

## NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF SOLOMON ISLANDS

Tuesday, 27 June 2017

The Speaker, Mr Adjilon Nasiu, took the Chair at 10.03am.

Prayers.

*Business of the House*

### ATTENDANCE

All were present with the exception of the Ministers for Health and Medical Services; National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation; Leader of the Independent Group and the Members for Malaita Outer Islands; South Vella Lavella and East Guadalcanal.

### SPEAKER'S ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**MR. SPEAKER:** Honorable Members, we have in the Speaker's Gallery the Governor General of Tuvalu, His Excellency Iakoba Taea Italeli and the First Lady Koling Italeli and his delegation. We also have the Police Commissioner of Niue, Mr. Toniata Edwards and his delegation. They are here in the country to be part of the RAMSI farewell celebrations. We also have the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency Mr. Roderick Brazier and the Deputy High Commissioner, Mr. Michael Hassett; the New Zealand High Commissioner His Excellency Mr. Don Higgins; the representative of the President of French Polynesia, Monsieur Manuel Terai; the Special Coordinator of RAMSI, Mr. Quinton Devlin and RAMSI officers and former RAMSI special coordinators in the public gallery. Please welcome them.

*(applause)*

*Motions*

### **MOTION NO.25: REGIONAL ASSISTANCE MISSION TO SOLOMON ISLANDS (RAMSI), 2003 – 2017: A JOINT REPORT BY THE SOLOMON ISLANDS GOVERNMENT AND RAMSI ON THE 14 YEAR INTERVENTION**

**Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (10:05): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I join you in welcoming our very important people in the Chamber.

This is going to be a daunting task for me. I rise to move that Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider National Paper No.19, the

Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), 2003 – 2017: A Joint Report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14 year intervention.

In making that request to Parliament, I realize that we have arrived at a very important crossroad in the history of our country; a journey that started in 1893 when we were declared a British Protectorate and the enemy then was ourselves. And to an extent, the blackbirders who took our people to Queensland, Fiji and Samoa to work for those countries' economies. The country was in danger of exterminating its own population through headhunting.

It has been a very exciting and eventful journey punctuated by events that challenged our resolve to remain as one country. I must thank the work of our churches who came to our shores even before the arrival of any form of government in this country paving the way for the smooth establishment of a government system in our country. They have since continued to uphold the government in their prayers. I thank them so much. I do not know where this country would be without the involvement of our God in our affairs.

Of course, the Second World War was the first test of our resolve to stick together as a country to fight a common enemy. We were rescued as it were by our friends that make up the Allied Forces landed on the shores of our islands. Incidentally, we will be celebrating the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that intervention on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August this year.

The story continues after we gain our political independence from Great Britain. We did not have to fight for our political freedom, and for that we thank Great Britain. We took over a country that was very much united under a name given to us by Alvaro De Mendana – Solomon Islands. About 20 years into that journey, our resolve to remain a united country was tested to the brinks, and it was clear that our capacity to address that problem was basically zero.

We could go through the reasons why we collapsed in year 2000, but that would be a repetition of what we already know. The truth is we allowed our country to go down that path by failing to establish and strengthen the important pillars of governance and nation building.

On that realization, we also made the decision on behalf of our people, this very Parliament, by inviting our friends to come and help us. That help came in the form of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, commonly known as RAMSI. It had to take the near collapse of our country for us to come to terms with the reality of our very weak state of affairs. We are here to celebrate the dawning of a second chance to get it right. The foundation of that new beginning has been set for us by RAMSI.

Our exciting challenge is to continue to consolidate the good work that RAMSI has done. This is where our united effort is called for. This journey must begin with our determination and resolution not to allow our country to slide back into anarchy and lawlessness. Again, if we are not doing that then we would be clearly irresponsible and that would be an act of unthankfulness. Let us make the determination as our incentive to take our country forward.

With that very sketchy outline of our colorful history, let me first of all thank you, Sir, for allowing me to present this motion today. This motion is moved to allow the House to acknowledge the good work of RAMSI in Solomon Islands as part of the celebrations to mark the end of the Mission's accomplishment of its mandate after 14 years. It is just appropriate that Parliament is given the honor to do that because it is this very House that approved the decision to invite the Mission on behalf of our people to come to our country with a clear mandate to restore normalcy.

The report focuses on the cooperative partnership of the Mission with the Solomon Islands Government and its people, the legal framework that give birth to RAMSI, the regional architecture, an oversight role of the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders. The implementation of the work program under the mandates of RAMSI, Police development programs, infrastructures and mobility and the legacy that RAMSI has for our nation and the region.

Since the inception of RAMSI 14 years ago under the Biketawa Declaration, it took a very interesting and trying journey. It faced a lot of challenges but none of which deterred the Mission from pursuing and achieving the objectives it sets out to achieve. These are mandates that were approved by this very Parliament. So much has been achieved through their work in Solomon Islands.

As a matter of fact the Mission fully achieved its mandates. Law and order has been restored, the machinery of government is functioning again, the economy has recovered and the judicial system has been strengthened. Our Police Force has regained the confidence of our people and regarded as one of the best police force in the region.

RAMSI's involvement in the family violence program is highly commended where it focuses on instilling discipline in the basic unit of our society that must exercise tolerance and love and be able to live in peace with each other. The extension of these is a society that enjoys peace and harmony because people can see eye to eye and live together. That program bears great result for our nation resulting in the enactment of the Family Violence Act, just to mention a few.

These significant achievements were attained within 14 years of RAMSI operation in Solomon Islands. These are great achievements worthy of our commendation

and gratitude. They are all designed to set the basics of our society on the path of peace and a happy coexistence, values that were solely tested during the ethnic crises

The chronology of RAMSI's work in Solomon Islands is well documented and articulated in reports and the media. Let me say that the uniqueness of RAMSI in Solomon Islands is that never before Australia had decided to help a neighbour rebuild itself completely and never before the Forum Pacific leaders stepped in to assist a neighbour on a large scale.

RAMSI was the first mission under the Biketawa Declaration that tested the cooperative arrangements of the region. And today RAMSI has achieved significant results for Solomon Islands and the region. And it is in this context that RAMSI intervention reflects the importance of pacific diplomacy, solidarity and cooperation.

The existence and evolution of RAMSI was based on the spectrum of stabilisation to capacity building and then to withdrawal. This is a strategic path that RAMSI took under its mandates. You will note from the report that RAMSI began with intervention in stabilization of law and order from 2003-2004. Then it moved into institutional strengthening from 2004- 2005, capacity development from 2006-2008. The transition from 2009 to 2013 and finally the police development and drawdown strategy from 2013 to 2017. These phases provided the impetus for RAMSI to assess its engagement with Solomon Islands and move on with achieving our mutual aims and objectives. And a very successful and methodical strategy designed to ensure that important pillars that will support a workable strategy of nation building are restored and strengthened. These are precisely the results achieved.

The existence of RAMSI also went through a series of reviews. And there were many views expressed both positive and negative. Our people were unshaken. In fact the overwhelming position taken by Solomon Islanders in these reviews is that contrary to what politics and political opinions say, RAMSI has become a critical factor in the effort to put things right in the country. It was moved beyond restoration of law and order to address the key pillars of nation building. It has done that to the satisfaction of our people.

Our people were correct in taking that position because RAMSI is not here to please politicians. That is the reality. It is a tough thing to swallow, even for the person speaking. On the contrary, the Mission was here to rescue us from ourselves and to provide an environment where we can once again see each other as Solomon Islanders working together to rebuild our nation. I can understand that agendas like that can be very painful because I have experienced it myself. And the Mission

was safe from early termination by the determination of our people to see RAMSI complete its mandate. They have done exactly that.

The reviews that took place include the 2004 Bipartisan Solomon Islands Intervention Task Force; the 2005 PIFs Emminent persons group; the 2007 Pacific Islands Forum Review; the 2009 Foreign Relations Committee Report, and finally the 2014 Independent Report Commission by the Solomon Islands Government. The outcomes were consistent.

These reviews provided more strength to our partnership and you may recall, Mr Speaker, there were times when our relationship was also tested. The good that came out of these testing times was that it helped to shape and mold our relationship. We become stronger and more understanding of each other.

All in all, the reviews and reports undertaken provided a very balance view of RAMSI in Solomon Islands. There were critics but also the overwhelming support by the people for the work of RAMSI. And I am also pleased to note that the reviews and reports gave us more succinct direction in the work of RAMSI, and this is what partnership is all about.

I must also state here that during the process of reviews, one thing that was evident is that RAMSI's exit should not be on arbitrary timeline but rather on agreed indicative achievements in the various sectors of its mandate. This position was fully supported by our people.

RAMSI's involvement in the various sectors have been overwhelming. In law and order, positive results have been achieved in terms of restoring law and order; the implementation of the firearms amnesty; the partnership with communities to address crimes; the Police Development Programs and cleaning up of the Force; training and mentoring of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force; rearmament, infrastructure and mobility, and we can go down the list outlining some of the key achievements in RAMSI's work in Solomon Islands which are well documented.

Furthermore, RAMSI has been actively engaged in the development of the Correctional Services of Solomon Islands, the courts and justice sector, fire and rescue service, and the victims of domestic violence. These achievements were made possible through enhanced partnership with the government and more importantly with community leaders, church leaders, business sectors, women and youth groups. The nation has been united for this worthy cause.

On economic governance, RAMSI has rescued this nation from near disaster. During that crisis period, gross domestic product, the value of goods and services produced fell by 62 percent, government expenditures collapsed and basic services such as health and education to the people were hindered. Since the arrival of

RAMSI, there were great improvement to government services. The public servants are paid and business communities were able to do business as normal again. The strict financial management measures and economic reforms put in place have provided the Government to operate its normal business again. Furthermore, we were able to re-engage with donors on our development programs that were halted at that time. This was the tedious journey of economic recovery of Solomon Islands and I must salute those who have been so instrumental in this journey.

What does the legacy of RAMSI means for Solomon Islands? Today we stand at the crossroad as I said, as we are ready to take full responsibility of the affairs of our country. Today we start a new but challenging journey into our nation building in the post RAMSI era.

As I have said on many occasion, this requires the solemn responsibility and commitment of every leader and the people of this nation. We must work together and stand united on a common ground for the good of our future generation. The legacy of RAMSI is a testimony of our shared goals to ensure Solomon Islands is a safe and secure nation. The legacy of RAMSI is a testimony to all Solomon Islanders that conflict has no place in our beautiful society. The legacy of RAMSI is also an affirmation of the importance of providing better leadership for the benefit of our future. This legacy also went beyond our borders to confirm that pacific diplomacy is a framework that stands ready to support members in times of crisis and despair.

The success of RAMSI is the result of a combined national support for the work of RAMSI by all level of leadership and people of our country from our head of state to members of this honorable House, community leaders, church leaders, women and youth, the private sector and citizens of Solomon Islands. I take this opportunity to thank you for your support to RAMSI in the past 14 years. Your support and partnership is what makes the work of RAMSI successful here in Solomon Islands. And our prayers have been answered and God has given us the gift of peace. So let us build on it and sustain it for our future generation.

I would also like to thank the governments and the people of the 15 participating countries for the invaluable contribution to RAMSI. And more specifically the

government and people of Australia and New Zealand for the significant financial support towards the work of RAMSI. Without your support we would not have achieved the goals we want. The geo-political reality is that we will depend on each other for our existence.

Equally important, I would like to thank the other regional participating countries that have made sacrifices for the common good of Solomon Islands. The men and women you sent under RAMSI have done well, and I must say that you have been great ambassadors of peace as you bestow life into this nation.

On Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017, RAMSI re-dedicated a memorial for the six fallen RAMSI officers who died while serving in Solomon Islands. On this note, I would like to salute and offer my respect to the six fallen RAMSI officers. May the God Almighty continue to comfort their families as we observe this week's celebrations.

The role of the Pacific Islands Forum and RAMSI is very important. As a regional intervention force, and I wish to thank the Pacific Islands Forum for the invaluable oversight role in this partnership. That task to ensure this Mission bears the regional character of RAMSI must be applauded. I take this opportunity to thank all the former and present chairs of the Pacific Island Forum leaders; the former and present Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum and secretariat and all the staffs for your hard work.

At the juncture, I wish to acknowledge all the special coordinators who have worked so hard to guide the work of RAMSI. And I commend their courage, bravery and unwavering commitment to pursue the objectives of the Mission in the face of many challenges. I salute you all and your other comrades for your leadership in RAMSI.

