

## THURSDAY 24<sup>th</sup> JULY 2008

The Speaker, Sir Peter Kenilorea took the chair at 10.00 am.

Prayers.

### ATTENDANCE

At prayers all were present with the exception of the Minister for National Unity, Reconciliation & Peace, Environment, Conservation and Meteorology, Agriculture and Livestock Development, Culture & Tourism and the Members for West New Georgia/Vona Vona, Central Honiara,

### **OPENING REMARKS BY THE SPEAKER**

**Mr Speaker:** Honorable Members, before we proceed I wish to take this opportunity to welcome you all to the Eight Meeting of Parliament. It is indeed heartening to see that this Parliament is becoming more active and it appears that we have a full program ahead of us in this coming meeting. I hope all Members take up the challenges facing this parliament and that nation and fully contribute to this parliament, as it strives to fulfill its lawmaking responsibility. At this stage I'd like to congratulate the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) on its fifth anniversary since its arrival on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2003. It has been a long challenging and eventful five years and its good outcome continues to stem from the partnership between RAMSI and our country.

I also wish to acknowledge the presence of the Speaker of the Malaita Province Provincial Assembly who is here with us today up at the gallery. He is here to observe the proceedings of the house and I welcome him on behalf of this House. I am glad to see that provincial assemblies are taking an interest in parliament.

On another matter, you have no doubt noticed some camera persons here on the floor of the house. You may have read the circular regarding the reason for their presence here but for those of you who might not have, be advised that these people are here to get clearer filming for the purpose of creating an educational video documentary of this parliament. This is in the making and will be used in future endeavors to promote awareness of parliament and its functions to schools and the public at large. This should not take long and so I ask Members to bear with the exercise and enjoy becoming part of the history of this parliament.

That said, may I end by saying that I look forward to a robust engagement and dialogue between Members of this House and wish us all a successful and fruitful meeting. Thank you.

### **PRESENTATION OF PAPERS**

The facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003, Paper No.8 of 2008

## STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

### MOTIONS

**Hon SIKUA** (*Prime Minister*): Mr. Speaker, I move that:

- (i) Parliament refers the International Assistance notice to the Foreign Relations Committee for inquiry, review and report;
- (ii) in undertaking this inquiry, the Committee may consider any matter relating to the:
  - (a) facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003,
  - (b) the agreement concerning the operations and status of the Police and the Armed Forces and other personnel deployed to Solomon Islands to assist in the restoration of Law and Order and security between the Government of Solomon Islands and the Government of certain assisting countries; and
  - (c) any other notices made under the Act that will assist the Committee in informing and making recommendations to this House in relation to the notice.
- (iii) The committee to report to Parliament by Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2008.

Mr Speaker, I rise to move that motion standing in my name in the Order Paper. Sir, this motion essentially seeks the resolution of this House to refer to the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee the task of reviewing the International Assistance Notice made pursuant to section 3(1) of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003, No.1 of 2003 which was published by the then His Excellency, the Governor General on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2003.

Mr Speaker, the statutory obligations to review the International Assistance Notice is conferred upon this House by this House in the year 2003 when it enacted that very Act, and that is the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 (No.1 of 2003). This obligation is stipulated clearly in section 23(1) of that Act of Parliament.

Mr Speaker, my government sees this provision in the Act as an opportunity to allow this country and for the good of this country the chance to get maximum benefit out of this Mission through consultation, realignment and focused programs. My government therefore, sir, since taking office has assigned officials to set in motion this process taking into account the opportunity that exists to review the notice. In this respect, I reiterate, Mr Speaker, that the policy statement of May 2003 specified the activities of the visiting contingent in the restoration of law and order and security through three pillars, which are law and order, economic reform and machinery of government.

Mr Speaker, the first two as you know were specifically defined and identified but the third was only mentioned as peripheral support to service delivery. The assistance under this pillar has not been discussed extensively and most of what has taken place is not guided by any instrument and has been problematic in many ways. Opportunity exists in this instance to explore better ways and approaches to better utilize assistance that is available under this pillar.

Having said so, the five years of RAMSI Mission in Solomon Islands has achieved much that is of great value to the current government and people of Solomon Islands. However, this positive impact has been counterbalanced by local perception rightly or wrongly that this Assistance has been at the expense of local ownership and that the partnership has been unequaled. A Solomon Islands review will better inform this House of the way forward.

You would also note, Sir, that all reviews so far carried out on the Mission have been done by external organizations and bodies. Solomon Islands and the government for that matter have yet to carry out any review of the Mission. The referring of this review to the Foreign Relations Commission will set this process in motion.

I wish to inform the House also that at the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2008, Ministers welcomed this Government's commitment to working with RAMSI and the Pacific Islands Forum on taking the partnership forward to continue to strengthen Solomon Islands' sovereignty and the long term sustainability of its institutions. Encouraged by this support, my Government sees a lot of benefit in having this review done.

In this regard and as a policy of my government, work has begun to look at the Mission with regards to our policies and programs. Unpinning all the policies and strategies of the government, is the firm belief that only when Solomon Islands benefit from development, when the people are at the centre of development, will the national needs be addressed. The Government has therefore developed a new SIG/RAMSI partnership framework in consultation with RAMSI and tentatively included a phase-out strategy to this, which will be further developed in consultation with RAMSI, the Forum and Participating Countries.

Mr Speaker, the important features of my Government's framework with regards to RAMSI which will benefit from this review are:

- (i) an acknowledgement that while the first five years of RAMSI have brought many benefits to the people of Solomon Islands to build true capacity, there is a need to work more within a respectful partnership with the Solomon Islands Government respecting the sovereignty and consultations of the nations;
- (ii) there needs to be a shift from tension or crisis related activities to rehabilitating damaged social, economic and physical infrastructures to stimulate economic growth particularly in the rural areas.
- (iii) Continuing but reframing the focus on building people capabilities so that Technical Assistance support builds real skills and confidence, rather than doing the job themselves
- (iv) An acknowledgement of the roles of chiefs and leaders to protect traditional rights as resource owners.
- (v) A continued focus on strong and stable government administration executing transparent governance.

Mr. Speaker, the key underpinning philosophy for this new Framework between the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI is “people are the centre of development”. For RAMSI to be aligned, with regard to its mandate and mission a review will be necessary thus this motion. It is also important that such a review must be done within the bounds of the instruments that are available in this house.

### **Opportunity to review**

Mr. Speaker, our obligation to review the international assistance notice is indeed an opportunity given to this House to review the notice. This is made abundantly clear in section 23(1) of the Act, which states that, **“The Parliament shall be given the opportunity to review the international assistance notice every year...”**

Mr. Speaker, the law makes it abundantly clear that the obligation or opportunity to review the notice is not vested in the executive Government, rather it is vested upon this Parliament.

