

FRIDAY 16TH OCTOBER 2015

The Speaker, Mr Ajilon Nasiu took the Chair at 9.53 am.

Prayers.

ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs; Culture & Tourism; Provincial Government & Rural Development; Fisheries & Marine; Agriculture & Livestock; Environment, Conservation, Disaster Management & Meteorology; Lands & Housing; the Leader of the Opposition; the Leader of the Independent Group and the Members for Fataleka; Small Malaita; Shortlands; North Malaita; West Makira; Ranogga/Simbo; West Kwaio; Mbaegu/Asifola and West Honiara.

SPEAKER'S ANNOUNCEMENT

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members, before we proceed on to our first item of business today, I feel most obliged as the presiding officer of this Chair to clear the air regarding certain Order of Businesses before this House, namely, Statement by Ministers, Questions and Answers, Motions and Debates in this House. Yesterday the Honourable Prime Minister made a statement pursuant to Standing Order 24. He also indicated that Ministers of the Crown will be making similar statements in the days to come. I also note the comments made in passing by the Member for Aoke/Langalanga.

Honourable Members, Standing Order 24 is very clear; it provides for an avenue whereby ministers may make statements regarding public matters for which the Government is responsible. Ministers usually use this avenue to highlight achievements in his/her ministry or stress progress on certain public policy or even highlight thematic national or international issues. I think this is healthy for a young legislature like us because it demonstrates responsibility on the part of the Crown Ministers to discharge their constitutional duties by being responsible and accountable to parliament.

With the endowment of the executive powers to manage public affairs and resources comes great responsibility by Government Ministers to answer truthfully and be held accountable to Parliament for the decisions and actions they take. As such, Standing Order 24 purports to safeguard the principle in so far as the proceedings of this Chambers are concerned.

Honourable Members, as you are aware, statements made pursuant to Standing Order 24(2) do not allow debates, but short questions only, simply because debates are introduced by a motion. Statements by Ministers and Questions and Answers during question time are not intended to be introduced by a motion because it would not require the House to vote on it. A debate on a particular matter can only ensue if a motion is introduced seeking the position of

the House as to where it stands concerning the question proposed by the motion. That is probably the rationale of Standing Order 24.

On the other hand, the comments made in passing by the Member for Aoke/Langalanga, is equally important as it calls for the protection of the right of a Member of Parliament to participate and be heard in Parliament. I do not think the effect of Standing Order 24 is to restrict that right because there are avenues and tools provided for in the Standing Orders in which Members of Parliament can use to seek the resolution of the House. And these are by way of motions.

I would encourage Members of Parliament to take note of the Statements made by Ministers, or any other Member for that matter, and if any Members wishes to engage in a debate on any issues mentioned, then he or she can later introduce a motion at the appropriate time to debate any issue of concern. Needless for me to say that each and every Member of Parliament has an undivided equal right to move a motion and cast a vote on any of the motions proposed in this House. Thank you for your attention. We shall now proceed on with the first item of business for today.

PRESENTATION OF PAPERS AND REPORTS

- *The Education White Paper (National Parliament Paper No. 16 of 2015)*

STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

The House adjourned at 10.00 am