I would also like to thank all leaders of this honorable House, the former MPs and the current ones sitting here for the strong support and commitment you have given

to RAMSI. The road has not been easy and there have been a lot of misunderstanding but we pulled through, we pulled through. For me, RAMSI is not able which of the House we belong to. In other words, it is not about politics, rather it is about the common interest and principles we all stand for - peace, progress and prosperity for Solomon Islands. When we sing that national anthem we are reminded that we are one people and one nation aspiring for a better future for our people both now living and the generations yet unborn.

At the dawn of RAMSI's departure, may I also convey my uttermost gratitude to the Provincial Premiers; Church and Community leaders; Women and Youth leaders; the citizens of this nation for your support to RAMSI. The work of RAMSI would not have been successful without your support. You have created a united front for peace and security. You have sacrificed your personal comfort on many occasions for peace. You have stood in the firing lines for peace and you have nurtured peace with love and understanding. Our partnership with RAMSI is very unique and special, and the legacy of this relationship will go a long way in our nation building.

Before I take my seat, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of my good people of East Choiseul to join all leaders and citizens of this nation to thank RAMSI for their work in our country. My people are peace loving citizens who have no illusion about the importance of ensuring that peace and stability prevailed in our country and its implications on development. Like many rural dwellers, they were silent observers of what brought this country to its knees. The people of East Choiseul say thank you to RAMSI for being a partner for peace and development in Solomon Islands in the last 14 years. We join all peace loving people of this country to commit ourselves to the resolution that we will make—not to allow our beautiful country to slide into the path of anarchy and lawlessness again.

Finally, let me conclude by encouraging all citizens and residents of this nation that Solomon Islands is our country and we must learn to live together in harmony and take interest in working with the Government in our common endeavor to see our country attain sustainable development. We must learn to see our differences as a point of strength.

The call is more serious for people in positions of leadership like us. We have a solemn duty to ensure that we do not allow this country slide down the path of anarchy again by setting in motion the adoption and implementation of fundamental reforms that will encourage our people to become active participants in our national effort to attain sustainable development. We have that responsibility. This is a fitting response to the good work that RAMSI has undertaken in providing the environment that makes it possible for us to pursue



our development aspirations . Anything short of that or to the contrary will amount to lack of appreciation on our part.

On behalf of the people of this country, I take this opportunity to extend our heartfelt thank you to our friends who came here to help us.

With that I beg to move that Parliament resolves itself into a committee of the Whole house to consider National Paper No.19; The Regional Assistance mission to Solomon Islands 2003 to 2017; a joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14 years of intervention. I beg to move.

**The SPEAKER:** Honourable Members may now speak on the general principles of the Paper and the discussion.

**Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE** (*Hograno/Kia/Havulei—Leader of the Opposition*) (10:33): Let me also join the Prime Minister and your good self in acknowledging the presence of our dignitaries who are in the Public Gallery.

Mr Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the Motion moved by the Honourable Prime Minister that Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No. 19 of 2017, the 'Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) 2003 – 2017: A joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14-year intervention.

I am making this statement on behalf of the Parliamentary Opposition Group and, of course ,on behalf of my good people of Hograno/Kia/Havulei constituency.

At the outset, I wish to thank the Government and RAMSI for producing the report and bringing it to Parliament for us to deliberate on the eve of RAMSI's departure from our country, and I think it is fitting that we do so.

Sir, as RAMSI departs, let me on behalf of the Parliamentary Opposition and my constituency, sincerely congratulate and say thank you to RAMSI for a job well-done. You have given us an opportunity to rebuild this beautiful country. You have given us hope for a better future. I also commend the Government for coming up with a week long program beginning with a thanksgiving service last Sunday to celebrate RAMSI's successes and to commence the farewell celebrations. I am sure those of us who attended the service enjoyed it. For example, the entertainments by our youths representing the 15 participating Forum Island countries was a fitting tribute and so as the sermon and challenge for us to take leadership and stewardship of our country.

The report before us is quite a comprehensive one. It outlines RAMSI's history, success, challenges and also recommendations on the way forward. There is no

doubt RAMSI has been a success. Despite a few cultural, social and political challenges experienced during its early years, RAMSI has proven to be a successful model of regional intervention and cooperation.

The 'Operation Helpem Fren' can be best described as a regional savior as it came to our rescue at a time when our Government and citizens have no hope for a better tomorrow.

RAMSI came in to help us rebuild our sovereignty. Without RAMSI, I do not know what our country would become today. Back then, before RAMSI came in, the International Community once described Solomon Islands as a banana republic or a coconut republic for that matter. Let us not venture into that direction ever again.

Whilst I acknowledge and welcome the report, I thought an additional section could have been included capturing the voices of our people, especially our children, youths, women, our chiefs and elders on their personal perspective of RAMSI and how this regional intervention has impacted their lives. I am sure our people have a lot of good memories about RAMSI that should be documented.

Pages 12 to 16 of the report outlines the historical contest, the reasons and events in particular, the ethnic tension that eventually led to the RAMSI intervention under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum - Biketawa Declaration.

I will not repeat what has been outlined here but I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Sir Allan Kemakeza, the Prime Minister then for making that important decision to request Australia for assistance which led to the RAMSI intervention. Of course, I acknowledge the other factors highlighted in the report which necessitated Australia to make that important decision to intervene. Some of us were officials then and we were privileged to be part of the taskforce preparing for the RAMSI Intervention. The rest is history, and 14 years later we have a country to be proud of. A country whose future is certainly bright and a country that will need the collective effort of all citizens with a strong leadership to sustain the gains and take it forward.

Pages 17 to 33 of the report describes the nature and scope of RAMSI, its mandate and focus and its structure, which was organized into three pillars, namely law and justice, economic governance and machinery of government.

I also note the various phases that RAMSI has gone through during the last 14 years. These phases are well articulated, and as the Prime Minister has also alluded to in the report and we are at the final phase, which is the Police Development and Drawdown Phase 2013 – 2017.

I agree with the observation in the report that one of RAMSI's core strengths and a major contributing factor to its success has been its regional nature. It was a regional

mission with regional endorsement and regional oversight. The oversight played by the Pacific Islands Forum through a number of mechanisms, such as the Forum Imminent Persons Group, the Enhanced Consultative Mechanism and the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee and the SIG-RAMSI Activity Report helped to keep forum members abreast of RAMSI's progress and the challenges over the years.

At this juncture, let me join the Prime Minister to acknowledge the contribution of the 15 member states of the Pacific Islands Forum. Thank you very much Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Palau, Nauru, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Cook Islands for helping us through RAMSI.

I commend in particular, the lead role played by Australia and New Zealand. In this regard, I thank the Australian Government and people for the huge financial contribution of almost AUD\$2.8million towards RAMSI over the years. The Parliamentary Opposition is also grateful for Australia's ongoing bilateral assistance towards other sectors in our country, such as education and health.

The Parliamentary Opposition Group joins the Government and RAMSI in paying tribute to those six RAMSI personnel who tragically lost their lives while serving RAMSI and representing their countries. Their names are listed on page 32 of the report.

I also salute the former Pacific Islands Secretary General, Greg Irwin and former RAMSI Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, both of whom have passed away. I had the privilege of meeting and interacting with them in my former life as permanent secretary. Both were indeed very dedicated and committed to the cause of rebuilding Solomon Islands. I also take this opportunity to salute all RAMSI Special Coordinators and personnel for their support, commitment and dedication to the cause of peace in Solomon Islands.

Pages 34 to 59 of the report outlines the events, activities and successes of RAMSI under those three pillars I have alluded to earlier. These sections of the report provide us with an insight on the partnership between the Government and RAMSI on these sectors and their institutions and their respective programs. I agree that one of RAMSI's greatest legacies has been its contribution to the law and justice sector. The rapid restoration of law and order was a considerable and significant achievement.

We must not forget that community support also played an important role in helping RAMSI to restore law and order. In this connection, I also wish to recognize the contribution of peace builders and mediators, including the National Peace Council, faith-based groups, NGOs, women's peace groups, chiefs and UN

agencies. We will need the same partnership, we will need the same collaboration after RAMSI departs as we move forward on our own.

I also commend RAMSI for its support and investments in the developments of the RSIPF, including our Correctional Services, Fire and Rescue Services, Courts and Justice and National Disaster and Emergency Response.

On economic governance, RAMSI's efforts to stabilize the budget and public debt, improve financial and cash management systems, reforms to make and doing business easier and other financial and economic reforms have been crucial in the efforts to stabilize our country's finances and the economy. We must continue with these reforms.

On a similar note, the various initiatives under the machinery of government sector including improving the effectiveness of our parliamentary services, electoral reforms, public services reforms, provincial governance and support to all integrity institutions, I believe have enhanced the capacity of these government agencies. We would have not done it on our own during those difficult times. Our government agencies would need adequate funding in their annual budgets to sustain and build on these gains.

Cross-cutting issues outlined on pages 60 to 64 of the report are equally important. As highlighted in the report, these issues included capacity building, gender issues, anti-corruption, partnership in nation building and community outreach. Indeed, capacity building was at the heart or central to RAMSI's mandate. It was an integral part of RAMSI's work to establish the conditions whereby we could once again regain full control of our country, our lives and our future.

As you know, a lot of work remains to be done in terms of addressing these cross-cutting issues, including the fight against corruption. The onus is on us Solomon Islanders, especially us leaders to take the lead and make the right decisions. Decisions that are in the best interest of this country.

I note that the final sections of the report are on Beyond RAMSI - sustaining the gains and lessons for the future security cooperation, and note the Prime Minister has detailed some of these legacies. I would like to make some reflections and observations in this regard, especially in terms of building lasting peace and stability going into the future.

While we celebrate RAMSI's successes and farewell our friends from the region this week, this is also a moment for us, for all Solomon Islanders to seriously reflect on the efforts and initiatives we need to pursue in order to sustain on the gains that we have achieved with RAMSI. At the moment, there is still some feeling of anxiety and to some extent fear among segments of our population as RAMSI departs.

There is anxiety and fear that the law and order situation could return to the pre-RAMSI days. This anxiety and fears does not necessarily link to another major perceived ethnic conflict, but the potential for a deteriorating general law and order situation where people and institutions could be harassed unnecessarily again. And I agree with the Prime Minister that we must not allow this to happen ever again.

I am confident that the RSIP is well equipped to handle such situations. I call on every Solomon Islander to support the work of the RSIP especially in terms of community policing, crime prevention and other reforms the Force is undergoing.

How do we sustain the gains made by or with RAMSI? I understand various government initiatives and policies are being pursued that are critical, that are imperative to sustaining and building on these gains and in addressing the underlying causes of the ethnic tension. But where do we start?

I believe we must start with addressing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I understand that work is about to be completed on prioritizing and sequencing the recommendations of the TRC Report. I also understand this work will feed into a reparation policy frame work and a reparation bill that will holistically address the outstanding ethnic tension related claims. This policy and bill are crucial to our reconciliation efforts and in ensuring lasting peace.

I urge the Government to pursue this initiatives with some sense of urgency. The Government Ministry responsible must be adequately resourced to undertake and champion these causes.

Of course it is our collective responsibility to build peace and stability in this country. We must all be peace builders and peacemakers. It is no secret that peace and development are interconnected. The National Peace Dialogue hosted by the Government last week once again highlighted the need for economic development in our provinces to provide employment and income opportunities for our people. Our efforts to build lasting peace and stability must be pursued with inclusive and participatory economic development involving our women and youth. It must be based on just and fair distributing of resources among our provinces and people.

Lasting and genuine peace starts at home. We must educate our children to become good citizens of our country. We must embark seriously on peace education in our schools. We must impart and teach our children about the values and principles of respect and mutual tolerance for diverse cultures and traditions, harmony and peaceful coexistence. We must also teach them to respect our own laws and regulations and respect for those in authority.

In conclusion, I believe strong national leadership is imperative as we move forward. As I have alluded to earlier we need champions to pursue peace building

efforts and strategies. In this connection, I urge all of us in this Honourable House to take our mandated roles seriously. We must take the lead, we must champion the cause for lasting peace and stability in our beautiful country. We must also be serious in the way we manage the affairs of this country and how we govern it. Furthermore we must serve our people and our country with diligence and honesty to bring about the peace and prosperity that our people are crying for.

Therefore I am confident that this nation will rise up and move forward if we allow our good Lord to intervene and take control of our destiny. We must take heed of the teaching from the Holy Book of 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles Chapter 7 verse 14 and which reads and I quote " If my people which are call by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, will I hear from Heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." This should be a great lesson for us and it should begin with us the 50 members of Parliament.