Nonetheless, it is incumbent upon a responsible Government to ensure that the Parliament performs such statutory obligation. After all, the provisions of the Standing Order 15(2) clearly state that it is the Prime Minister who shall determine the motions and bills to be considered on any day except Friday.

### **Laying of Notice before Parliament**

Mr. Speaker, the laying of the **international assistance notice** by the Clerk this morning is a significant aspect and step in the review process. This is so because the law clearly states in section 23(3) of the Act that this Parliament cannot review the notice unless it is first laid before the Parliament.

It is vital for this legislature to comprehend that section 23(1) of the Act envisages that the international assistance notice must be laid before Parliament *“within the period of 3 months that ends on the review date”*. The Hon. Acting Attorney General has rendered advice to the Government that the annual review date is 24<sup>th</sup> July every year. The Hon. Acting Attorney General has further advised that the laying of the notice must occur when the Parliament actually sits. Hence, the Clerk has laid the notice on this 24<sup>th</sup> day of July 2008, when the Parliament sits.

Mr. Speaker, given the advice rendered to by the Hon. Acting Attorney General, this Parliament will need to amend the review date under the Act so as to make it more compatible and manageable with Government and Parliamentary legislative programs. The fixation of the date in the Act can be problematic in circumstances where this Parliament does not sit on 24<sup>th</sup> July in any given year.

### **First Parliamentary review in 2007**

Mr Speaker, the first time ever, after 2003, when this Parliament took the opportunity to review the international assistance notice was on 27 August 2007. The Hansard Report will verify this.

On that occasion last year, the Parliament debated, hence reviewed the notice. There was no amendment whatsoever sought or made. Thus, both The Facilitation of International Assistance Act and international assistance notices remained effective without any amendment up to today.

When my predecessor, now the Leader of Official Opposition, moved the motion for review last year, the motion was couched in the following manner:

*“That, pursuant to section 23(1) of the Facilitation of International of International Assistance Act 2003 (No. 1 of 2003) (“FIAA”), Parliament review the “international assistance notice” (as defined in section 2 of FIAA) and take necessary action resulting therefrom.”*

Mr Speaker, you would certainly acknowledge that this Parliament had not taken any further action after the review on 27 August 2007. This was so because the previous motion by my predecessor did not seek Parliament to authorise any specific action. That motion was, therefore, ineffective.

The motion I am now moving is premised on pragmatic and effective measures. It acknowledges that when this House is in recess, its Select Committees will still be functioning. Hence, the motion seeks to refer the review of the notice to the Foreign Relations Committee, lest we fall into the same lull like last year. It is, therefore, fitting that this House refer the task of reviewing the notice to the Foreign Relations Committee. Standing Order 71B(f) empowers the Foreign Relations Committee to *“examine and make its observations and recommendations on ... the receiving of foreign assistance and the administration and management thereof”*.

Mr. Speaker, this Parliament is now given another opportunity to take affirmative action which will see meaningful review of the international assistance notices with a view to bringing about an effective and respectful partnership with regard to the assistance mission. This opportunity is a statutory one which is bestowed on this Parliament alone.

### **Scope of review**

Mr. Speaker, our people listening on Radio and TV are surely keen to know the scope or extent of reviewing the international assistance notice. Mr. Speaker, if one examines the notice, which is only one page, one will see that it embraces the following significant matters:

- (1) First, the notice lists the names of the countries whom we invited as **“assisting countries”**, and who make up the *“the visiting contingent”*, commonly known as RAMSI. It is this list which will come under review.
- (2) Secondly, the notice says that the assistance we requested from the named countries was **“for a public purpose”**. This public purpose is the mandate given to the visiting contingent or RAMSI.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the term “public purpose” is well defined in the *Facilitation of International of International Assistance Act 2003 (No. 1 of 2003)*. The definition of the term “public purpose” is confined to the following mandated functions only:

- (i) ensuring security and safety of persons and property;
- (ii) maintaining supplies and services essential to the life of the community;
- (iii) preventing and suppressing violence, intimidation and crime;
- (iv) maintaining law and order;
- (v) supporting the administration of justice;
- (vi) supporting and developing Solomon islands institutions;
- (vii) responding to natural catastrophic events.

Mr. Speaker, the mandated functions I read constitute the statutory mandate given by this Parliament to RAMSI. If the mandate is to be altered, the definition of the term “public purpose” in *Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 (No. 1 of 2003)* has to be reviewed as well.

- (3) Thirdly, the notice cites an agreement which **“covers the operations and activities in Solomon Islands of the visiting contingent.”**

Mr. Speaker, the name of the agreement is: **“Agreement concerning the Operations and Status of the Police and Armed Forces and Other Personnel Deployed to Solomon Islands to Assist in the Restoration of Law and Order and Security between the Government of the Solomon Islands and the Governments of certain Assisting Countries.”**

This agreement also sets out the public mandate. If there has to be a new agreement, a full and thorough review has to be done; and this is the start of the statutory review process.

### **Engagement with Forum**

Mr. Speaker, the obligation of this Parliament to review the notice must not be confused with the Government’s Executive responsibility in engaging with the Forum, RAMSI, ECM (Enhanced Consultative Meeting) and FMSC (Forum Ministerial Standing Committee). It must be noted also, that our engagement with these regional bodies or forums is an engagement on the executive Government level, and it does not substitute the Parliamentary review process.

Given that clear distinction, it must be noted as well that whilst any executive Government may wish to review *The Facilitation of International Assistance Act* or pursue a new deal with RAMSI, **the implementation of any revised law or framework depends very much upon the willingness of the assisting countries comprising the visiting contingent (RAMSI).**

Therefore, in as much as we would like to preserve the sovereignty of our Parliament, it is equally significant that we engage with the regional bodies or forums on the review of The Facilitation of International Assistance Act and the new Solomon Island Government and RAMSI Partnerships Framework. Hence, the Government's engagement with RAMSI at ECM and FMSC level is inevitable.

### **Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee**

Mr Speaker, I have already sketched the landscape for the review. The sketch shows three main areas of review, namely, **“the composition of the assisting countries”, “public purpose” and the “agreement which covers the operations and activities”**.

By referring the review process to the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee, this Parliament in its wisdom, will be giving the Committee the privilege of conducting public hearings and inviting submissions or representations from stakeholders, Forum, RAMSI, ECM (Enhanced Consultative Meeting) and FMSC (Forum Ministerial Standing Committee).

### **Report of the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee**

**Once the Parliamentary Foreign Relations Committee has completed its review and submits its report and recommendation to this Parliament at the next meeting in November 2008, this Parliament will have the opportunity to debate the report, and make further decision on the mission.**

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Order 72(11) makes it clear that, upon completion of report, the Chairman of the Committee will send the report to the Clerk who shall then be responsible for laying the report on the table in this House.

