islands was created for foreign ownership. That is why you have foreigners having advantage over Solomon Islanders because it was made for them, it was not made for us. That is the very basis of alienation. Alienation is moving from one way of life to another way. In other words, we Solomon Islanders are trying to become like the white people. Well, can we be? No, we will be evoking the anger of the Almighty God because

we are denying our true selves by trying to copycat somebody. And that is what the alienation process is all about. It is refusing to be yourself by becoming something else. That is the product of alienation. That is why our land is called alienated land because it is taking away from our ownership, our type of ownership to something else. When it is with us it has no value but when it is with foreigners under their law, which is the law of the land at the moment then it has value.

No wonder, our foreign friends and colleagues had the advantage over us Solomon Islanders. That is a fact. And this is what we have to address. We have to address. Because if we are denying ourselves then whose image are we.

Mr Speaker the qualification of being in the image of God is to be a creator. You become a creator and that is the only thing that qualifies you for ownership. If you don't create something then you cannot own it. It belongs to the person who creates it. That is the qualification in the image of God. Creation is the qualification for ownership and ownership qualifies you to conformity. In other words, compliance to the rule of creation so that you ensure the thing is sustainable. Creation, ownership, compliance and sustainability is one language. And unless we put that into context we will not appreciate what we have. That is why we are tearing the system down because we did not create it. It was never ours. We should have revisited the work of creation by foreigners so that we make it ours. We have recreated it to be ours. That is what we should have done after our independence, we should have revisited these things so that the act of creation becomes the qualification for ownership and ownership is the qualification for compliance and sustainability.

Without those, we are fighting a losing game, not only here in Solomon Islands but third world countries in the world as well. That is the global era. That is Whiteman supremacy, the very essence of Whiteman supremacy placing the developing countries in perpetual state of slavery. They are slaves. We are slaves unto ourselves. That is the problem which this government today is trying to address. Why is it that people do not have respect for institutions?

It is because they did not build it, they did not create it. If they had created it they would have respect for them. A husband and a wife produce a child and they care for the child because it is their creation. That is the universal rule of ownership. The universal rule of ownership is to be the creator before you claim ownership, before you claim compliance and before compliance means sustainability. That is what this new government is trying to say in the Speech from the Throne. It is trying to combat the very essence of colonialism which made us.

The only part of the world that is managing to do things by itself is South East Asia. It is growing at the moment at the fastest economic rate. And we in Solomon Islands are part of South East Asia. We should be doing it the way they are doing it. There is no country in the world that has become developed as a result of being on the aid money. There is none. In fact they all get into trouble there is none.

The Bible does not talk about grants. The Bible talks about borrowing - pay of debts. It does not talk about grant and so grant itself will not do it. But if you borrow it means you are advancing your sweat. You are advancing your sweat to create things and so when you sweated you pay it back. And that is rewarded, it is blessed and the Bible talks about borrowing rather than grant.

That is what we in Solomon Islands should be doing. We should be creating things. Every women, every men, every boy and girl, every old men and old women should be out creating things and not playing with the same soccer ball which somebody create and we are all trying to kick the same ball.

That is what we should be doing. We should be out creating and doing things. Unfortunately we are not. We seem to be busy destroying things. Instead of creating things we destroy them. We are destroying things because they were never our creation anyway.

Look at the logic of it, Mr Speaker. You destroy it because it was never yours. You steal it because it was never yours. How can you steal your own things?

Mr Speaker, all of us are running into the system trying to make ends meet by manipulating the system because we never own the system, and therefore we look for ways to

manipulate it for our own end. But in the end we did not make it for our own end it instead destroy us. We were the opposite of the intentions of God. We were not the creator.

Sir, we therefore have to create things. We have to create the system in this country to make this country ours. If you look at all the coconuts today they belong to our old people. But where are the coconuts of the young people today? There is none. Those coconuts belong to the old people and they almost reach their life. So where are our coconuts? There is nothing. It would seem the years of creation have all gone. People who were made in God's image are all gone. I do not know what image are we made?

Here is a serious fundamental question that each one of us in this chamber should begin to address not by ourselves but with our people. Each of us is responsible for constituencies. We should make our constituencies become creative. But how do you do that? Well, the good Lord said, I am the way the truth and the life.

Mr Speaker, is there any other way? There is no other way. You are the way, you are the truth and you are the life. There is no other way. Where will the other way come from? Who will it come from? So there is no other way. We are the way, we are the truth and we are the life and there is no other way. That is what we should be doing.

If we regard ourselves like that we will see the positiveness in each one of us to help each other. Because as it goes, 'before you point a speck of dust in your neighbor's eyes remove the log in your eyes. It means the worse enemy to myself is myself. I am the worse enemy. If I realize that all my disability like myself at the moment, I am disabled, my eyesight is gone, I am sick man with a hole at the side of my tummy. Who would I blame for all these? I cannot blame anybody else. For me to be able to do something about it I must blame myself. Why? I now localize it so that it is within my reach to do something about it. If you externalize the problem it is not within your reach to do anything about it. It is somebody else. But when you localize the problem it is within your reach to do something about it because it is you. For example, I stopped drinking beer, I stopped womanizing and all that stuff because we can now conceive the thing

properly. You have to localize your problem as it is within your reach, whereas when you externalize it you thought another person poisons you but you are just making it impossible. to do something about it. When you localize it you make it within your reach. You now can go to the limits that no one else has ever gone. In fact you can do miracles like Jesus has done because you are Him and this is because you localize it and make it your problem.