The future of this country depends on us and on our attitudes towards our people and country. Let us be genuine, we must not pretend. We must be committed and dedicated to building sustainable peace and stability in our country.

Finally RAMSI as we have heard and as we can read in the report had rescued us-it has played its part. Now they are leaving, the onus is on us; on ourselves to ensure that we do not fall back to those dark days. We must be united in our resolve to create a peaceful and stable country for our children and future generations.

The Parliamentary Opposition and the peace loving people of my constituency, is firmly committed to this noble cause. With these remarks once again I would like to pay tribute and say thank you to RAMSI, to all the Forum countries who have provided the opportunities for us to rebuild our country and create a better future for our children and future generations. I support the motion and resume my seat.

**Hon. BARTHOLOMEW PARAPOLO** (*Ngella—Minister for Culture and Tourism*) (10:52): I thank the honorable Prime Minister for moving that Parliament resolves itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider National Parliament Paper No. 19 of 2017, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) 2003 – 2017: A joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI for the 14-year intervention.

On behalf of my Ministry of Culture and Tourism, I wish to contribute in conveying my appreciation and thank you to the leaders of all the countries that made up the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. As the minister responsible for tourism, I am conveying the appreciation and thank you to RAMSI on behalf of the Tourism and Culture Industry in Solomon Islands. The contribution that RAMSI made to progress peace, unity and development of Solomon Islands must be

appreciated nationally and must be continued to be valued by all citizens of Solomon Islands now and in the future.

As a nation, we have evolved through many challenging times in the last 39 years. One of the biggest and the most challenging times we went through resulted in the establishment of RAMSI. However, from this very challenge I personally believe Solomon Islands has evolved to become a stronger nation than 14 years ago. In this regard, the Solomon Islands Government and people must also make all effort to learn from our past mistakes in order to redirect the course of our country for a better and strong future.

The most valuable lesson we must draw from the last 14 years is that peaceful coexistence amongst ourselves is the key to open up development potentials in all sectors. We have seen the crippling effect of what instability and lack of peace can do to our country. In this regard, the tourism sector is no exception. Our tourism sector by far is one of the sectors that has realized very positively the signal of growth with the presence of RAMSI over the past years.

With the restoration of peace in the country, the tourism sector has realized positive growth due to improved visitor confidence, enhanced investor confidence and more importantly improve business confidence. This has created the necessary environment for the tourism sector to continue its growth trend in the right way.

While there is still need for other important factors such as support infrastructure, policy frameworks and investment incentives to speed up the growth of the sectors. The most important issues of peace and stability has already been established. It is because of the momentum for development that has been created, that my ministry is working extra on how to create necessary mechanism to support the growth of the tourism sector in the country. For this I wish to convey the Tourism industry's sincere thanks and appreciation for RAMSI for their marvelous work it has undertaken in Solomon Islands over the last 14 years. On this note, I also would like to congratulate all the countries that made up RAMSI for the very successful mission in "Helpem Fren".

Lastly as the Member of Parliament for Ngella constituency, I would also like to convey our thank you and appreciation to RAMSI on behalf of my good people. My people have also seen very positive progress in our development efforts due to the presence of RAMSI in the country. I would like to say "tagio tumas RAMSI" and we are committed to continue to play our part in contributing to advancing Solomon Islands as a nation.

With those brief remarks I would like to conclude by thanking the Solomon Islands Government and Parliament for working closely with RAMSI over the last 14 years to create the right development environment for our country to progress.

The responsibility is now on our shoulders to capitalize and to continue develop Solomon Islands and its people. With these remarks thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Ministry and my people of Ngella constituency. I support the motion and resume my seat.

**Mr MATTHEW WALE** (*Aoke/Langalanga*) (11:00): Thank you for the opportunity to add the voice of the law abiding peace loving people of Aoke/Langalanga to say thank you to our friends who have been staying with us.

As mentioned by the Prime Minister when he was speaking and also the Leader of the Opposition who was reading from Chronicles, I would also like to read as well. At the end I want us to sing a hymn but for the start I would like to read from Deuteronomy 1 verse 6. God talked to Moses and Moses talked to his people the Children of Israel and some people from Israel are also here and you have to listen to it. It reads "*The Lord our God said to us at Horeb, you have stayed long enough at this mountain, break camp and advance into the hill country of the Amorites.*" This is the time for us to break camp. I will stop here because at the end I will come back to it.

It is very important that we have looked back to remind our selves where we were before RAMSI have arrived on our shores. When we look back it is important that we recognize how we got to where we were before RAMSI's arrival. Looking back constructively is a very useful exercise to remind us of the pain, suffering, degradation in our society. But the looking back must be to point to the future with a solemn commitment to say never again.

We are often plagued with short term memories and we forget how bad things were prior to the mid-July 2003-RAMSI's arrival. It is when we suffer from this kind of memory loss that molds are blown into mountains, excuses are given for what is really a lack of gratitude and appreciation for the benefits and gains that are accrued to us under RAMSI and the efforts they give to our country over the past 14 years.

I had often wondered, it would have been better or certainly would have been a whole lot more efficient had the Parliament of 2003 ceded total sovereign control to RAMSI; perhaps with some local technocratic leadership. Just think how much



Solomon Islands would have gained without the petty politics or even juvenile politics that made much of RAMSI's work a heavy burden at critical times.

Much of the critical reforms that this country needs could have been achieved under such an arrangement. It is not totally out of this world to have such a thinking. In Italy, when their government runs their economy badly or misuses funds, Italy can hand power to a technocratic government so that they do not have to face re-election and they can make the tough calls that needs to be made. So it is not totally out of this world.

Substantive, constructive, necessary changes in our governance, in our economy and in our society when it reaches the level of the politicians is where the compromises that needs to be made always backfires on us. And when I said that I know that there are people who would—perhaps not violently but would really be very much against it. But what I am saying is just a thought.

It is an indictment on the collective leadership of this country over the years that it takes outsiders; even if friends to make the really important things happen in this country. We are grateful for the Biketawa Declaration under which auspices the Pacific Islands Forum was able to construct RAMSI. Of course, I join the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and the Member for Ngella in thanking the leadership that was provided by Australia in terms of finance, military, policing and technical expertise, and along with New Zealand as well who has made quite a sizable investment commensurate with its size.

Arguments have been mounting over recent years that Australia acted only after 911 and the Bali bombing, so the calculus was not entirely altruistic. That may be so, but Solomon Islands is grateful that help came sooner than later.

Sir, 14 years is just the appropriate length of time to be engaged in meaningful nation reconstruction beyond the prerequisite restoration of law and order. A shorter period may have left structural deficiencies in key democratic institutions tasked to hold our system of government together and functioning. Too long and it may undermine indigenous capacity to take charge and provide leadership.

This report makes it very clear that RAMSI remained popular with the ordinary people of Solomon Islands throughout its 14 years. The opposition to RAMSI over the years has principally come from politicians, but there were a few former politicians as well and we ask ourselves why was this the case. At that time it was regrettable because much could have been gained by more collaborative rather than a combative relationship in the early years of RAMSI. Reactionary juvenile politics forfeited some critical gains that could have been had in the early phase of RAMSI. It is unfortunate we tend to grow up a little bit late.

There have also been reports we read in the media that RAMSI costs too much to the Australian tax payers in the first instance and also in New Zealand, and it probably is true; I do not know. Those are debates for the tax payers of those two countries that foot the bill for RAMSI. Our response is simply that the peace, the order, the security, the stability, the restored rule of law and the respect for the rule of law, a functional economy are priceless. We are eternally grateful for the governments and the peoples of those two countries for their huge investments in the RAMSI project. If we have seemed ungrateful, we are sorry.

As was noted by previous speakers as well as the Prime Minister, RAMSI is a makeup of every member state of the Pacific Islands Forum. We are grateful also to each and everyone of them who participated by sending personnel to be part of RAMSI from the largest to the smallest members of the Forum. It truly was an exercise in good Pacific Neighborliness and collaboration. When our brothers and sisters from the Pacific Islands come and they joined the Australia and New Zealand it makes RAMSI more palatable. We can be able to swallow it a bit. It makes it easier a bit when one brother from Vanuatu or Papua New Guinea or Palau or Nauru is accompanying other RAMSI officers. This is especially so in early phases when arguments takes place a little bit because the hard yard need to be gained. When our people see our Pacific Brothers and Sisters it makes RAMSI more acceptable, and it gained a necessary foothold. So this one is also priceless as well, it is a big contribution that our brothers and sisters from the other Pacific Islands have come to give and we are very grateful.

So of course the report also recognizes, and we must also recognized the key role played ourselves by our own people by Solomon Islanders in allowing RAMSI to come. It was not taken for granted that the Parliament of 2003 at that time approved the idea. So we must acknowledge the role played by the then Prime Minister, your predecessor Mr. Speaker, who has retired and he must have great joy in his heart and rightly so, for giving the leadership in taking the decisive step in not only fomenting the move but also encouraging the rest of Parliament at that time to take that decision. He himself went to prison. He was himself for the benefit to the rest of the community, I supposed, because then when the rule of law was restored and then he was charged and was found guilty by a functional police system and a functional court system and a functional correction system, he went to prison and was corrected. He went through the whole process and in a lot of ways, he stand as a shining example of the gains that Solomon Islands obtained through this very important project. we must recognize his leadership in this.

Of course, ordinary Solomon Islanders that supported RAMSI right through to ensure that it was able to carry out its mandates; without the support of ordinary Solomon Islanders and if it was left entirely to the leadership of the country, RAMSI might have been forced into a premature exit and we would have lost some of the

structural benefits from its work. In this matter, ordinary Solomon Islanders had far more foresight and we must give them due recognition. It is their support that ensured that we stayed with it until the right time to exit.

We must look forward. we, Solomon Islanders as the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition and also my dear brother the Minister mentioned that we must stand together and be committed to ensuring that any threat to our nation must be met with a firm and effective response, especially at the political level. it is important that we politicians do not condone any threats to our nation because we might calculate that it might be beneficial to us politically. This was the attitude of key political leaders that led to the breakdown in our governance systems back then.

Sir, such attitude recur during the China fires when the Minister of Finance was elected Prime Minister back in 2006. we have the attitude of letting things happen, even if it is a bad thing, but if we are going to gain from it politically, we condone it; we may not actively excited about it and try and encourage people to do it but we let it happen. Let us not speak out against it, we do not pull together as a collective leadership and stand against such things. We wait until things are out of hand before we look for ways to control. It is an important lesson that we must learn.

We are part of this commitment of saying 'never again'—never again must our democracy, young as it is, be brought to its knees in the way that it was, never again are the cries of our people on legitimate issues that require public policy responses be ignored and neglected for so long that they resort to violence to force a discourse. Our systems of democracy, our processes of democracy must be sensitive to what the people see as issues to them, and therefore continuing reforms in the political party system, continuing reforms in our electoral processes is part of making our democracy responsive and sensitive to what our people are saying. We must not leave our people feel that the only way for the country's leadership to take notice is to take matters into their own hands.

On the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force, I agree that they have come a very, very long way from where it was when RAMSI found it. We are extremely grateful for these gains. These gains to a large extent are being consolidated. We know much more work still needs to go into making the Royal Solomon Islands Police the truly independent and professional police force we all want it to be. It is incumbent on government, every government to make the serious investments required to achieve that.

Officers in the Royal Solomon Islands Police, in the first instance, must make it their solemn duty to avoid the pitfalls of the wantok system. The Royal Solomon Islands

Police Force is key to ensuring that all other democratic institutions can pursue their mandates and functions and withhold our government system with integrity.

In terms of police rearmament, I wish that it was not as limited as it is. I am thinking that this armament needs to be broader and capable of handling multiple armed incidents at the same time in several locations at different parts of the country. This is because our border at the northern part is an open one, but I am sure that this is something the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the Government are looking at. The cost of policing report touched a bit on this, and it would be good for the Government to put serious money into this so that we can build up this capability. I am sure that upon the Government's request Australia and New Zealand would be very happy to further engage in this area to train our police officers.

At this juncture in 2017, it really is ironic but unfortunate that at the exit of RAMSI, government finances have hit a precarious situation in so much that Parliament could not provide toilet papers in our restrooms now. We now operate on a BYO principle – bring your own toilet paper. I am very saddened by this; this is not a good sign of us taking full control of our own affairs and making things difficult for ourselves.