Standing Order 72(11) also makes it clear that if and when the Clerk receives a concluded report, but the Parliament has not met, that report by the Committee shall be deemed to have been laid. This is an exception to the rule that the laying of the notice occurs only when the Parliament actually sits. The exception, however, applies only to reports sent by Select Committees.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Members of this Parliament will have further opportunity to debate and review the international assistance notice pursuant to Standing Order 18.

With those remarks, I beg to move.

**Mr SOGAVARE:** Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on this motion. It is obligatory on Parliament to actually pass this motion because it is required of us under Section 3 of the Facilitation Act.

In fact, the future of RAMSI under the CNURA Government's policy is summed up as follows. When RAMSI completes its work it was requested to do, Forum Leaders will need to

meet, see whether the Mission should eventually withdraw or set up permanent military and police presences as police backup support service and continue to act as an avenue through which economic development assistance can be channel. That in a nutshell, Mr Speaker, sums up the policy of the CNURA Government and the future of RAMSI. I guess, Mr Speaker, the review will guide the way that policy will be implemented, either to allow RAMSI to establish permanent presence in Solomon Islands or to ask them to withdraw.

Sir, the Act does not have any regulations, and so I take the point expressed by the Prime Minister that the motion was passed by Parliament last year and it did not go from there. In fact, there are lots of things wrong with the legal framework and there is no real mechanism for us to operate. It is just a principal act, the Facilitation of International Assistance Act and some agreements that govern the legal framework.

The most important one is the Facilitation of International Assistance Act, but that spelt out in no uncertain terms the kind of powers that the visiting contingents have. The Act, as I said, I think the first thing that really should happen here is for us to come up with a regulation that will govern the way this Act is to be implemented – how it should operate.

Having put into focus the policy of the government, and as I say, I admit that this review will probably give some kind of guideline as to how that broad Policy Statement will be implemented.

Sir, maybe their permanent presence here is an issue that is contentious and something that will attract debates from the public. I think the correct option would be if some kind of intervention under the RAMSI arrangement is still required in the country, the legal framework that governs the operation of some kind of interventionists force in the Solomon Islands must be reviewed so that we can see how we can accommodate it. As the Prime Minister rightly pointed out, it is a partnership and partnership means that we take in the views of everyone affected by this arrangement.

Mr Speaker, I am heartened to hear as expressed by the Prime Minister that we start to think along the line that some of us have been talking about. Sovereignty is a word that when it is used by the other side, it is fine. And so I am glad to hear that some of the sentiments raised by this side of the House or some of us whenever the opportunity is there to talk about these issues, were taken on board.

Sir, I would assume that the Committee will come up with some kind elaborate terms of reference so that we can see exactly what we need to do. And of course, the calling for the public to come and give their views is a very important part of this review as well. I think as may be touched on a little bit by the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, all the reviews done so far were done by people outside and also surveys that were carried out in Solomon Islands purporting to be views of people about what they think about RAMSI has been heavily biased too, Mr. Speaker. A result of a very biased survey, in fact, at one time I can remember it was said to be conducted with 5,000 Solomon Islanders who have very little knowledge about RAMSI and other issues and they are required to give some views, people take up those views and take them as authority.

We welcome this review that will happen.

Talking about partnership, Mr. Speaker, we talk about Solomon Islanders or ordinary rural people living at home, different contingents, countries that send them here, politicians,



NGOs, these are all parties to this very important partnership, which I still have some very strong views about. But I think the very important component in this partnership is the ordinary people of Solomon Islands who have not one clue of what actually happened. What they only remembered is a big event that happened in 2000, the country collapsed and people from outside came in to help us. So it is narrowly focused on law and order security - something that is easily sellable, and of course extending into projects, they go and build things in the villages. That is what they can see. But beyond that, they do not know what is really happening.

Sir, just a humble view, the review of RAMSI should really be addressed on two fronts; firstly to review the legal framework with the view of removing excess powers accorded to the visiting contingent by the Facilitation Act, and effectively subjecting the operations of RAMSI under the laws of Solomon Islands. I guess these are the kind of views that will be presented to the committee to weigh and eventually Parliament will need to make some decisions on it eventually.

The reason for this is quite obvious, and I think as touched on by the Prime Minister, the situation in 2003 which warrants an aggressive, like military-style intervention is no longer there now. The situation has changed altogether and that is why some of us have been calling for really aggressive review on this. Because of that the visiting contingent are now stuck with powers that they do not need given the changing circumstances, as I already said.

The tendency to misuse this power is very tempting and there have been instances where this power has actually been abused, maybe not purposely. Maybe the recent accident that has happened is a case in point. It is an accident and we will allow the Police to continue to investigate that. But those are the kind of things I am talking about. I think the review is very important.

In keeping with the spirit of the Forum Leaders' decisions in its 37<sup>th</sup> Meeting in Nadi, and I think in the recent Forum meetings the issue of RAMSI continues to come up, it is actually a permanent agenda item in the Forum Meeting. This review really should be done in consultation with the people of Solomon Islands and the Forum Member countries. The Foreign Affairs Ministry should be the driving Ministry to continue facilitate and coordinate that important review because it has to do with partnership with the countries that are here to help us.

Sir, we need to appreciate, and I think as also referred to by the Prime Minister, legally the Solomon Islands Government does not need to get the Forum Countries to approve to review and even amend the Facilitation of International Assistance Act. But when it comes to maybe agreements, it is made by your party, and so I guess the law of agreements demands that consultations is very important when it comes to reviewing the agreement. But when it comes to the Facilitation Act, which is the very important piece of legal instrument, which governs the presence of RAMSI in here, section 23 of that Act makes it very clear in that it empowers Parliament to conduct that review.

In fact it elaborates more, and so I take the point raised by the Prime Minister that the last motion was moved on the floor of Parliament and remains as it is. What was going to happen at that time was that when Parliament passes that motion it should be taken up by the executive government to come up with a process of how to go about it because Parliament gives

its approval to review the Facilitation Act or the legal frame work. We were actually putting something in place but we did not have the opportunity to take it off the ground.

Sir, we are convinced that all the concerns about disrespect of our sovereignty (I think the word is used again by the Prime Minister this morning) we believe that is facilitated through the legal framework that governs the existence and operations of RAMSI in Solomon Islands because they have immunities and privileges and so they are protected by those powers. The concern for disrespect of sovereignty is directly related to the kind of powers that is given to the visiting contingents. I therefore think the review is timely.

We will wait and see when the Committee sits and starts its work. We take it from what the Prime Minister is saying that everyone will have the opportunity to present their views. But as I said there are important stakeholders that we need to focus our attention on because it looks like every one of us do not seem to understand what the whole legal framework is about and the kinds of powers they have and so on.