If we conceive ourselves in this chamber like that, the problem of this country will be within our reach to do something about it. We cannot push it to Australia or New Zealand or UK. They can never do it for us. They have tried and many years have gone with aid assistance which gets us nowhere. So it is up to us to do it because it is us is the way, the truth and the life. There is no other one. And that is what we should be doing that.

So I appeal to Members of this chamber to be looking at these issues in their own context, in their own individual context, in their own family context, in their own constituency context so that they can see that it is within their reach. It is within our reach and we can do something about it.

If we externalize it and blame others for our failures and shortcomings we can never do anything about it and no one else will do it for us. That is what this Speech from the Throne is trying to show. That is the spirit the Speech from the Throne is trying to give us. The motion by the Deputy Prime Minister who had a lot of experience in self reliance is trying to say as well. I am appealing to all of us to be along the same line of thinking. It is us who has to liberate us as no one else will do it.

Sir, I do not want to talk too much I will have my opportunity to speak tomorrow on the Supplementary Appropriation and the motion on resolution when I will have time to speak more on this issue. With that Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Hon SOFU:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to join other Members of Parliament to contribute to this very important Speech from the Throne.

In so doing Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to thank His Excellency for the well presented Speech. Mr Speaker, I also thank the honorable Prime Minister for shouldering the responsibility of leading this nation Solomon Islands and managing the affairs of half a million people during this period when the nation is still economically weak to fully satisfy the unlimited wants and needs of Solomon Islanders.

To Minister of the Crown, I also thank you for accepting ministerial responsibilities as you are very important to spearhead the implementation of policy initiatives and programs of the Grand Coalition Government. As key players in overseeing the implementation of the government's rural development policy initiative much should be required of us.

Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank the Permanent Secretaries and public officers for their role in the formulation and implementation of government policies. Without their knowledge and efforts sound government policies could not materialize. The government has placed full trust on Permanent Secretaries and Public Officers to carry out policy programs of the government very effectively and within the implementing time frame.

Mr Speaker, while there is appreciation of the economical policies, corruption which is rampant internally must also be tackled in order to see that the policy initiatives of the government are implemented very effectively.

As leaders we should take the leading role in tackling corruption, improving work performance, increase in productivity and increasing the role of the law.

Mr Speaker, indeed I am proud to say that the government under its policy objectives has placed importance on improving the machinery of the government to effectively tackle corruption by strengthening the democratic process, improving quality leadership and enhancing corporate governance at all levels.

Mr Speaker, the role that our chiefs play in the communities and the governing of our nation is also very important in promoting socio economic development and sustainable political stability. The chiefs are the custodians of customs and cultural heritage in our

communities to encourage and harness peace, unity, good moral values and coexistence in our societies.

With that, Mr Speaker, I would like to register my vote of thanks to all our chiefs in the country, especially my chiefs in East Kwaio.

The country's new development model - the bottom-up approach which underpins rural development focuses and encourages full participation of the 85% of the rural populace in socio economic development cannot alienate our chiefs especially in facilitating customary land recording, identifying land boundaries and settling land disputes.

Mr Speaker, the ineffectiveness of the common law in putting end to customary land disputes must be considered seriously, and that is the role of every parliamentarian sitting down inside this House. It is very important as members of Parliament and our respective constituencies that it is our bound duty to talk to our chiefs and show them better use of economical activities that we talk so much about.

Mr Speaker, the recent ethnic tension has shown the grievances of the country's good people at the failure of government policies to decentralize economic infrastructure, promote private sector investment, improve customary land administration to meet the employment demand of the increasing population and workforce having forced to present their grievances in the form of violence. There needs to be planning by us the 50 Members of Parliament who are sitting right now in this Chambers. It is our duty to plan for this nation.

Mr Speaker, the government's introduction of the new rural development policy program is a step in the right direction to embark on a workable development model that best reflects the country's land tenure system by recognising the role of chiefs in customary land administration, which is the foremost thing in fostering rural development.

In terms of infrastructure development, Mr Speaker, I as the Minister responsible for this sector would like to inform all Members of Parliament and the good people of Solomon Islands that the government has introduced a National Transport Plan. I believe letters have been sent to all Members of Parliament.

On Provincial Government, there are nine provinces, we could come up and identify what sort of economical activities and infrastructures should be put in our various constituencies in line with provincial government plans.

Mr Speaker, today when I came in I heard the Member of Parliament for Savo/Russells saying that the Minister for Infrastructure is not doing something that he needs in his constituency. I would like to assure the Member of Parliament for Savo that his constituency is included in the Ministry's work plans.

Mr Speaker, the government recognizes that developing and improving the country's fiscal infrastructure is very important to enhance the implementation of the government's rural development policy program.