There seems to be a tendency to always keep the Solomon Islands Government in a hand to mouth situation. When will we learn that this lends us vulnerable? The Government is at the core, is at the centre of the state and it must never be placed in a situation where it cannot mount a quick, efficient, effective response to any threats. This is that much harder when Government is existing on a hand to mouth situation. Of course, we cannot blame RAMSI for this. This is totally self-inflicted, but it does point to the fact that we need to do better as leaders. We must think seriously about this. The Government's cash flow is not something that happens because of global financial crisis. And there is no global financial crisis. So who do we blame it on? Let us blame it upon ourselves, it is poor management.

I do not know if it is incompetence; maybe it is worse. We have to seriously think about this. And on the eve of RAMSI's exit, we find our cash reserves totally depleted where we have this hand to mouth situation. I am ashamed of this.

Further on the exit of RAMSI, our economy is still way too heavily dependent on unsustainable logging. And the loggers still have a very strong decisive hand over the Government. These are regrettable factors that perhaps RAMSI being an outside intervention could have assisted with. Because it seems internally/domestically, the loggers have infiltrated our governance system to ensure that nothing will ever be done to bring harvest rates to sustainable levels and that the rampant transfer pricing that is the outright defrauding of landowners and the government be brought to an end.

I have said this in the last meeting and recently I went to three auction floors where Solomon Island round logs were being auctioned. Our landowners are being defrauded. There is no other way around it. The determined prices are all a scheme; a scheme to steal from our own landowners. The determined price is not supposed to be the price at the auction floor. The determined price is too low by 30-40 US per cubic meter, given the different species of logs being stolen from our landowners. And are we not angry about that?

Not to mention the revenue that should be coming in as duty and taxes to the Government. That too, we are being robbed of because the determined price is always so low. Way, way lower than what is happening on the auction floors. And we are not angry because loggers still control shots in the government. This makes me very sad.

I do not know how we would take control of that aspect, but we must take control of it because way way too much has been stolen from our people and our government. And if we go back all these years on logging, how much billions in Solomon Dollars have gone missing from this transfer price? We must do something about it, and it is now up to us. We do not expect RAMSI, Taiwan or Angel Gabriel from heaven or someone else. We must now look to ourselves to do something that is constructive and substantive about this matter. Let us not wish, then curse, we do not want to actually kill this industry, we need them too. But the fact that we need them must be no excuse for them to rape and to steal us. We must do something about it. It calls for leadership. Are the beautiful people of these lovely islands asking for too much when they expect us to provide this leadership?

I must end on a slightly more positive note. Although all of that has been positive and say that Solomon islands will be forever grateful, just as the Prime Minister recounted our journey and our history, our togetherness as a nation are very true as reflection on that up until 2003.

Now we see children safe and are free to go to school. Last time we used to be worried because schools were closed as well as clinics were closed. Parents too were worried about their children going to school. These are benefits that we must not take for granted. Now schools are opened and are functioning and clinics are opened again, even though some of them do not have the basic medicines every now and again but at least they are opened. Women are safe, especially here in Honiara. These are very important benefits gained under RAMSI. And the economy, although there are issues that have been growing consistently, even if government management of its resources still leaves much to be desired. But these are our own issues.

Of the things that it sets out to do, RAMSI has done a splendid job; no doubt about it. So we are extremely thankful to everyone that is part to it by providing leadership to it. Now we must farewell RAMSI and reflect on our own roles and attitudes going forward. And so we say thank you very much friends for coming and holding the hand of Solomon Islands and help Solomon Islands to stand up and walk again. Where we are going to walk towards is up to us.

On that note and in light of the reading which I have read earlier on, where God said to Moses and the Children of Israel and I quote - 'You have stayed long enough on this mountain, break camp and advance' so we must advance.

The Standing Order is silent on the matter of singing, and so I would like to suggest that we sing the hymn 'Guide Me O thou Great Jehovah'. In such a time like this, hymns capture the solemnity of the gratitude we feel, and also since we are just human beings and so we feel sorry that they are leaving us but we are also happy that they are leaving because we take charge, we take control of our destiny. With those few words, thank you.

**Hon. MILNER TOZAKA** (*North Vella Lavella—Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade*) (11:31): I would like to thank the Prime Minister for presenting this very important historical motion to consider Paper No. 19 of 2017, 'The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (Helpem Fren) 2003 – 2017: A joint Report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14 – year intervention". And accordingly I would like to contribute to it, but before I do so I would also like to join the Prime Minister and honorable colleagues in acknowledging the presence of some very important people in the chamber - diplomats and our VIPs who are attending the commemoration of RAMSI this week. I would like to acknowledge them and our leaders for joining us in the debate of this important motion.

At the outset, let me join other colleagues, the Prime Minister and also the Leader of Opposition in expressing on behalf of my own and that of the people of North Vella our heartfelt thanks to RAMSI, the contributing countries and all personnel headed by the Special Coordinators involved in RAMSI over the last 14 years. Thank you so much, you have been a friend indeed.

At this juncture also, I would like to join the Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition and colleagues to pay tribute to one of the special coordinators, the late Graeme Wilson who served between 2009-2011 and had passed away. I am very grateful and very happy that his two children are here with us to commemorate RAMSI this week. We acknowledge and are very honored and very grateful for the two children who join us on behalf of their late father, Graeme Wilson.

RAMSI through its operation "Helpem Fren" has been a resounding success. Through its help, Solomon Islands is once again well positioned to again stand on its own two feet, move forward and be a leader in the region and beyond.

RAMSI's arrival on our shores saved us from ourselves. We know that Solomon Islands darkest days which brought our beloved nation to its knees was self-inflicted. Although it should be acknowledged that valiant efforts were made by communities, churches, provincial and national leaders and even a number of our regional friends to resolve our differences, these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. We needed outside intervention, hence entered RAMSI.

My appreciation for RAMSI was even more profound, given the fact that the Mission was truly a pacific one. One that saw our neighbors, our pacific brothers and sisters come to our aid in the most powerful way. RAMSI consisted then of all members of the Pacific Islands Forum, the basis for action as other colleagues have stated was the Biketawa Declaration itself; a pacific construct adopted under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum.

The story of RAMSI is a true pacific success story. This success is one that the region can truly take pride in. It is a testament of our strong regional cooperation and a powerful manifestation of the pacific way. It will go down in history as a significant marker which underpins the solidarity of the region by coming together to the aid of one of its own.

The story and success of RAMSI should be shared beyond the region. It must be shared at the global level. Solomon Islands must take the lead in sharing this story. The world needs to know about our story and how regional neighbors came to our aid and how together we pull our beloved nation back from the brink of collapse.

My ministry, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade will continue to play its role in sharing this success story, indeed at international forums including the United Nations General Assembly. Our Prime Minister has been sharing RAMSI's story already.

RAMSI was invited by this Parliament, the Parliament that we are meeting in right now. Congratulations to our Parliament. When our country and the neighboring countries like Australia and New Zealand were in agony at that point of time, I was the High Commissioner to Australia at that time. The agony was in three questions. They were very concerned about the ethnic tension that we had but the three questions were how are we going to get in, when and with whom? Those were the questions. That was the agony Australia was facing at that time.

The other agony was Australia was trying its very best to preserve the dignity and the independence of our country. The last thing they want to do is to be seen as the

pacific policeman coming to the pacific to help you. And what was the trigger? The trigger was two. The first was this Parliament, our Parliament overwhelmingly as stated by our Prime Minister, agreed saying we wanted an intervention, we have tried all we could do using our own capacity, using our organizations to address this tension, but it did not work, and so we would like you to come and help us.

Secondly, it was a blessing in disguise when Kiribati and the Forum countries made the Biketawa Declaration. The Pacific Island countries who shared the same values of democracy, freedom, peace and security joined together to help us, and that is how they came. This was a very unique and a very special intervention. And most of us can become advisors to the world on how we became successful with this intervention. It is very successful. I can speak about this because I knew that my work as the High Commissioner when I was in Canberra was just nothing. The day one I arrived were just continued knocking on the door of Australia. Can you hear my knock and come to help my country?

I did not give up during my four years as the High Commissioner until the knocks on the door were heard by my good friend, the Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard and my good friend, the Foreign Minister Mr. Alexander Downer. They said "Yes, Milner, we will come". I was right at the back of a function; I can remember very well because I used to attend functions all the time, I never failed attending functions although I had difficulties.

The most difficult time I experienced as a public servant for 25 years is my service for my country in Canberra. Those were my very difficult times minus RAMSI. But somehow I held on and I kept knocking and kept listening to all the prime ministers, including the Solomon Islands' Prime Minister, Sir Allan Kemakeza. I listen to them and I continued knocking until the door was opened. And when the door opened, I was right there at the back when the Prime Minister of Australia said to me "Where is the High Commissioner for Solomon Islands". I used to hide because I was the last one, the 90 of us. But he said - tell him to come to the front. I do not know what to say but when I came to the front, he said to me "High Commissioner, there is good news for you, tomorrow tell your Prime Minister to come over so that we can sign the assistance for us to come over and help you, and not only Australia but the region to come and help.

Not Australia but the region to come and help. That is how I am involve in this coming of RAMSI. So I was very happy and I facilitate that and the Prime Minister too said that I will not be able to come and sign that agreement but I would like you to represent the country to join other leaders to sign this in Townsville, that is what I do then I return. That is a short history Sir, but I am a little bit carried away just like the Prime Minister use to feel sometimes, that when we talk about RAMSI it also touched me too.



RAMSI was invited by Parliament. RAMSI was never at any time an occupying force. Although RAMSI's intervention overlapped with the development of what the doctrine of responsibility to protect-R2P, is what they called it which was been promoted at the United Nation around the same time as the arrival of RAMSI. It should made categorically clear that RAMSI was not deployed in response to a an R2P situation. This is a fact.

Mr. Speaker, as a report saw Solomon Islands sought assistances from the United Nations on two occasions. Prior to RAMSI deployment and while this calls went unanswered Sir, RAMSI eventual Mission to Solomon Islands came itself viewed as an example of the application of Chapter Eight of United Nation Charter which allows for Regional arrangement on matters concerning peace and security.

Indeed the United Security Council in 2003 released the statement informing that then members of the then Security Council welcome warmly the collective action of the countries of the Pacific Islands Forum to support the people of Solomon Islands in their quest for the restoration of law and order and stability.

The Statement also welcome the leadership exerted by Australia and New Zealand in close partnership with other countries in the region in this regard.

As I mentioned earlier, the stories success of RAMSI is also a global one as we move forward, our engagement with the international community including through the United Nation, a peace building commission should continue to be strengthened.

The report told some truly impressive statistics, it pegged the total costs of the Mission at around AUD\$3billion. At its peak in 2003, some 1,800 military personnel were in the country but the end of its third year some 6,300 arrests of militants and criminal activities was made .

On the financial side Sir, free RAMSI revenue, total SBD\$258.2million in 2002. Ten years later in 2012 the figures stood at SBD\$2.5billion Sir. The reports states at 1996 total investment was around 4.5 percent of GDP between 2005 and 2013 investment in our country, average around 20percent of GDP. It is incumbent upon us , for us to ensure that our country Solomon Islands continue to perform Sir, economically and that the livelihoods of all Solomon Islanders should be our primary focus.

Going forward we have to acknowledge and fully embraced the fact that there can be no development without peace and without security. And other Prime Ministers and others have already stated that and I really agreed with that. There can be no peace and no security without development. These two cannot happen if there is no development.

We also have to embrace the fact that neither peace nor development can occur without respect to human rights. These two cannot occur we do not have respect

for each to each other. Our respect to human rights must take precedence. We must respect each other as a Solomon Islands that is united together; one country, one people and one nation and we must live together. This is very important.

As we now know all too well, these three pillars of peace, development and respect for human rights, respect for each other underpin the respect for the rule of law. I want to drive that fact straight on. Our country with its diverse languages and diverse cultures, there is no difficulty for us to live together. We just have to respect and appreciate each other. We must follow those who know best, that is the only way. In my heart and belief as a Leader representing my constituency, I believe that that is the only thing. I have no fear about RAMSI leaving because I believe in my heart, soul and spirit that I will work together with the 50 Members of Parliament to move this country forward. United in peace and harmony.

Our downward spiral into what is now commonly referred to as the ethnic tension was fanned by our cultural differences and socio-depression. I already covered that. Let us learn from the past mistakes, we owe that to our children and grandchildren. Many of our children today were born during the last fourteen years, merely toddlers when RAMSI arrived on our shores. RAMSI is all they know. For them RAMSI is the law and order, peace and chance for economic development. RAMSI to them is about friendship. Colleague Leaders, our children want us to maintain our country in peace and harmony. As soon as RAMSI leaves we must step up and work with them. I join the Prime Minister and other colleagues to call on all of us to work together.