One important key group of people is us politicians ourselves. We do not really fully understand what this package contains. When the motion during our time was passed we were going to address it this way. A joint workshop of all Members of Parliament was to be organized to fully discuss the content of the resolution made by Parliament. I take it that that can fit in here because after the report of the Committee is produced, it needs to be thrashed out first with Members of Parliament so that we can understand what this is all about. We are the frontline when we go home to our villages because people will come to us for answers on RAMSI. I think the first thing that should really happen is when the report of the Committee comes out, it should be deliberated on by Parliament but I think a more closer look at the review with no radio and TV should take place so that we sit down and really talk seriously about it in a workshop environment. And that workshop should allow the Government to fully brief Members of Parliament and maybe the Committee on the justification of the approach that they want to direct that review and how it should happen.

The workshop also, Mr Speaker, should allow Members of Parliament with the assistance of the Attorney General's Chamber to make comprehensive detailed analysis of all aspects of the legal framework and arrangement so that we can all understand and appreciate amongst other things its legality, how it undermines our constitutionally established systems and institutions and whether it is still necessary after five years given the environment has already changed tremendously after RAMSI came in five years ago.

In my view, the Government should then use the outcomes of the workshop to further refine the review agenda. I would also like to see the review agenda to be fully explained to the people of Solomon Islands through an extensive nation wide awareness program through appropriate avenues. Because it is those people that were affected, and every time we stand in here we say we speak on behalf of our people, and so please, let us take it down to them so that they too can express their views and understand what this thing is all about. And then maybe the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would then engage a comprehensive regional consultation with its counterparts to basically inform them of what the people and government of Solomon Islands have decided on the areas that need to be reviewed. You do not have to seek their views again because I think the authority really lies on the Solomon Islands Government its people. It is us who fulfills those things. This is how we feel as Solomon Islanders. We have

consulted every stakeholder in Solomon Islands and this is how we feel this Act should be reviewed. We must tell them that this is how this review should happen. If we go, sit down and negotiate again then we would be undermining the views of the people of Solomon Islands after we explain things to them and they express their views to us.

In saying that, Mr Speaker, we must understand however that where the area of concern requires an amendment to the law to rectify questions of breaches of the Solomon Islands Constitution and any laws, that responsibility is the sole prerogative of the Solomon Islands Parliament to rectify because no amount of consultation will change the legal and constitutional obligation of the National Parliament of Solomon Islands to exercise that responsibility. It is not something that you can go and negotiate with foreign countries in saying that RAMSI is undermining our constitution but what do you think.

The constitution is the supreme law in Solomon Islands and Parliament is the supreme body of the land as well that should make that decision. Any amendments will be referred to Parliament after every stakeholder has been fully informed.

Sir, I do not have any problem with this motion. In fact, I would like to acknowledge what the government has done. In fact it is obligatory on us under section 23 of the Facilitation Act to bring this in at the right time for Parliament to approve some kind of comprehensive review of the Facilitation Act.

With that, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Hon KEMAKEZA:** Mr Speaker, I would also like to thank the mover of the motion, the Honourable Prime Minister for this very important motion.

Before I cover one or two issues, Mr Speaker, on behalf of my people on Savo/Russells I join you, Sir, in congratulating RAMSI on its fifth anniversary of arrival here in Solomon Islands. I am not saying this only on behalf of my people but also on behalf of every people in Solomon Islands. We congratulate RAMSI at its fifth anniversary. In saying that, Mr Speaker, this motion comes at the right time so that we review what has happened five years ago. There is a requirement in the Facilitation Act for us to make a review. But let me ask a question about those days from 1997 to 2003, the darkest time of the history of this country. The question is why did we invite RAMSI to come to Solomon Islands? Why? Is there any answer from the 50 Members of Parliament or the 600,000 people of Solomon Islands? Why did we invite RAMSI to come into Solomon Islands?

The Prime Minister mentioned earlier on in his speech the reason why we invited RAMSI to come into the country. And I would like to add on to it as well because there was a shortfall, and that is why the Member for Temotu Nende moved a motion against the Prime Minister then on this floor of Parliament. My good friend moved a motion because the government failed miserably to uphold the affairs of this country. There was no law and order, the economy is at zero level, there were six pay days of public servants in arrears, people cannot move around, other provinces want to breakaway; the country was in a state of anarchy.

You know those days very well, Mr Speaker. That is the state of our country at that time. I congratulate the former Prime Minister of Australia and the present Prime Minister of New Zealand because the Biketawa Declaration is a declaration. I thank the wisdom of the

leaders of those days for putting a mechanism for Forum States for which Solomon Islands is also a member.

I thank the wisdom, vision and focus of great leaders in those days, including yourself, Mr Speaker, for putting in place mechanisms whereby if any member states go through a situation like Solomon Islands has gone through from 1997 up until now, there is evidence. Why did you question it? The only problem, Mr Speaker, is that we do not have money to facilitate meetings. That is why I would like to thank Australia and New Zealand for using their taxpayers' money to help us do this.

I also thank God for the prayers of all Christians throughout the country; if you people on this floor pray at all. I do not think so. But that is why you still doubt the prayers of our people. It is blessings from heaven that we are now enjoying today. But here we are jumping up and down talking about sovereignty for what, abuse of power, for what. Where were you during those dark days in the history of this country?

A bunch of you ran away to Australia, Western Province and inside the holes of crabs. But, Mr Speaker, we stood firm and brought this country back to where it is now today. You should be congratulating these people. (I am coming back now to speak on this motion but let me first of all put history right, if at all no one knows and so should take note?)

The Act suits the situation of that time and so there is no doubt that it has to be reviewed. Remember, Mr Speaker, that the three objectives of RAMSI is to keep law and order. I thank the Leader of Opposition for talking about heavy armed forces. Surely, Mr Speaker. But where are the heavy armed forces today? They have all gone. There are no army houses at Henderson. There are no armies except for a battalion. (If you are army personnel you would understand that word but if you do not understand it then just keep quiet). There is only one battalion that is left. Last time there were many of them at Henderson and you think it is an intervention. But that is not so, it is just a back up of the Regular Force.

Law and order is restored even after the armies have gone back. Even many police officers have already left. You can see that the Prime Minister is no longer provided security by the PPF. Even the Participating Forces are scaling down very drastically. But that is what we want and that is the exit strategy. You cannot put a date on the exit strategy, the Leader of Opposition because you do not know when it is going to finish.

The leaders say that the exit strategy is when RAMSI completes its work. And there are two things that RAMSI still has to do. There are two objectives still to be fulfilled. Law and order is back to normalcy and our Police Force is coming up and it still has to improve its image, and the Minister of Police is working very hard on this. I thank the Minister for that, as well as the former Minister of Police, Member, the MP for West Honiara for doing a great job. So that has reduced.

What about institutional strengthening and capacity building, has it been fulfilled. This is where people are complaining and start to jump up and down. No, we have to bring up the mechanism, the machinery of government, the institutions, the provinces and the laws of our country. We have to take these up. That is the civilian part of RAMSI and yet we are saying that they have to go back. Goodness me, are you not seeing that after 30 years of independence instead of the country going up, it is going down. That is what is happening. The Leader of the

Opposition was once upon a time a Permanent Secretary and so he should know better. Mr Speaker, there is still work to be done by the Mission on institutional strengthening.

