



## **RAMSI's 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

**Special Coordinator Graeme Wilson**

**RAMSI Headquarters, Honiara, Solomon Islands**

**25 July 2009**

Disfala wiken hem taem fo tingtingbaek long kakam blong RAMSI long Solomon Islands long 2003 an fo celebratim wanem iumi bildim tugeta long las six yias. Hem taem tu fo iumi celebratim patnasip melewan Solomon Islands an olketa neba an frens long Pasifik.

Evri memba blong RAMSI i praod tumas fo help mekem Solomon Islands wanfala kantri wea olketa pipol save stap free, laef blong olketa kamap gud an ples blong olketa hem sef.

Mi laek fo tekem disfala taem fo se tangiu long olketa pipol an gavman blong Solomon Islands fo sapot an frensip blong iufala an fo patnasip wea iumi bildim.

During my first six months as Special Coordinator, it has really struck home just how important this 'partnership' approach is in Solomon Islands. It can increasingly be seen in the contributions made by all of you – the government, the private sector, civil society, the donor community and RAMSI. And here by 'partnership' I mean the need to work together on all things: on maintaining a safe environment in which to live; on continuing the work of restoring pride in this beautiful country; and on the critical issue of reconciling different communities so that you may stand united under the one Solomon Islands flag.

I know it is a source of great satisfaction and pride for the thousands of your friends across the Pacific who have served with RAMSI over the past six years that we - Solomon Islands and RAMSI - enjoy a strong and genuine partnership. It is remarkable what this partnership has enabled Solomon Islands to achieve since the first RAMSI contingent landed just down the road at Henderson airport six years ago. It is sometimes easy to forget just how far we have all come since then.

Law and order has been restored, the justice system is operating effectively and openly and the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is being rebuilt into a vital national institution. The work of building a sustainable economy, reducing debt and restoring investor confidence continues. RAMSI is also supporting the Government's efforts to respond effectively to the impact of the Global Economic Crisis. Just as importantly, RAMSI remains strongly supportive of the nation's efforts to establish a more accountable, effective and responsive system of government.

In that respect, the recent sessions of Parliament have highlighted the great progress made. The raft of new legislation to be considered by Parliament reflects the positive and ambitious reform agenda of the Government. At the same time, the Leader of the Opposition has been playing his role actively and responsibly in keeping the Government to account. The various committees too have been producing work of a high professional standard, backed by the diligent parliamentary staff. Add to the mix the fact that all these proceedings are being reported and analysed by a free and robust media and I think it is fair to say that democracy is alive and well in Solomon Islands!

With extended sittings of Parliament and so many bills being tabled and debated by MPs, I know many of you have been working very long hours. I am sure you all agree with me that you deserve a celebratory drink this evening followed by a good night's sleep!

This weekend we celebrate not only six years of the partnership between Solomon Islands and RAMSI, and the achievements and strengths of that partnership but also our shared vision for a well governed, prosperous and peaceful Solomon Islands. This vision should help the citizens of this country face the future not with fear but with confidence.

Together, iumi, Solomon Islands and RAMSI, are beginning to make this vision a reality. I think this can be best seen in the renewed vigour that we see all around us in the day-to-day workings of this nation. It shines through in the enthusiasm of politicians, supported by hard-working public servants, to consider and debate new legislation. It shines through in the commitment of the Government to continue the difficult process of economic and political reform, to pursue much-needed work on anti-corruption measures and to establish a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. And it shines through in the enthusiasm of ordinary Solomon Islanders in all walks of life for moving forward, for putting the past behind them and building a better future for their children and their children's children.

This week, we in the Mission have enjoyed helping communities throughout the nation celebrate this renewed sense of optimism and confidence in the future during our RAMSI Community Fun days held in almost every corner of the country.

This morning I was lucky enough to join the community in Auki for the Opening of their Community Fun Day. It was great to see so many people involved in simply celebrating the fact that it is possible to come together, play some sport and share a little *kaikai* together safely as a community.

Then this afternoon today, I had the pleasure of launching a book by Francis Aruwafu, the former Solomon Islands' goalkeeper who has just announced his retirement. The book provides a history of soccer in this country along with a whole set of training drills to create Solomon Islands' own squad of seriously impressive goalkeepers Francis is a wonderful example of the renewed energy in this country and we're very proud to be publishing his book as part of our 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

To see the RAMSI team contributing to creating a welcoming, enthusiastic environment here gives me enormous pride. RAMSI personnel are actively involved in sporting and other community activities – with the key focus on creating stronger partnerships throughout the country.

Members of RAMSI are also making the most of the sporting opportunities to become immersed in life here, with sports such as rugby, soccer, triathlon and netball providing another great avenue for the RAMSI team to contribute to the local community. Relatively 'new' sports to island life such as Rugby League and Australian Rules Football (AFL) are providing additional opportunities (mention Fred from AusKick if he's going to Australia). And having played cricket myself in many parts of the world, including in Vanuatu and New Caledonia, I am delighted to be helping fulfill the Prime Minister, Dr Sikua's wish to resurrect cricket in Solomon Islands! I am sure he won't mind if, on his behalf, I invite you all to come and witness the inaugural Prime Minister's XI versus RAMSI XI match tomorrow at the KGV ground starting at 1.00 pm. I am sure more partnerships will be built during the game!

In my view, the contribution that RAMSI can make goes beyond helping to restore law and order and to revitalise institutions. It goes to being part of the community and contributing to building a nation. When you look back, the journey that RAMSI has shared with the Solomon Islands people and government over the past six years has been a remarkable one – and not without its ups and downs. The journey continues and many challenges remain. But we are getting to know each other better, confidence is building and the partnership is going from strength to strength.

Staka samting iumi achivim finis, stat kam long 2003 kasem tudei, but plande samting i stap yet fo duim. Mifala long RAMSI wande fo gohed fo waka wetem iufala long Solomon Islands fo mekem disfala kantri i kamap strong moa an fo helpem olketa pipol garem gudfala laef.

Tangiu tumas.