I would like to thank the thousands of our neighbors who lend their hands in support for us. Solomon Islands should conjure memories of life-long friendship through the highs and lows of the last fourteen years. I, on behalf of my people of North Vella, also join the Prime Minister and colleagues here in paying tribute to the ultimate sacrifice paid by the six RAMSI personnel who gave their lives for the cause of peace on our shores over the last fourteen years. I thank their families and loved ones from the bottom of my heart.

In my travel abroad as Foreign Affairs Minister, I have always been astounded by the good will for Solomon Islands from the International Community. Many of our international partners are willing to support us move forward. Solomon Islands does not have any external enemies. We do not have any enemies overseas. We are friends with them. As stated by the Prime Minister, history shows that we ourselves have been our own enemies. We ourselves have the power to remake Solomon Islands into the happy isles we all want. We are the captain of our own destiny. The future is bright and I hope it remains undimmed. Let me now conclude by saying as a Christian country, let us thank and give all the glory and honor back to our Creator, the one true Prince of Peace, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While

we may have strayed, His faithfulness endures forever. May God bless the Pacific Region and may God bless Solomon Islands.

**Hon. STANLEY SOFU** (*East Kwaio—Minister for Police, National Security and Correctional Services*) (11:54): I also want to join the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and those who have spoken, to also acknowledge the presence of important dignitaries in the public gallery. I wish to also join others in singing the song or the chorus of acknowledging the Prime Minister for seeing fit to move this motion to allow us to contribute.

Thank you for the opportunity given to me to speak on this very important motion for RAMSI's end of mission. It is also incumbent for me as the Minister responsible for Peace National Security and Correctional Services to likewise share the gratifying sentiments on behalf of my Ministerial staff, including serving officers of both the Police and the Correctional Services organization and my good people of East Kwaio Constituency, which I represent in this Honorable House.

It is indeed a profound sense of appreciation now to reflect on the RAMSI delivery of the Mission accomplished since its insertion and intervention into Solomon Islands some 14 years ago. The time frame of RAMSI mission in the country may not seem long since the country have continued to enjoy guaranteed peace and stability that once enjoyed prior to the dark period in our history.

When one would recall that gloomy and lowest moment in our history of 2003, when our day to day life normal seem no longer being enjoyed, where public disorder and lawlessness, economic instability where private sector, business houses slow down, public hospitals and clinical services stopped to function as usual. Lack of funds to pay for both public servants and service delivery to our people which all these negative slowdown has negatively impacted on the Solomon Islands national economy. This ailing economic situation then left the fertile state of this country to the mercy of a good Samaritan who wishes to intervene to salvage Solomon Islands which at that time was believed to be moving towards the verge of collapsing. Lawlessness and public disorder was seen everywhere within the communities especially within main urban centers. These were signs of uncertainty proving sense of insecurities amongst communities and further signals bleak state of affairs for a small economic country such as Solomon Islands. Though diverse once united by our forefathers since the colonial era where diversity through intermarriage, tolerance for religion, ethnicity, culture, race also merge well without much tension.

Following invitation by the Solomon Islands Government with endorsement from the Pacific Islands Forum Solomon Islands welcomed RAMSI in the early hours of 24<sup>th</sup> July 2003 when Australia led the first peace keeping mission to Solomon Islands.

Most people who have witnessed the arrivals at Honiara International Airport can still recall very well the joyous moment visibly noted from the huge welcoming crowd with joys, tears and smile all over the face of our people, especially children woman and elderly including those listening on airwaves who have prayed for answers for peace intervention from a friend indeed. Here with the gift mission an ultimate mandate to restore peace with the sole necessary motto of 'helpem fren'.

The early part of 14 years mission was not easy alignment and merge for RAMSI in most sectors as one may think. With wisdom to listen and learn, the RAMSI Mission has gradually captured the inside of the lives and feeling of our people and understanding issues from local perspectives. RAMSI Mission Officers began to mix well and build positive ties with the locals and this was observed well down to most rural communities of Solomon Islands. Collectively from everybody involved that our RAMSI serving officers, the whole matter for RAMSI success of manning peace and uniting the communities stability has begun.

As years have gone by, community feedbacks on RAMSI performance has been overwhelming drawing attention from the major players around the world on peace building. RAMSI model was observed and studies were undertaken by various organisations and interest groups of the vulnerability and achievements made.

One could relate that RAMSI as a Pacific invented model where stakeholders, and donor partners may wish to adopt the model framework regionally or internationally if or when required. It is a law enforcement or capability building model where collective expertise from all regional countries working together by sharing knowledge and skills recruiting to a successful mission accomplished for this beautiful nation.

May I turn to the specific work RAMSI has supported the Ministry of Police National Security and Correctional Services. At the inception of RAMSI in 2003, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the Correctional Services of Solomon Islands were both in disarray. Numerous efforts were made to try and stabilize these two core law enforcement agencies for Public Order. Mr. Speaker, the standard of discipline was at all times low for both the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the Correctional Services of Solomon Islands. Rebuilding back of these two organizations becomes the top priority for RAMSI. The intention of the Participating Police Force to support the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force with advisors and Commissioners of Police. Similarly, the Australian aid for providing technical advisors and Commissioner for CSSI to support the restrengthening and capacity development has become so crucial for stabilizing again these two organizations including capacity development and support rendered to the Ministry.

Today the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is a new organization. More than two thirds of the Police Force have been recruited since the tension era. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force under each Commissioner of Police has a strong and experienced team of senior officers responsible for driving the organization forward. We are recruiting new police officers for a new future with 70 bright new recruits currently at the police academy. Half of the new recruits are women, reflecting a modern police force that must represent the community it serves.

There are now 1,400 officers in the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. The Government has increased funding in recent years to strengthen the police force and build its capability to deliver the required services. With the departure of RAMSI and the increase commitment made by the Solomon Islands Government, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force today is well prepared to undertake the followings.

- Respond to emerging crime threats through the Crime Prevention Strategy.
- Uphold national security by monitoring and protecting the integrity of Solomon Islands borders, infrastructures, government institutions, industry and natural resources.
- Predict, deter and disperse a series occurrences of civil disorder and rioters behavior through intelligence led policing.
- Manage and maintain a professional police training academy that can independently recruit new police, design and deliver training programs and provides specialist training and professional development opportunity for these future leaders.
- Manage and maintain efficient and professional corporate support functions that can sustain its front line and national security responsibilities throughout the country.
- Manage, maintain and conduct complex investigations with independence and professionalism.

Sentiments expressed by my colleague Member of Parliament for Aoke/Langalanga in his debate in relation to police are very important sentiments. The Police is fully prepared to takeover in maintaining law and order when RAMSI leaves.

Significant investment has been made in both the current and future capability of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force through initiatives such as construction and refurbishment of police buildings throughout the country. Fleet improvements, including motor vehicles and maritime capabilities. The state's limited rearmament of 125 officers from the Police Response Team and Close Personal Protection Team to protect national security and high office holders.

The finalization of the cost of Police Report and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force Capability Plan.

The evidence of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force capability can be measured as they are responsible of the delivery of frontline policing services in Honiara since 2011 and across the entire nation since 2013. The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force has plans for and supported major security events including the Pacific Islands Forum and the Solomon Islands Games. Moreover, this week more than 300 officers will be deployed for the security operations of the RAMSI week. This week security operations is 100% planned and led by the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force officers.

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force introduced random breath testing in 2016 and supported an extensive public awareness campaign on the risk of drink driving and its associated penalties. In 2016 alone, more than 165 successful prosecutions were made under the revised drink and driving legislation.

In September 2016, the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the PPF supported operation rendered safe a multinational military contingent to recover and destroy unexploded ordinances in four provinces where the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force demonstrated its world class ordinance disposal capability. Over 25,000 ordinance items were recovered and destroyed during the operation.

The Royal Solomon Islands Police Force also led efforts to collect and destroy illegal firearms to make Solomon Islands safer. The recent fire amnesty which was conducted between 22<sup>nd</sup> May to 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017 netted 18 weapons and over 2000 rounds of ammunitions. These are but few examples of the successes of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force which are due to the support of RAMSI over the past 14 years.

In this endeavor, I would like to sincerely thank RAMSI for re-strengthening these two core law enforcement organizations that this country would lean on for future law and order stability.

At the outset, I would like to express these gratifying sentiments of appreciation. First, I would like to thank the Australian and New Zealand Governments for the leading role taken to fund RAMSI Mission which led to the RAMSI success. To the Australia and New Zealand people and government, thank you very much for the support rendered which enabled Solomon Islands to return to normalcy. I particularly would like to thank the Australian and New Zealand tax payers for funding of the mission. Our people and our government owed you so much for this support in friendship and no words can express our deepest appreciation.

I would like to also thank our other Pacific Island states who have provided personnel to serve in RAMSI contingents both current and previous serving officers. No more words can express our gratitude to you. You know the Pacific way of resolving local conflicts and have provided tremendous contribution to our fellow officers who have been merged so well to serve our people rebuilding by communities, families and individuals to once again enjoy peace and guaranteed prosperity.

To all our RAMSI serving contingents, both current and previous, we know it is not easy to leave loved ones back home and come to our country to serve us. However, with unselfish and great determination of rebuilding Solomon Islands society, you have all accomplished the intended mission of bringing back peace and economic stability once again in our happy isles.

Before resuming my seat, let me take this opportunity to make a few remarks on behalf of my people of Malaita. Since the Premier of Malaita cannot be here to express his words of appreciation, I stand here on behalf of the Malaita Provincial Government, the people of Malaita and especially my peace loving people of East Kwaio - the chiefs, church leaders, women's group and those who are not able to thank RAMSI today, I stand on their behalf to thank RAMSI. As I have already stated in my speech, if RAMSI had not come, I do not think the children of East Kwaio will enjoy education today in other provinces. Also men and women of Kwaio would not be able to come over to work here in the capital, but the presence of RAMSI in Solomon Islands has enabled my people to freely move and do whatever they want to support their families.

As the responsible minister for police, national security, and correctional services, may I now conclude by assuring key donor partners and supporting friends that the Solomon Islands Government will continue uphold the police, national security and correctional services re-strengthening policy framework formally established including other security policy frameworks which will contribute towards long lasting peace, security and stability of our people and our country as a whole.

Long live RAMSI, God bless RAMSI and God bless all of us and the best future for our country. I resume my seat and I do support the motion.

*Parliament resumes*

**Mr RICK HOUENIPWELA** (*Small Malaita*) (02:20): Thank Mr. Speaker and I thank you for your indulgence to ask me to speak first this afternoon. I would like to join the others in thanking the Prime Minister for bringing this report, the Report that the government or joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14-year intervention.

I would like to add the voice of the people Small Malaita constituency on the debate on this important topic. We subscribed to the many words of appreciation and gratitude that have been expressed by the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and others that have spoken earlier on the Motion.

I also would like to acknowledge the presence of the various dignitaries, including the RAMSI's Special Coordinators both former and the current who are here in the Public Gallery.

Sir, the mandate of RAMSI is well articulated on page 17 of the report but most Solomon Islanders think of RAMSI as the army and the police. I think it is also right as well because it is the most visible of all RAMSI components and that mandate is remarkable- the mandate that RAMSI came and was assign to do.

It was a dramatic one from inception to the day of the arrival of the first contingent of military personnel in Solomon Islands. I recall, I was in my house in Panatina, East Honiara on that morning. It was about midnight that we started to hear the aeroplanes coming in and they came in, in loads and loads, of course bringing military personnel and hardware landing at Henderson. I recall that I used to have a wireless radio in my house to communicate with those back at home. Of course that was before the advent of the cell phone. When I put on my radio wireless we were communicating with East Choiseul and South Choiseul and South Guadalcanal and Rennell and Bellona and everybody are calling in wanting to know what was happening. Some people cried while we were talking. This is the expression of the jubilation and the rejoicing that everybody experienced at that time.

Some people do not know what was happening at Henderson; those in Malaita and the outskirts of Honiara but there was definitely expression of joy even on that day when the planes landed at Henderson. I think it was a Thursday and some of us did not go to work. We went to Henderson and there were hundreds and hundreds of us; children, women and men. The following day everybody lined up at the Mendana Avenue to watch the warships landed at the wharf bringing military personnel and hardware. It was like watching a war movie, except this was real. They did not shoot at us but we were excited to see them.

The restoration of law and order was of course the priority of the mandate and that is why everybody became very familiar with RAMS- they even use term to refer to motor vehicles and helicopters and speedboats. People did not refer to the 'police' as police but as RAMSI. When there is a situation to be addressed by the police, people refer to them as RAMSI and of course police action under RAMSI was swift.