The third objective is the economy of this country, which is something we always talk about, those of you who are economists. That is the third thing. RAMSI must make sure that the economy of the country goes up. If there is any spot where blood is leaking out must be patched. That is one objective of this Mission and therefore for us to say that RAMSI must leave tomorrow is not right. A review was made which the Prime Minister did not accept. Goodness me! I visited Choiseul Province and everyone in Choiseul told me that they want RAMSI to remain. He is not representing his people, and he was with me that time when I was Prime Minister.

That is one objective, and it is good, and I agree with him that the Act should be reviewed by the Foreign Relations Committee. But one thing is that no government will change it except the floor of Parliament but it has to consider the concerns of Forum Leaders because that is an agreement that every member countries signed in Auckland/New Zealand. Just make sure we give the courtesy due to them, and not like what the MP for Temotu Nende always said. He is a person who always complains but during that time he ran away to Munda. He should go to Temotu instead.

There is another point. RAMSI is equal to the Forum Fisheries Agency. Why? I say that because it is a regional body. The Forum Fisheries Agency is not a regional institution and so as the South Pacific Commission (SPREP) so that you should start questioning the nature of this arrangement under the Vienna Convention and the protocols accorded it. These people must go and learn their protocols, especially the Member of Parliament for Rendova/Tetepare. Go and check it. We are not confusing it but you must go and learn your protocols. I have to lecture those people to understand this.

This is a Forum Body and therefore when we talk about protocols and conventions, make sure that we look at this carefully. The review will look into that. I agree with the Leader of Opposition the first time that the Facilitation Act we passed in 2003 is not one hundred percent correct, but what can you do at that time. This is now the time for review and change. The Bible too is also wrong in some interpretations. It says that Cain and Abel are the two first people that God created, but then they ran to the land of Enoch and got married there. Where did those people they got married to come from so that they got married in the land of Enoch? This is mentioned in the Old Testament, and so this is a mistake. This is in Genesis. These two went and got married in the land of Enoch. Those of you theologians like the Reverent Bishop on the other side will correct me on this. But to me this is confusing. Now that is exactly what we are doing now. We have to straighten it.

Here I would like to congratulate the CNURA Government, not the Government for Change because it did nothing about this but I thank the CNURA Government for looking at the partnership framework. The partnership framework will gear towards institutional strengthening and capacity building and look at the economy of our country. We have to build infrastructures.

Here I thank donors for showing interest in this area. Japan has come in. This is the time for you to come in. We might not need the military of Japan to come here because it is not a member of the Forum. But in the case of institutional strengthening and capacity building of

the country and building of infrastructures in Solomon Islands, please Japan come in. I thank you for coming in, and other aid donors too, please come in. This is the time and not any other time for us to move this forward.

It should not be like the Leader of Opposition who talked about sovereignty. Do you know what sovereignty is? Let other people talk about sovereignty and not you. Shame on you if you want to talk about sovereignty because during those days there was no sovereignty in Solomon Islands as sovereignty was only in the hands of a very few. Save too! He was Prime Minister at that time in 2000 and I was his deputy and I did the work for him but he sacked me for nothing. The only problem with the Leader of Opposition, Mr Speaker, is that he was not being given true facts. You should sack everyone in the Opposition, your officers because they are giving you wrong information making you to jump up and down when the real story still remains. That is always the case.

Mr Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for moving this motion giving opportunity to the Foreign Relations Committee to look at the Act and make a report for us to discuss. Do not forget to keep the team moving, make sure we consult the Forum, and this courtesy is in the good hands of the Prime Minister. You are going to Niue sometimes this year where you are going to tell them.

If you need my help, certainly the MP for Savo/Russells from day one, like the Leader of Opposition too, we can give a lot of information about that time, but not the MP for Temotu Nende, because he ran away during that time.

With these, Mr Speaker, I support the motion.

**Mr ZAMA:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for this opportunity to briefly make a few comments. Firstly, I would like to thank the Honorable Prime Minister for this motion for this review, but before going further, I would like to, on behalf of my people who are now finding life very difficult in the villages because the price of fuel has gone very high and a bag of rice in the village is unaffordable. Under the leadership of my Prime Minister life for those living in the villages now under the CNURA Government is difficult and that is why it is timely as well that this review comes into place.

Mr Speaker, before moving on I would like to recap on what I said in 2004 during one of the reviews that was presented on the floor of Parliament. If I can still recall what I said then during that review, the involvement of RAMSI in Solomon Islands is over-killing and is a liability to the people of this country. I still stand by those two points I made that the involvement of RAMSI in Solomon Islands is over-killing and it is a liability to the people of this country.

(I know the Minister of Environment is smiling there and he would raise some comments).

Mr Speaker, it was deliberate of me in making these comments in 2004. Today after five years we are still confused as to what kind of review we are trying to make here on the floor of Parliament.

The Honorable MP for Savo/Russells, the Minister for Forests is still very confused as well being Prime Minister at that time when RAMSI was welcomed on our shores. I wouldn't

be surprised that the situation in 2003 is totally different to that of 2008. The reviews that need to be pushed through Parliament ought to be plain and clear.

To me the review that is to be tabled on the floor of Parliament is the Notice. The 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2008 is a date that is of significant importance to this country, as it is almost a permanent date on which the Parliament of Solomon Islands has to meet.

I think the Attorney General needs, and this is according to the Prime Minister, to come out and advise the Government as to when this review is really necessary instead of the Government continuing to see the 24<sup>th</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Sir, what I am trying to raise here is that Parliament, in my view, is here to just review the Notice to revalidate another year allowing RAMSI to continue remain in Solomon Islands. I think that is really the prime focus of this review. In my view, Mr Speaker, there are two or more reviews that could have been done but purposes of today, the 24<sup>th</sup> of July we are here to just review the Notice to revalidate the involvement of RAMSI so that it continues to remain legally in Solomon Islands.

Mr Speaker, I do not have difficulty with this review and I really support the long stay of RAMSI in Solomon Islands. The next phase that we need to look at is the core review of FIAA (Facilitation of International Assistance Act). That, in my view, is a subject of a broader review in the operations of RAMSI in Solomon Islands. I think the government has taken a few decisive actions in its program of actions and the Prime Minister has informed us the course of action the executive government is planning to take.

But, Sir, being in Cabinet before I know very well the kind of spirit the executive has, what kind of review it would want to do and what kind of review the executive government would want to bring on the floor of Parliament. Seeing the number we have here today in this Parliament, Mr Speaker, I cannot honestly see any independence between the executive and the legislature. There is not going to be any independence in this review.

What the executive is going to do because of the numerical strength and number it has would be reflected on the floor of Parliament. Members of Parliament would not be independently thinking as representatives of their people when they deliberate or debate issues that require them to be independently thinking and expressing on the floor of Parliament.