While on this sector, Mr Speaker, I would also like to reiterate here that the national transport fund has been established within the Department of Infrastructure to meet immediate needs relating to deteriorating country's infrastructure such as maintenance of roads, bridges, wharves and airfields around the country.

The 1998 Stabex Fund under the European Union Assistance to Solomon Islands has been earmarked to address this area of infrastructure development.

Mr Speaker, may I take this opportunity to acknowledge the assistance rendered by the European Union towards the construction of seven wharves around the country for phase 1 and another seven wharves to be constructed under phase 2 of the project. I am glad that one of those wharves is going to be built at the Atoifi Hospital in my constituency.

*(hear, hear)*

Mr Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge help from the Asian Development Bank through soft loan arrangement with the Solomon Islands Government to effect the implementation of the post conflict rehabilitation project on some components of roads in Guadalcanal, Honiara and Malaita.

The Australia and New Zealand Governments have also rendered assistance

towards improving the country's road infrastructure under the Solomon Islands Road Improvement Project (SIRIP). The other seven remaining provinces will benefit from the SIRIP program soon.

As the Minister responsible, Mr Speaker, I would like to acknowledge all donors for the invaluable assistance in this area.

Mr Speaker, the Japanese Government has also contributed to finance the cost of bridge reconstruction on Guadalcanal. May I also acknowledge the Japanese Government for its valuable support towards the country's infrastructure development needs.

It is also important to appreciate the country's political history in order to fully appreciate the downfall of the country's economy. Over the last 28 years Solomon Islands has experienced numerous political instabilities resulting in the public taking the law into their own hands.

Mr Speaker, our people want to see real development and not political instability which is detrimental to fostering growth and development of the economy. I am happy to see that the Grand Coalition Government is very mindful to establish a conducive environment for political stability and to tackle corruption at all levels.

May I also stress here that the growth of the domestic economy cannot do away with healthy and productive human resources and as such the government has given priority in addressing this sector.

May I thank the Government on behalf of my people of East Kwaio for the recognition of private hospitals for which in its bottom-up approach policy has provided for assistance in the 2007 Budget under the Ministry of Health and Medical Services.

The churches' roles in our country's development process are also very important and have to be applauded. Churches have established training avenues to subsidize government human resources trainings. The establishment of vocational schools throughout the country is a clear indication of the extent which churches have contributed to the development process of our beloved nation in terms of manpower training.

Mr Speaker, the recent ethnic tension had also shown churches participating in conflict resolution, which led to the cessation of warring parties given the important roles that churches in Solomon Islands have played in the nation's development process. I wish to applaud the government in recognizing this sector by introducing a formula based on the Christian principle of one tenth contributions on a given amount of state revenue to the Ministry of Home Affairs to assist in churches' administration to effectively participate in the country's development process.

Mr Speaker, do we only talk about recognition of the churches? What is our involvement Mr Speaker? This government has seen the important role that churches are playing in this nation.

Mr Speaker, having raised issues of importance to the development process of the country, I am also proud of the contribution made by the country's former leaders in successive governments and the people of Solomon Islands have made in the last twenty eight years in terms of the country's socio economic and political development. Even though they have faced many challenges the country's sovereignty still remains intact. I would like to thank them.

Mr Speaker, while there is great appreciation for the formulation of sound policies, I must admit that the road ahead is always tough, undermined by internal factors relating to the country's disadvantage as a small island state characterized by a small economy of scale, poor technology, high population growth rate increasing unemployment, rising poverty level, high debt burden, increasing government spending and a weakening export sector.

Mr Speaker, in raising these issues of economic and political importance to the country, I must again acknowledge the fact that the government itself cannot lift the country out of its economical, financial and political problems. It depends very much on us Mr Speaker. However, with the cooperation of all stakeholders to help facilitate and establish a conducive environment for the implementation of the government's rural development policy program, I believe the country can get out of its socio economic and political problems.

Mr Speaker, it requires the cooperation of all Members of Parliament, the private sector, government organizations and the 85% of the rural population, in order to realize the results of the objectives of the government's rural development program.

History also reveals that some of the external development assistance to Solomon Islands were suspended or halted because of people's disturbance in the implementation process.

May I call for the understanding of the 85% of the rural population to recognize the importance of the invaluable assistances that our international friends have contributed towards developing the Solomon Islands' economy. It needs all of us as stakeholders, those in our constituencies and resource owners to work together. It is high time that the good people of Solomon Islands need to change from their bad habits so that development in the rural areas could be expanded and progress effectively.

On this note Mr Speaker, I once again would like to take this time to thank His Excellency for a well presented speech outlining the government's work program for the next three years.

With this, I support the Speech from the Throne, and I resume my seat. May God bless Solomon Islands!

**Hon TAUSINGA:** Mr Speaker, I beg to move that the debate on the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Governor General be adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday the 4<sup>th</sup> of October, 2006.

*Debate on the Speech from the Throne adjourned for the next day.*

**Hon Tausinga:** Mr Speaker, I beg to move that Parliament do now adjourn.

*The House adjourned at 4.00 p.m.*