I think some people may not realize or even appreciate that there are other mandates under RAMSI and I refer to four of them, which are articulated and listed on page 17 of the report:

- i) to rebuild the machinery of government and strengthen government institutions.
- ii) to stabilize and restore government finances.
- iii) to restore the country's economy and promote longer term economic recovery.

It is through these three mandates that there were hundreds of RAMSI personnel serving from the early stages of the mission right through to the end, even when both military and the police components were scaled down.

Today we come to recognize and express our gratitude to them and their governments for their contributions and for an assignment, which I believe RAMSI has delivered on all its four mandates. The mission could not have delivered if it were to address only one aspect of our problems. The period from 1998 to 2003 saw the entire country descending fast into near anarchy, beginning from the center, political government and at its core. In fact the then Prime Minister was under house arrest and for that period we had a government with its hands tied behind its back. The militants were the de facto government. There was no rule of law and security went as far as is determined by those who have the gun. Many people, including some in this chamber have had first-hand experiences with RAMSI operations in different capacities. Some of us were dealing with various issues pertaining to the aftermath of the outbreak of the ethnic violence in 2000. In my case, I was heading one of our institutions – the Central Bank of Solomon Islands, 5 years before the arrival of RAMSI and remained there for the first 5 years of RAMSI's 14 years in Solomon Islands.

In that role, I found myself with a small group of other officials from the Ministry of Finance and Treasury, and Ministry of Development Planning and Aid Coordination, faced with this enormous task of dealing with the most dreadful financial circumstances in our country's history. I agree with the Member for Aoke/Langalanga that in our rejoicing, we must not forget where we were before July 2003. I will be commenting only on the financial and economic situation since that is what I am familiar with.

In that regard, let me give you a sketch of the situation for the period from 1998 to 2003. Government debt was at its highest. The debt to GDP ratio was about 50 percent among the highest in the world and well above our sustainability levels. The government was unable to repay its borrowings or lending institutions both domestic and international closed their doors on the government. The government

was running huge fiscal deficits, even normal payrolls was often in arrears for two pay periods on average.

Government service orders were as good as scrap paper. No supplier could accept government LPOs, everybody demanded cash before delivery- I mean hard cash and not cheques. Treasury operations were basic hand to mouth. Treasury was overtaken by the culture of cronyism and patronage and it was managed by everyone except the Accountant General. Armed men would know how much cash came into treasury even before any officials know. Authorizing officials were coerced and forced to make payments, invariably the Accountant General had to be removed from his house and on some occasions from his hospital bed, because he was sick; to sign or authorized payments.

Government cheques were not worth even the paper they were written on. Cheques were post-dated to when inflows were expected. Hundreds, even thousands of these cheques were out in public hands that cannot be cashed, the coffers were literally empty. Ministry of Finance officials were always on the run; the Permanent Secretary often would escape to my office just to write a letter or just to think, and there was no time to think or plan anything. Government services were grinding down to zero levels.

Meanwhile, the Solomon Islands' economy was under severe strain and quickly descending. Domestic inflation soared to above 15percent, the country's external reserves were worth only up to 2 weeks cover, foreign exchange rationing and invoice matching was the order of the day. Commercial banks used whatever foreign exchange they earned to pay whatever invoices they could pay.

By the end of the year 2000, the Solomon Islands' economy growth plunged and took a nose dive of a whopping 14percent. The lowest Solomon Islands has ever been in its recorded economic history.

This was the situation for three and half years to July 2003, when RAMSI arrived in Solomon Islands. During that period addressing government finances was like trying to climb the slippery side of a black hole. As you can see for that small group of people, we desperately needed help from outside, from outside of that black hole. And as you can appreciate that explains why we went into jubilation on the morning of July 24<sup>th</sup> 2003.

The RAMSI effect on government finances was swift. We started by systematically reaching agreements with the cooperate sector who withheld normal tax dues for a number of years. What was happening was those companies did not want to pay tax and for only one reason; if we pay tax and if you do not fix anything then we do not want to pay tax. We could not hold them to the law because there is no law. We strengthen collection of the goods and services tax, tax exemptions and

remissions. Suddenly revenue soared more than a hundredfold as reported currently without raising taxes. Without raising taxes annual tax revenues are well over 3 billion dollars annually compared with less than 300 million dollars collected in 2002.

We also addressed the Solomon Islands debt situation as a priority. Negotiations took nearly 2 years when in 2005 under the Honiara Club arrangement, Australia repaid all outstanding debts arrears to the Multilaterals, that not only brought the government debt repayment to current but also it opened up bit of credit windows to the government.

Also another Honiara Club arrangement, millions of dollars of penalty charges by domestic lenders were forgiven; all domestics were rescheduled, and a new formula for debt repayment was agreed and put into law. With that excellent performance on revenues and consistent good debt management the Government was able to repay nearly \$190 million dollars in 2015 which brought government debt level significantly low. In fact with these actions, the debt to GDP ratio for Solomon Islands now stands at 8percentage one of the best ratings by world standards.

As regards inflation domestic prices have been stabilised at about 5 percent for nearly 5 years after RAMSI arrival, and in recent times inflation has decelerated to negative levels for past almost 12 months.

On the external front since RAMSI arrival, export trade has been performing so well and aided by significant donor inflows has led to increasing levels of foreign reserves which are now equivalent to more than 10 months of imports cover compared to what we had - 2 weeks in 2000—2003.

More generally the economy saw a significant turnaround in a very short period since the arrival of RAMSI. At the end of 2003, growth rate was back in positive territory registering 6 percent growth that year and by 2004 the economy was growing at 8 percent. The following 5 years growth average 5 percent. It is now moderated somewhat to currently around 3 percent.

Sir, I can go on and demonstrate more examples of the achievements which some are listed in the report on pages 50-54 - of the achievements that are being made of the government finances and the economy as the result of RAMSI coming in. No doubt these significant results were possible due to the management tools and skills passed on by experts provided through the intervention, mostly as a result of the reforms under taken. But also I should mention that importantly, the restoration of security and confidence in the country following RAMSI arrival was a very important factor. The presence of RAMSI instilled security, peace and confidence, the corner stones of a growing economy. I however still have great concerns that even on the eve of RAMSI departure, we are seeing signs of the significant gains

eroding or at risk of being undermined. For example, I imagine we should now have a very well trained and highly disciplined force—I mean the police. I am very encouraged by the Ministers assurances to the House that the RSIPF is well prepared and ready to take its role when RAMSI leaves. But my people in Small Malaita the rural constituency of Small Malaita would still long to see that reflected in a RSIPF presence at Maka Police Station. We are eager to have something more lasting as the result of RAMSI.

In our current court system, I expect we now have very well trained and highly skilled men and women to administer the law without favor or fear, but I hear of certain court cases that could not proceed because they involve people in high places or with good money to offer prosecution witnesses.

In the financial sector, I am very concerned with rumors that the public financial management act is being considered for amendment or even repealing because it is an obstruction to services delivery. I am very hopeful the government would not do that, I think it is placing the blame at the wrong door.

And on good governance reforms I am concerned that a number of important bills including the Whistle Blower, Anticorruption Bill, Ombudsman Bill have not been dealt with by parliament yet. I urge the government to live up to its promise to this country to bring these legislations for approval by parliament.

On the management of government finances, it is very worrying that we now see signs of the management practices we use to see in the period 1998 – 2000 are showing up at Treasury. It appears that cronyism and patronage is showing up its evil head again. Consequently for the past months the cash flow situation continues to deteriorate and there appears to be no logical explanation for this.

The four going examples which there are many more, would suggest that we Solomon Islanders have to have something more than just being grateful for RAMSI. We need to have something that would take us beyond the RAMSI effect. We know that no amount of training and skills transfer can substitute for the integrity and dedication of the people involved.

The relevance of all the reforms undertaken and the strength of our institutions are as good as the commitment by the people running these very institutions. The laws and regulations we pass since RAMSI came are as effective as the people who administer them.

So we may have made huge gains since RAMSI came but without the will and the commitment to continue to build on and consolidate these gains, we may lose them sooner than we know. It is the people of this nation that must take up the call of duty. That responsibility to sustain the gains made through RAMSI. I believe this

is where leadership at the political level is very critical. We in this honorable house have a duty to make it work, to make it happen. On that note, I think the observation made by Frankal, Madraiwiwi and Okole in the report, "the RAMSI decade, a review of the RAMSI 2003 and 2013" is appropriate. And I quote;

"The task of reform and of shaping suitable institutions will not hold when RAMSI finally departs, but this will depend very clear on the clarity of political will and on the prospects for responsible government".

What I am saying here is we must show responsibility and act responsibly. We have to have the political will and commitment to continue with those reforms including political reforms; electoral reforms; land reforms; economic reforms and so on, that will ensure the gains by RAMSI are sustain in the long term.

Before I resume my sit, allow me to acknowledge and commend a few people and groups for their part in facilitating and ensuring RAMSI a success. There a too many to mention but allow me to mention a few. First, the former Prime Minister Sir Allan Kemakeza who's cabinet had initiated the request for the intervention. Secondly, the former Governor General, Sir Father In Lapilli for taking the step in making the formal step to make the request to the government of Australia and the Pacific Islands on behalf of the people of the Solomon Islands. Thirdly, RAMSI would not have been possible without the thousands of Solomon Islands Men and Women in government and in Parliament, in statutory organizations, private sector organization, NGOs and many other groups that toil during those years.

Finally, I join the others to commend and thank the hundreds of men and women from Australia, New Zealand and our other Pacific Islands Member states who have serve through the Mission and gave their tireless efforts helping us return to normalcy over the last 14 years. we salute them and thank them all on this day.

With that, I support the motion and I resume my sit.

**Hon. MANASSEH MAELANGA** (*East Malaita—Minister for Home Affairs*) (02:46): I also like to add my voice on behalf of my people of East Malaita in this very important motion moved by the Prime Minister. I want to thank the honorable Prime Minister for moving this motion today for us to debate on and I want to thank the honorable Prime Minister and those who have already contributed to this motion.

Firstly, I want to thank RAMSI's Special Coordinator and the previous Special Coordinators who are also here in the Parliament Gallery. I want to thank them for

their time to come and listen to this debate today. I also want to thank the previous governments and the Leaders who bring the Facilitation Act which enables RAMSI to come during the time we face the difficulties and we have seen that peace has now prevailed in our country.

I want to thank the leaders of the previous governments who have done this. I Also want to thank church leaders, the chiefs and elders within our communities for their support during the time when RAMSI is present in the country. I think they have done a very good job by working alongside with RAMSI during the crisis in the country. Since RAMSI came we see normalcy return to our country.

I want to point out three things which I see as important and pleased about with the intervention of RAMSI. We see that law and order, judiciary and economic governance and government machinery have all come back to normal. It is an excellent job done by RAMSI and there are no words to express. But to say that on behalf of my people of East Malaita, we are really happy to see peace prevail in our country, and this is because of RAMSI's intervention in the country.

As others have said, I think it is very good history that RAMSI has set in Solomon Islands. It is a history that we can look back on and see how it unfolds. Also, it is a history that might be in the future, this is how we can do in any country if they faced such similar situation. This is a success story of RAMSI in Solomon Islands.

I stand here to thank RAMSI as they will be leaving our country this Thursday, which is their drawdown date. That is why it is important that I declared Thursday a public holiday on behalf of the Government to show our great appreciation of RAMSI's work in our country.

I want to thank the people of Solomon Islands for working together with RAMSI in the country. That working together has made our people to live together in harmony.

I would like to thank the Australian and New Zealand Governments for their support in funding the work of RAMSI in the country.

I would also want to thank all participating regional police from other countries who have combined under RAMSI to work here in the country. I want to thank their governments for allowing them to be part of the RAMSI group to help our country.

As RAMSI departs, we as leaders and people of this country have realised something that what they will leave behind with us must be upheld and done for the betterment of this country. As the Member of Parliament for Small Malaita said,

I think the Government is working on these issues. Any governments will also do the same for the good of its people of Solomon Islands.

I think the DCC Government will continue to implement the policies in ensuring our people are looked when RAMSI leaves this country.

I would also like to thank RAMSI for the help it has given to the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. I think RAMSI has given very professional and high standard training to our Police Force. I am really happy to see improvement of our Police Force at this time. As the Minister for Police and Correctional Services already said, the Police Force is well prepared to do its work in looking after law and order in this country.