**Hon Wale:** Point of order Mr Speaker. I am not sure if I am comfortable with the insinuation that seems to suggest that Members of Parliament do not exercise their own independent thinking in these matters. I think that is uncalled for and is an unreasonable insinuation.

**Mr Zama:** Mr Speaker, that is totally uncalled for. The MP for Aoke/Langa Langa should just simply wait and say what he would want to say later and stop interjecting when I am talking, Mr Speaker. Thank you and I wish he understands that.

Mr Speaker, the point I want to raise is what the executive will do on the floor of Parliament. Nobody needs to tell me that. I know what the spirit is in Cabinet and the Executive and the fact that the Deputy Prime Minister continues to boast about numbers is what they will be doing on the floor of Parliament. Any review we might want to do in Parliament as an independent arm of the Constitution will be bulldozed by the Executive because of the numerical strength it has. That is what I am trying to raise and express here. I wish the

honorable Member for Aoke/Langa Langa takes that seriously instead of being paranoid about what is going to be raised. I want him to be independently thinking as an independent Member of Parliament. That is the point I want to make.

Mr Speaker, the reason why I raise this issue of a confused state of mind by Members of Parliament is that we need to be absolutely sure of what we want to review on this 24<sup>th</sup> day of July, whether it is the Notice or the main Act. In my view, Mr Speaker, it is only the Notice that we are reviewing, the notice to revalidate, and I do not have difficulty over that as it is now five years running. This is the fifth review, Mr Speaker, and the Notice does not seem to mean anything.

Mr Speaker, the same review is what we are continuing to do every year. But now I know that the Deputy Prime Minister will talk about it because he has been very vocal about RAMSI and he will continue to do what the Prime Minister has already told us on the lineup of the reviews the Executive Government is intending to undertake.

Mr Speaker, one thing I want to continue to raise here is that the Facilitation of International Assistance Act is well drafted in Canberra, and the situation in 2003 really warrants it because we did not really have any options. The situation then was frightening, and that is why I think it is time after five years of operation and after five years of normalcy and their continued presence, there is now need for a review to be undertaken. But as I have said it is not time yet. The time will come and the Deputy Prime Minister will talk to the Prime Minister because he is always out on the air almost every evening reminding the Prime Minister that this review must come as a priority.

Yes, Mr Speaker, my learned colleague of Savo/Russells continues to talk about the situation in 2003 and the situation in 2008. But little did he realize as Prime Minister then that the real issues of why we entered into the situations in 2002 have not yet been addressed. These situations must be looked into and tackled head-on, regardless of how sensitive these issues might be. Unless Parliament or the 50 Members of Parliament look at these issues, the situation in Solomon Islands will continue to be uncertain. And when we live in a state of uncertainty it gives a breeding ground for RAMSI to continue to live in Solomon Islands. That is what we need to understand.

We as leaders have to look at the issues that are still outstanding. For instance, the Western Province did not celebrate Independence on the 7<sup>th</sup> July 1978. After 30 years of independence, some of these issues are still outstanding today. After 30 years of independence, the Western Province was moving for breakaway. It did not want to celebrate with the whole nation. It only acknowledged and recognized independence one year later. But a lot of the issues why our people, my people in the West are still crying for are still not answered, they are still not addressed. Which government and which Parliament is going to look at these issues?

Mr Speaker, the things I am raising are core and fundamental to any review of the main Act of RAMSI.

Mr Speaker, the involvement of Parliament and the Executive Government in any review is important, and that is it must be shared with the people. We must listen to the people who are also now in a confused state of mind. What these people are doing now is that RAMSI and its officers go out with their outreach programs to the rural areas, to the grassroots people



doing their own campaigns, awareness programs and then coming up with many reports and studies.

I was in Canberra, Mr Speaker, early this year and one of the reports that RAMSI did maybe last year or this year, I have it from the horse's mouth that all the questionnaires given out by RAMSI for its review carried out in the rural areas in Solomon Islands were drafted back in Canberra. Or if not, the questions or issues were drafted by RAMSI officials in Solomon Islands and given back to Canberra. This is the kind of networking that is going on. That is the kind of issue we need to be raising on the floor of this Parliament so that people in the rural areas know who is telling the truth.

We need RAMSI in Solomon Islands, but on whose goal and whose agenda. These are the issues I want us leaders of this country and as Members of Parliament to take stock of and be very mindful of what we want to raise on the floor of Parliament. Are the reviews we wanted to undertake on the Notice or on the main body of the Act?

Somebody is walking out when I am raising these issues, but I am raising these issues on the floor of Parliament because this is the right place to be raised. And if it hurts you and you walk out then I am hitting the point. I am raising this and I would like the Minister of Foreign Affairs to take serious note of what I am raising instead of being tossed around.

Mr Speaker, as I have said that I support the motion by the Honorable Prime Minister for us to review the Notice so that RAMSI can continue to live and work with the people and the Government of Solomon Islands. I do not have difficulty with that but I am going to raise many more of the issues I want to raise on the floor when we come to the time when the main body of the Act will be reviewed.

Mr Speaker, I also want to rebut what my learned colleague for Savo/Russells, the Minister of Forest has said that RAMSI is similar to bodies like the FFA. Sir, in my view, these are two different bodies altogether, and this is why I said he is confused himself. RAMSI is not the same as the Forum Fisheries Agency. They are two different bodies. Yes, they are regional bodies but they are different and their operations in this country are different too by law. Mr Speaker, no wonder this country did not move forward during his leadership. I wish he is listening out in the coffee lounge as he is not here.

But, Sir, I support this motion by the honorable Prime Minister and I support the work of RAMSI in Solomon Islands. I wish them well and the people of this country as well as the 48 Members of Parliament to continue to lead Solomon Islands, and work together with RAMSI and our people to make life easy and more enjoyable, especially for people living in the rural areas because life is difficult honorable Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Life in the villages is difficult under your leadership and under the CNURA Government and I want you to take note of this.

With that, Mr Speaker, I support the motion. Thank you.

**Hon HAOMAE:** Thank you, Mr Speaker and I thank the honorable colleague Member for Temotu Nende for yielding the floor to the Member for Small Malaita Constituency.

Mr Speaker, at the outset I wish to record my gratitude for the Prime Minister for moving this very important motion. On that note, I wish also to join the Minister for Forests and Member for Savo, on behalf of the chiefs and people of Small Malaita Constituency to

extend to RAMSI a thank you and also congratulations on its fifth anniversary of arrival in the country, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker, the motion before the House is very clear. The key word, Mr Speaker, is 'refers' that Parliament refers the International Assistance Notice to the Foreign Relations Committee for inquiry, review and report. It therefore, Mr Speaker, amuses me to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Rendova/Tetepare, who has just went out, appear to be now contributing to the review. It is as if the review committee is now in session and they are contributing to the review committee because the key word of the motion is 'refers' to the Foreign Relations Committee.