I am very happy to see the training and the discipline our Police have gone through from the trainings that RAMSI has provided to them. What I would like to see is for them to continue with the good work they have been doing so far and to continue with their discipline. I know the Government very much supports the work of the Police by supporting the Ministry of Police and Correctional Services here in our country with its capability plan. I think the Government really supports it. As we all know, it is the main ministry that looks after law and order in our country. I am very happy with how RAMSI trained officers of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. That is one thing I would like to thank RAMSI for.

I also would like to thank RAMSI for its community policing work. We can see community policing in the villages and communities. RAMSI personnel went down to our communities and do policing work. That is a well done job which I would like to see continued by our own Royal Solomon Islands Police Force. I want to see them go down to the rural areas. In some very remote areas where police was not able to reach in the past, but during the time of RAMSI we see the police reach those places, and so we need to continue with this policing work in the Ministry of Police and Correctional Services as well as in other ministries that have programs to do with our people.

There are many things that we can talk about. Overall, I am standing here to salute RAMSI for its work here in our country. As they will leave on Thursday, the withdrawal of RAMSI, as I have said, it is a good thing that we can look at for our future, not only for Solomon Islands but for other countries within the Pacific as well.

I think it is now 3pm and my five minutes time has lapse. I would just like to thank the other speakers who have already spoken in thanking RAMSI. Before I forget, I would like thank RAMSI officers of other countries. I think they are not here at this time because they may have returned to their countries. I would like to thank them for their services in our country and for the time they spent here. As we know, they

leave their families back home and come here to work in Solomon Islands for a number of years before going back.

I would like to thank them for the work they have done here. Those are the short remarks I would like to share on the motion moved by the Prime Minister.

With those, once again, on behalf of my people of East Malaita, we are really happy and we thank RAMSI for a job well-done in our country. With that I support the Motion. Thank you very much.

**Hon. JIMMY LUSIBAEA** (*North Malaita—Minister for Infrastructure Development*) (14:59): First of all, let me thank the Honorable Prime Minister for moving this very important Motion on the floor of this honorable House. It is customary that the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands End of Mission Report is also brought to the floor of this honorable House for deliberation in the same manner as the Facilitation Act, which guided the Operation Helpem Fren in the past 14 years was also passed in this honorable House.

As we are all fully aware, the invaluable service and support under the RAMSI partnership ends as of this weekend.

The Motion gives me the opportunity to thank on behalf of my people of North Malaita Constituency, the To'obaita speaking people, our chiefs, church leaders, women leaders and ordinary men and women to say thank you to all the countries of the region that came to our assistance during the darkest hour of our nation. Your participation in this great RAMSI contingent 2003 to 2017 must be applauded by every Solomon Islanders for a great job well-done.

To the families of the six personnel who died in their line of duty while serving in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, I would just like to quote a verse from the Holy Bible which says: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God" (Matt 5: 1-10).

The Mission has restored civil order, strengthen the machinery of the government, enhancement of justice and the legal sector, including new court houses, new police stations, police housing, correctional facilities, improving the capability of the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force and the rebuilding of our economy, which was near failed state before the Mission arrived in 2003.

In the same way our Prime Minister said in one of his speeches last week on his story relating to the intervention of RAMSI to our country, I also have my personal story intertwined in the 14 years of RAMSI's Mission to Solomon Islands. To that, I would like to leave my short story with RAMSI's End of Mission Report here on the floor of this honorable House. I was arrested by RAMSI on the 16<sup>th</sup> October 2003 and was imprisoned for six years until my release in 2009. The people of this nation,



the region and the wider world thought that when I was arrested, it was the end of my short story as an individual or a son of this beautiful country Solomon Islands, not realizing that God had a plan for my life then, and now I am standing on the floor of this Honorable House.

The arrest and the imprisonment I suffered with great pain and humiliation has impacted me enormously. I toiled through it for six years of the 14 years of the Mission here in Solomon Islands. Today my story is the same as the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob in the Holy Bible seems to be manifested. I can stand tall here on this day today in this Honorable House to say that what I went through in my personal journey will become a part of RAMSI's short history of its intervention in our beautiful country of Solomon Islands.

Achieving the restoration of our people's freedom, achieving true freedom from poverty and freedom to realize our full potential as a nation and people, to do that, we must learn to forgive and let go of the past. I strongly believe that the only way to walk forward together as one people and one nation to our promised land, the only way to ensure our survival as a people and nation is to follow the pathway of reconciliation .

So where do we go from here? I believe that in order for us to maintain the 'Happy Isles' that has now being restored by RAMSI as a young democratic country above all fragilities in the conflict or as a post-conflict nation, it is prudent that we continue to seek the basis for a sustainable process; peace and stability that can only come from reconciliation, dialogue and tolerance and a common vision for the future that will allow our national conscience on fundamental areas for the development of our country.

In conclusion, we cannot effectively build our nation with high petition politics in the future. We have to look at including the Cabinet Members on both sides of the House. This will not only allow us to make sure that our government has the best people or our small nation has to offer, but it also promotes national cohesion and stability, not only in this honorable House, but reflects unity among us people throughout our country and population.

This move maybe unusual but it is going to work for Solomon Islands in securing lasting peace. A change in perception leads to a change in attitude which leads to a change in behavior which leads to change in our country and into the wider world. Let us all be the change you would like to see in this beautiful country, as peace starts from within and peace is the key ingredient to happiness. Let me leave with you this popular quote from Mahatma Gandhi,

"Happy is when what you think, what you say, and what you do are in harmony".

To the outgoing RAMSI contingents, we thank you for restoring hope and harmony in the minds of our people in Solomon Islands. With these few remarks, I support the Motion and resume my seat.

**Mr DOUGLAS ETE** (*East Honiara*) (03:07): I thank the Prime Minister for bringing this paper 19 to be discussed and debated. At this point it is with great honor and distinction that I rise to say thanks and say farewell to our most important partner RAMSI and its endeavor over the last 14 years helping a friend in need when this country needed it most. Words cannot express or way to measure my utmost gratitude towards the New Zealand Government, Australian Government and the other 15 Regional Pacific Island countries that sent their men and women in uniform to serve here in this country.

Before I begin let me first give you an insight of the intensity of the violence of 2000 leading up to the point our leaders then decided to sanction an international force under the international facilitation act passed in Parliament under the auspices of the Biketawa Agreement.

My discourse today is from a political perspective because I believe that what has happened between 1999-2003 when RAMSI came was a direct failure of political leadership in the country. A direct application of divide and rule in this country. As you know politics could be a major component of problem solving in a society or a hub for bad governance and bad society.

At this point I am going to share some thinking of our leaders before Independence and before RAMSI came. What have our provincial Premiers thought of? What did the government at that time think of? And that line of thinking would give us our perspective at this time in the departure of RAMSI. Where are we heading to and that this the picture that I'd like to paint.

I have thoughts that I would like share and I am going to give examples of the thinking compounded within the realm of intensity of why RAMSI would come. That is in page 12 of the report and that is where I am going to start my story. Why RAMSI? the year was 2000, the Prime Minister at that time -it was the Solomon Islands Alliance for Change Government, was served 3 votes of No Confidence. Around April of 1999, the Government accepted to look into the Bona fide demands of Guadalcanal people.

Despite the Government's willingness to do it, the intensity of problems surrounding the island of Guadalcanal kept on going and didn't stop. Militia violence at that time began to escalate. At that time too SIAC Government had to deal with displaced people on Guadalcanal and the Western Province.

Mr. Speaker, option taken by government at that time- the political line of thinking that time was. We do not want to deal with illegal groupings doing atrocities and illegal activities. They have to disband themselves before we can negotiate, that is the thinking of the government at that time. I share this idea here because we are going to make decisions after RAMSI leaves this country: I am bringing up real facts today. The government's original quest for a lasting solution was to the commonwealth. The government ask for 50 UN Peace Keepers instead, we receive 20 peace monitors and they came here. That was the first trial any government had with an international force, they gave us 20 Peace Monitors. Government continue to seek solutions to the increased tension. At this point a new group was and was called the Malaita Eagle Force(MEF). It was formed as a retaliatory measure of defense against aggressiveness and atrocities caused by the other warring party- Isatambu Military Force(IMF).

This was according to a confidential caucus paper, G66 of 2023 March of 2000. At that time New Zealand Government provided a meeting venue for the warring parties, a tripartite meeting with the government. I say this because a lot of people listening do not know about the ethnic violence that had happen in this country. I want to put a preface to it. At that time the government knew the problems within the police force itself. That was the reason one of the first things that RAMSI came to do is to build up a better police force in this country.

The commissioner at that time that worked really hard was Mr. Frank Short. And issues relating to law and order and the maintenance of law and order in this country had eroded. Around the same time, the Government had to deal with a spilt over effect of this violence in other provinces. Leaders from Western provinces at that time including the Premier had worked hard to curb the situation there, and finally a communique was signed between the premier of Malaita Province and the Western Province.

Let me point this out that while ethnic violence in Honiara continues, plans were made that; if this country is like Iraq whereby everything is destroyed. Plans were made by leaders and submissions were made to the government at that time to open and upgrade Munda Airport and allow Noro Seaport to handle all trade and international transactions. The premier at that time and leaders at that time allotted lot 116 on Kolombangara for a University.

I present these facts here because it is the truth about violence. Lot 325 on Kolombangara Island is the second port for transshipment; consider the Gizo hill for a five start hotel and an international airport at Baeroko; Noro dry dock to be persuade by government and to be funded by government; extension of town boundaries in Gizo and Noro; consider an oil refinery at Barora on New Georgia at

Bat harbour; consider Rendova harbour at Ziata to be Agricultural area; create a town ship at Lofang in Shortlands to base immigration, customs and security.

On this side of our country people are also voicing their agendas. The Malaita Provincial government said we want independence. We want a road to cross from Auki to Atori in the East Malaita. We want north road to be tar sealed from Auki to north road. You either strengthen the Provincial government system or we become an independent country. The Bina harbour trade shipment port and township is what we want to see that happen. That was the mindset of the Leaders of the country; the loining factory at Suava bay; the Fiu hydro to energize a township; the Auluta and Waisis oil project. No successive government has this projects in mind but that was the thinking of the people prior to the ethnic violence.

The six industrial parks around Malaita: the International airport at Harifafa; the Kilu'ufi Hospital—taking into account 1,037,000 in population the Kiluufi Hospital has been an unfulfilled promise from many governments in the past. I am just bringing up the thought of leaders of this country that we loved so much.

I am not digging the past and, destroy, destruct and divide our society and people. I am only emphasizing the point that ethnic violence only brings a state down and divides citizens of a state.

The Guadalcanal people demands, either you go out from our land now. I decide to talk today because the violence was heavily on Honiara and the people in Honiara will feel its consequences so as a member for Honiara allow me to mention these things.

During those days as well, the government had strong evidence that the ethnic violence was aggravated by politician and the technology of 'Solomon Mafia' was first coined. The names was brought up in the cabinet paper, the name of the people. At the time three former Prime Ministers were implicated in this.

There were several communiques Sir; the Buala Accord; Auki Comunique; the Panatina Agreement and finally the Townsville Peace Treaty Agreement in Australia supported by the Australian Government, the New Zealand Government and the Commonwealth. This TPA, including all the accords were important landmarks to which succeeding Prime Ministers and political parties did little to address from 2000 to date.

I have been in Politics for seven years but I see little within these seven years in terms of driving towards facilitating the clauses within the TPA. So the time bomb is still ticking. We can talk on the floor of Parliament but the reality is not here in Parliament. Reality remains outside. This is because TPA sets the basis to which

any Government must make directions. TPA sets the platform of the thinking of the leaders of this country regarding the violence.

It is my intention to talk about these demands today. In terms of RAMSI, I will only thank the good work of RAMSI in the country. I want to remind us of all the thinking's so that we can build a strong Government that drives the hopes of the people of this country towards state building in order for our country to be progressive, sustainable and a safe State to live in.

I uncovered in some of the signed and authentic green papers, that the people of this country want a change of system—they want a change of system from the current to a more palatable or adaptable system. They are still waiting for it and next year it will be 40 years.

It is difficult with our Heterogeneous nation society with 70 different languages, customs and cultures. They wanted to bring us back to a system that will be more touching to the rural community, that is the thinking of the people. They want a two tier system that has 10 provincial Governors and a provincial congress and they also want 50 constituency congress. These 10 Governors will also sit in Parliament. I think that Bill was written in 1995 by Rohiny when she was with the Attorney General chambers. The Bill concludes the thinking of a lot of people in our country.

The people want to see the RCDF narrowed down and one of the ideas that was floated at that time was that the family business loan component—one third of all the MPs allocations should go into a scheme somewhere for people to access through loan.