The Foreign Relations Committee is not yet in session and so you should wait until the Foreign Relations Committee sits before you submit all your views to the Committee. It is not good talking about rice and such things. Yes, our people are also suffering from that but this is not the right time for you to mention those things. Wait for the supplementary appropriation before you mention those things.

This motion is merely asking Parliament to refer the international assistance notice to the Foreign Relations Committee for inquiry, review and report, and in undertaking that inquiry, it may consider any matter relating to A, B and C. That subsumes what the Member for Rendova was referring to. The Member for Rendova's point is out of context, in terms of the debate now before the House.

Yes, there are other wide ranging issues that on independence have not been addressed. But as they say in Europe, Mr Speaker, Rome is not built in one day, and so it will take time. It will take some time for this country to develop and move forward if we remain true to the development of this country.

I have said at the outset, Mr Speaker, that I shall be very brief. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to make those important points, just to remind my colleagues that we speak direct to what the motion is saying and not making submission to the forthcoming sitting of the Foreign Relations Standing Committee. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

**Mr OTI:** Mr Speaker, I too would like to take this opportunity to congratulate RAMSI on its 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and also to contribute briefly to the this important motion, not an extension of but at least something to give effect to and implement what was the deficient of the motion moved in August last year.

Also from the outset, like what the Minister of Foreign Affairs who has gone out of the Chambers said, I think it is something very common about this House that we normally miss the substance of what is brought to Parliament and start talking about ourselves here on the floor of Parliament. I do not think we need this Chamber to do that; do it elsewhere and restrict legislative and parliamentary matters on the floor of Parliament. Because of that I would like to speak on the gist of the motion, particularly in relation to the section of the Act making reference to the annual review of the Notice under Section 3 of the International Facilitation Act.

But before coming to that, Mr Speaker, let me say that this law, the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003, is the only law of its kind that has come to the floor of this Parliament. That we must recognize. Only one of its kind that dictates almost to Parliament what to do about it. There are no other legislation like this in this House that I know apart from

the Constitution perhaps. This law tells you exactly what to do and what not to do and what time to do it. That is how serious this legislation is. And as has been alluded to earlier by various speakers, perhaps it is not surprising that it was drafted at a critical point in time when there was no other way and immediately before the coming into force of the Biketawa Declaration for any regional intervention elsewhere outside of the ambit of the United Nations like the Bougainville one, this is the only regional mechanism that was in existence or in fact was drawn up specifically because the situation in Solomon Islands then could not be fitted into any other regional or international framework elsewhere. There was none, hence the coming into force of the Biketawa Declaration, and hence the Regional Assistance Mission as allowed for under a regional framework.

We must go back to 1998, 1999 & 2000 when Solomon Islands, and the former Prime Minister, and I was Foreign Minister then in 1998, went and requested Australia to come but it said "no" it is your internal matter. It was the same answer given to PNG until it was brought under the UN Security Council and Bougainville was listed for UN intervention.

Solomon Islands could not do that, first because, and we can guess, what happened to Solomon Islands at that point in time. Was it a civil unrest? To a certain extent may be but it was overtaken by lawlessness. That was it, and no one can intervene because a country has become lawless. No anywhere. And so we fell out of the United Nations Conventions, we fell out of any other undertakings, any agreements and any arrangements at that point in time. The only way we could be assisted was through the Biketawa Declaration, and because it was done in a rush, as we have heard, a lot of the framework, a lot of the thinking was done outside of the country.

Government institutions then did not have the time. The former Prime Minister was there, the deputy prime minister then and now the Minister for Forests were all here. The former Leader of Opposition, the former Prime Minister, the late Member for Aoke/ Langa Langa was here, a lot of us were here but we did not have the time and perhaps gave opportunity to those who were concerned about the domino effect of our country going under this sort of tensions in Melanesia. It started in Solomon Islands like this, it also started in Fiji and Vanuatu was in the waiting, as it were, and so a regional mechanism has to come in quickly. I am saying this because of the nature of the legislature now why we have to grapple with what to do with a situation as we are now currently today.

Coming back to the intention of the motion now, Mr Speaker, it is to review the Notice under Section 3 as required by Section 23(1). That is review of the Notice that was signed by the Governor General as specified by the Prime Minister already. In fact it is Legal Notice No. 61 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> July which has three sections, one of which is the preamble and the two operative paragraphs – operative paragraphs two and three stipulating the invitation by Solomon Islands for the visiting contingent to come, and the second one is the assistance we requested to be provided by the visiting contingent, and the third is that this Act will apply to the visiting contingent on the making of the Notice by reason of Section 3(3) of the Act.

These are the important critical elements that have to be looked at by the Foreign Relations Committee. Otherwise it would just look at what we are now looking at. Then we have to distinguish what will the review of the Notice result in after the report. For what? Is it for continuation under the present term or what? Is it amendment to certain sections of the

law? Do you need a review or notice to amend the law? Can you amend the provisions of the existing Act without the Notice? These are the legal issues that you have to look at because we can actually if we look carefully at it. And if no, who said no? Who dictates to the Parliament of this country so that we cannot amend provisions of the law until it is tangential to the Notice of review. That is the critical point.

Can we amend certain provisions of the law without a review of the notice? This is critical. Because some of the pressing issues like taxation and immunity, are they critical to the notice?

Mr Speaker, I want us to draw the line. Can we amend the Act without resorting to the Notice because it is like this? Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister said that the report will come to Parliament at the end of this year and then you go back and next year another Notice for review. Are we sure that the recommendations can be made to amend the report or any recommendations of the Committee or certain amendments. Is that really the intention? Would the review of the Notice give rise to a situation where the report by the parliamentary select committee on Foreign Relations will come up with its findings or by is it those areas that we are going to amend?

Just look at the time frame, it would seem that we will go for another whole year. That is why I said is that the intention or have we been drifting and said no, and going back to my point today that this is a very, very special legislation that no any other law of this country is similar to it. This law tells you what to do and what time to do it. It is only this law and no any other law.

My point here, Mr Speaker, is that in the drawing up of the terms of reference and perhaps from advice from the law officers that we have, is it critical, is it tangential to the Notice being reviewed before we can amend any particular sections of the Facilitation Act. Or can we invoke legislative amendments and give the notice because the notice is about the visiting contingent and the duration of their stay in here.

Also in the law it says that you do not need a notice. There is a provision in the Act that says that if the countries of the visiting contingent decide to pull out they give three months notice to the Government of Solomon Islands. So vice versa the Solomon Islands Government should not need the notice. If it wants the visiting contingent to leave, give them three months notice. This is currently in the law. Now why are we only looking at some parts of the legislation and we do not take seriously some parts of it.

Coming back to the point made by the Leader of Opposition today, before this goes before the Foreign Relations Committee to call stakeholders to participate, please Mr. Prime Minister and your good government, dissect this legislation section by section explaining their explications so that when stakeholders make their intervention and contribution they know exactly and you take their views based on the explanation of what the law is saying. I think that would be critical but I still want, and of course the Prime Minister and law officers will inform Parliament whether or not you can bring about amendments to sections of the Act or separately treated other than the Notice as required by Section 23(1).

This is my short contributions and I am sticking to the point. If I made reference to the names of people here, it is because of the contributions they are making to this legislation and not because they are making contributions that have no meaning on the floor of this Parliament.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

**Hon HILLY:** Mr Speaker, I would also like to contribute to the general debate of the motion moved by the Hon. Prime Minister. Mr Speaker, from 2003 up until this time in 2008 is five years. The law requires annual review of the Act. We have not been reviewing in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Last year there was a bit of review done, and so today we are trying to do the right thing by asking the Foreign Relations committee to look carefully once again at this issue.

Mr Speaker, sometimes we tend to quickly forget our past and we want to talk about RAMSI as it is today. But as the Member for Savo/Russells said, we have a problem. For those of us who were in Honiara at that time, we do not want to go back again to that time. The help that we have been getting has brought us to this stage today. It is something we must appreciate and thank the people that came and helped us because we could not solve our own problems.

On that note, Mr Speaker, we should look into this motion as a requirement of the law that is facilitating the assistance that we are receiving at this time. It is only when we look back that we can appreciate the work of RAMSI in the country. I think we must continue to help them in order for them to continue to help us.

The notices that it talks about are very general notices, and there is no need to change them. But the activities or operational matters that we sometimes are not happy about should be the areas that we need to look into for improvement. The non security aspects of RAMSI that came and work with RAMSI, sometimes we have conflicting ideas about them. We seem to question why is a RAMSI personnel holding a line post and is answerable to the Permanent Secretary or why does that RAMSI man stop genuine payments in the Ministry of Finance? Those kinds of questions are causing a bit of unhappiness or uneasiness in their operational matters. I think those are areas that need consideration for improvement so that we can be able to carry out the intentions of the help we are getting.

There is a lot of work yet to be done in trying to strengthen our institutions. There is a lot of work yet to be done to get development strategies of the Government to be implementable and trying to get help coming in from overseas so that we can develop ourselves to a point where we will no longer need RAMSI to assist us. But not until then, Mr. Speaker, and it needs the cooperation of everyone in this country to make the work of RAMSI easy, quickly so that they can go back and we can try again as an independent country to develop our country the way we want.

Mr Speaker, I think it is the operational aspects of this assistance that we need to look into and we should not cause unnecessary disturbance to the work of RAMSI. But as far as the Notice is concerned it is general and it covers every aspect of what RAMSI is here for.

This is my small contribution, Mr Speaker, and I support the motion.

**Mr AGOVAKA:** Mr Speaker, first of all I would like to contribute on behalf of my constituency of Central Guadalcanal in thanking RAMSI and to also congratulate them on the occasion of their fifth anniversary of operations in Solomon Islands. I would also like to thank the mover of the motion, the Hon. Prime Minister for asking this House to refer the international assistance notice to the Foreign Relations Committee for its inquiry and review.

Sir, I would like to go back to what the Member for Savo and Russells alluded to earlier on the question 'why did we invite RAMSI to this country'. I think he himself knows the answer to that question. The question speaks loud on why we need RAMSI. The answer is simply because successive governments have never addressed the Guadalcanal bona-fide demands. Those issues were never addressed and hence youths got angry, took up arms and fought with their Malaitan counterparts, which resulted in the ethnic tension. And the result of the ethnic tension is people got killed, loss of property and that is why we need RAMSI here. And I must thank RAMSI for its presence here in our country.

Are we going to do the same thing and address the issues of our people here? Or are we going to put them under the carpet and leave them as they are leaving them for successive governments to deal with. That is the underlying problem of why RAMSI is here. It is ourselves. We have not addressed issues. Successive executive governments have never fully addressed issues.

Mr Speaker, for me, the review is welcomed and is timely. As we go forward Solomon Islands must now go ahead with its economic recovery and social development. It is important that we look at the review report that would be produced by the committee so that we can go forward with our lives and our development in terms of the economy and social development of this country.

Sir, like the Member for Simbo/Ranongga has said, I think the Review must also look at the operations of RAMSI here in the country. I would like also, if it is possible to review not only the operations but also the attached agreements between the Solomon Islands Government and the Participating Countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the other countries. It is important to have a look at clauses in the agreements. As time goes on things have changed and the environment has changed. Because the time the agreements were made, the Parliament hence the executive government were handicapped in the sense that they cannot do anything because of gun tooting cowboys having control of the government and the economy of the country as it were, hence their hands were really tied up. Now that things have changed we must go on in our economic development.

The sovereignty of this country as the Leader of the Opposition always alluded to is of paramount importance. We must not allow other countries to come and take away our sovereignty but allow our laws to be the supreme law of this country.

Mr Speaker, I do not intend to speak any more than those points I have raised but it is important for the government to realize the fact that the underlying issues that gave rise to the ethnic tension must be addressed so that the issue of RAMSI can be properly addressed in this review. Mr. Speaker, with these few comments I support the motion by the Prime Minister. Thank you.

**Mr Speaker.** Honorable Members since there is a general support for this statutory motion, I wonder whether we should close it and ask the Honorable Prime Minister to make his concluding remarks because I do not think anyone seems to have any dissenting voice on this particular motion.

**Hon Sikua:** Thank you indeed, Mr. Speaker. I had in my introductory speech sketched out the scope of the review and I did say that the features of the Notice for purposes of the review were the composition of the visiting contingent, public purpose and agreement. I think with the contributions that have been raised in today's debate by Honorable Members of Parliament, there are many important issues and matters that have been raised with regard to the motion and I wish to thank them very sincerely for that.

But one of the important points that were raised was in regards to the scope of the review, as it relates mainly to the composition of the visiting contingent, the public purpose and agreement.

In regards to the amendment of the Act, this Parliament has the sovereign right to amend the Facilitation Act because it is a law passed by the House in 2003 and because it is the law of this country the Parliament has the right to amend the Facilitation Act. This is in answer to the question raised by the MP for Temotu Nende.

Mr Speaker, in its sovereign right this Parliament can amend the Act without prior reviews of the Notice. Any amendments to the Act must be enacted carefully in a manner that would unnecessarily effect the operations or assistances rendered by the Mission.

Mr Speaker, those are the few comments I would like to respond to. With those few comments, Mr Speaker, I beg to move.

*The motion is passed*

**Hon Sikua:** Mr Speaker, before I move the adjournment, I wish to inform the House that since there is neither private nor government business for tomorrow I propose to adjourn the House until Monday next week. Having said that, Mr Speaker, I move that Parliament do now adjourn until Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister. The adjournment motion is that the House adjourns until Monday morning 28<sup>th</sup> July 2008.

*The adjournment motion agreed to*

*The House is adjourned at 12.00pm.*