They also like to see the alienated land bill, customary land bill Mr. Speaker, where it is tangle up inside the successive government's policy but it did not happened.

The decentralization bill of 2000 was already drafted. In this bill you have separation of powers and we will share the revenues that we collect—it is something like the devolution order.

The people also like to develop a peoples' commercial and investment bank for this country which belongs to the indigenous people. At that time the people wanted a lot of things. Have we done that, have this Chamber or the Government contemplated around these areas in terms of injecting and writing up policies? This is a question which I am asking Mr. Speaker.

Malaitans say, they do not want a the Federation, that is why I opted that any government that wants to establish a new system must make a national referendum so that all of us vote on it like the "BREXIT", British exit from Europe. This is to ensure that everyone votes it so that all of us see that it is true that the people want it.

In 2002 the Chairman of Caucus wanted to suspend the new Forest Act. He submitted a Paper to Cabinet to suspend it. The reason being that there is an ethnic violence, and the year between 2000 and 2003, approximately \$700million was lost in transfer pricing and so forth Mr. Speaker

*Point of order!*

**The SPEAKER:** Honorable Member of Parliament for East Honiara, can you keep to the motion please.

**Mr DOUGLAS ETE:** I am running this down, but I wanted to put a prefix to my talk. Those were the reasons behind why RAMSI came. All the aggressions that boils down to June 2000 incident where the Joint Parliamentary take over.

So Mr. Speaker, why does RAMSI appear on this page (12) here, my question is, why RAMSI? Because we cannot handle the situations alone, we need someone to come inside here. So I will further summarize it by saying, the Prime Minister then led a delegation to the UNGA and met with some academics in Nadi. I was there at that time and the question the Prime Minister paused was, what was the alternative of RAMSI? Given the situation of our country where the finance has been exploited and rampaged by the Militia, what is the option? If anyone of you have an option, please tell me now? that was in Nadi. That situation of our country made mention of in Nadi, points to bad Leadership of our country. We want to divide and rule. We think that the Motions that we table on No Confidence in the Prime Minister might help our country, it did not help the country at all. At that time the obvious answer was now it is like that. At that time the obvious answer was 'no'.

Let me conclude by saying what do our leaders want in a changing world? What is it that those of us in this chamber want for tomorrow? I believe all of us inside here, listening to all the previous speakers, all of us would want to build this state. How we build this state depends on the politics of who runs the government and its policies.

Mr Speaker, you have reprimanded me and so I will stop here. I still have four pages to go but I will stop here. The challenge is on us as to where we are heading and how we would want to see this country in the future. All in all, my profound appreciation and gratitude on behalf of the people of Honiara is to thank RAMSI for coming. We want to thank RAMSI from the bottom of our hearts. With those I support the Motion.

**Mr CONNELLY SANDAKABATU** (*North West Choiseul*) (15:35): Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to briefly contribute to this very important Motion. The motion is as stated by the Prime Minister that Parliament resolves itself

into a Committee of the Whole House to Consider National Parliament Paper No.19 of 2017, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands 2003 – 2017: A joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14-year intervention.

This is a historical motion that will go down in the history of this country as we bid farewell to a regional setup that has helped this country for the last 14 years. On behalf of my good and peace-loving people of North-West Choiseul constituency, I would like to take this opportunity to thank RAMSI for the work you have done to this country and through it to the people of North-West Choiseul constituency.

To the government and the people of the 15 countries that made up RAMSI, I extend my deepest appreciation and sincerely thank you for your many contributions in ensuring this mission is a successful one and one that allows us as Solomon Islanders to continue to live together.

The reasons why RAMSI came to our shores is a familiar story and I need not go into the details. In the nutshell, it is a regional response to a SOS or a distress call from our leaders for assistance from our neighbors during a time our country was under immense and tremendous trouble. As we all know, RAMSI came and provided stability, and the rest I think is history.

The success of RAMSI in fulfilling the mandate it was set out to achieve is visible, and we all have seen it, know it and a part of it as well. We see the manifestation of these success stories through the cessation of hostility between warring parties, the return of law and order, the resuscitation of our government machinery and others, which others have already mentioned earlier on today.

These are testimonies of a very successful stories, and I can say this with absolute certainty. On the regional scale, this is also a successful story of how our region is able to stand together with the help of our bigger neighbors Australia and New Zealand in dealing with the law and order situation that if not properly contained, surely should have rippling, negative effects through the region as a whole.

Allow me to make a little reflection on the 14 years of RAMSI's existence with us. Reflecting on the 14 years of RAMSI's presence is important so that as a country, Solomon Islands is able to see and shape its future from the experiences we have gone through. During the 14 years of RAMSI's presence, you would agree with me that there were more good things done and a few failures. Many good examples of these success stories have been shared on the floor of this Parliament. Something that we must be thankful to RAMSI for.

We also learn that there were instances that RAMSI should have done a little bit better, like the 2016 April riot. However, the bigger picture to date is a progressive one. One that we should continue to hold on to, and improve with the benefit of

high sight, we are able to see where improvements can be made; improvements that will be beneficial to the sustainability or what have been achieved under RAMSI. The mandate of the Mission, as we all know, is concise and very clear. I believe the mandate was made as a result of the unrest and the effects of the unrest on government machinery.

I am thinking that after 14 years, does the partnership with RAMSI and the government dealt with the fundamental issues that have given rise to the ethnic crisis? Have we? If the answer to this question is in the negative, then looking back, I would say that the mandate of the Mission should have been enlarged to look into the issues that have given rise to the crisis.

One may say that those are issues the people of this country should take on the responsibility to deal with. Of course, I agree totally to that assertion. However, evidence of our history have shown that we have not been doing good at this. Thus, looking back, I believe it would have been beneficial in terms of solving the underlying issues that caused the ethnic crisis. We should have coordinated the governance structures instituted to deal directly with issues that have given rise to the ethnic crisis. I say this because what has transpired was that RAMSI came in to be part of the approach to strengthen the machinery of government that failed the people at the start. There was no creativity to allow these substantial issues to be handled and dealt with as specific issues that needed to be addressed independently of other issues.

What we have seen is that we are using the same failed institutions to address issues that they themselves have perpetuated through their failures. I am thinking a structural arrangement that is mandated to deal with the underlying issues that brought about the crisis should be a better option.

I am saying this because I am not sure whether after the 14 years journey we would be able to confidently say that yes we have dealt with the underlying issues. Again I am saying this in hindsight of the tremendous good work that RAMSI has done to this country and its people.

Maybe what I am suggesting would be something for Government and the people of this country must think seriously about. Please just allow me to say a bit more on the lessons learnt and looking forward, the question that awaits us the leaders and people of this country is will what we have achieved under RAMSI be sustained and improved into the future? This is the question that we, the people of this country and more importantly the leaders of this country, all of us sitting here, the 50 Members of Parliament, as the Leader of the Official Opposition Group alluded to this morning. This, we must answer correctly.



The presence of RAMSI has given us the opportunity to deal with our issues. Whether we have made use of the opportunity is another question. On this front, it is my view that we might have under utilised the opportunity provided and have not fully utilised it to our benefit. However, as RAMSI is leaving, we the leaders of this country must stand tall and not allow the selfish interests of a few to dominate and over shadow the wider and common interest of our people. For the sake of our people and the prosperity of this country, we cannot afford to lead by bad examples.

I need not remind us that some decisions that we made on our behalf not long ago have not painted a good picture of us as leaders and have portrayed us to have led by bad examples. We cannot let this continue to happen because I believe it is a recipe for distrust and disharmony.

As RAMSI is leaving us, let us be genuine and sincere with our responsibilities. We Solomon Islanders must continue to nourish our common good heritage and consolidate our good values and strengthen it to enable us take control of our future. Let us not divide on petty and trivial matters, for what good will division bring us? What good will envy and jealousy bring us? Surely we know that these are things that will not bring good to anybody. Let us shelve these negative elements for the sake of a better Solomon Islands and a better future of this country we called home.

I strongly believe this is what is asked of us as leaders of this country as we bid farewell to RAMSI. We know that some of the core issues that many view as the trigger of the civil unrest experience are still unsettled and have not been meaningfully addressed by the people during the presence of RAMSI, some of which is land matters and unfair distribution of the nation's income, to name just a few amongst the many that dominate the issues that have given rise to the social unrest.

As I said these are our issues and we cannot afford to downplay them. The issues of land dispute and the consequential effects it had on meaningful developments is something we are well aware of. Thus we must take aggressive actions to bring these issues under our control. These issues and many others are not necessarily issues confined for governments to deal with. There are issues that need the concerted effort of all of us. It is time of consolidating the strengths that we have and not to bring dispute that may unnecessarily derail the progress we have made under RAMSI to date. All of us do not want to see the unfortunate experience in the past to reoccur again, and no one in their right mind would allow that to happen again.

With RAMSI leaving, we must see this as a positive side to the development of this country. Positive side because after 14 years the country is able to say to its neighbors and the rest of the international community that we are now capable to

look after ourselves and to deal with you as equal partners in the many affairs we have in common. This is the positive message that we must take as we move forward with the affairs of this country.

The people of this country are looking to us for peace and prosperity, let us not fail them again. Let me say this to conclude my brief remarks, this country have abundant resources that should enable each and every one to live a life better than what we have today. With greed, we will be forever remembered as an icon of failure but with generosity to ensure the affairs of this country is governed for the benefit of its people this country will prosper again.

With those few remarks I would like to thank you again for giving me this opportunity to speak on this very important bill on behalf of my people of North West Choiseul Constituency. I support the bill.

**Hon. FREDA SORIACOMUA** (*Temotu Vattu—Minister for Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs*) ( 3:51): Thank you Mr. Speaker, I rise to also contribute to this important motion No. 19 of 2017 'The Regional Assistant Mission Solomon Islands –(RAMSI) 2003 – 2017. I would also like to thank the Honorable Prime Minister to move the motion. I would also like to thank the government of Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Island countries who have contributed towards this RAMSI Intervention, 'Tagio tumas for Helpem Fren'.

Mr. Speaker sir, the support RAMSI provided during the last 14 years is enormous and that is from restoring law and order, health and education, services reopened, women and youth and children are able to move freely. The Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs also receive great support from the bilateral support through the Australian government. This had led to the development of a number of policies and within the ministry of Women, Youth and Children. For example, the passing of the Family Protection Act, the passing of the Child and Family welfare Act, Solomon Island Gender Equality and Women Development Policy, National Action plan on women, Peace and Security are some examples. Our women are playing an important role during the recent ethnic crisis as peace builders. As part of this commitment, my ministry had just launch a national action plan on women, peace and security. This partnership agreement between RAMSI and Solomon Islands demonstrated hope and a prosperous future for women, Youth and Children for this nation. Our women are able to enjoy this daily activities from fishing, going to the garden, going to the church involving in sports and also going to work.

Our youths who are leaders of today and also leaders of tomorrow are able to go to school and enjoy the health services including involving in other social activities. Moreover, our children who suffered during this period were able to attend school

again receive the necessary love and care and also receive multiple support they need from RAMSI restoring of law and order. My ministry fully acknowledge RAMSI's contribution over the last 14 years in terms of building and strengthening the institution restored law and order. the restored of basic social and economic services.

On behalf of the women and children of this country, they give so many thanks to RAMSI and the support from all those who have been contributing during the ethnic tension.

And on behalf of my good people of Vatu constituency, chiefs, elders, women and children would also like to take this opportunity to thank RAMSI for bringing peace to our nation Solomon Islands. I believe we want a future that holds peace and prosperity in this nation. We want a Solomon Islands that embrace respect, love and joy to all our people. I strongly believe that we will continue a great effort and commitment in our respected organization that uphold peace in all our efforts. Moreover, on behalf of our women and children of this country, we want to salute RAMSI and the Solomon Islands government for this partnership and the work they have done during the past years. For this, may God bless RAMSI and Solomon Islands. Thank You.

**Hon. JIMSON TANANGADA** (*Gizo/Kolombangara—Minister for Rural Development*) (03:57):

I rise on behalf of the Rural communities within the 50 constituencies around the country including my good people of Gizo/Kolombangara to contribute to this very important historic motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister, The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands RAMSI from 2003-2017.

In early 2000 before RAMSI's intervention, I was a student attending my final year in high School with all other students from the nine provinces of our beloved country Solomon Islands. How did we react during that time? We stood to protect each other as Solomon Islanders in high school regardless of which provinces one came from. Indeed that spirit of united Solomon Islands has protected each of us in the manner that once would rather be in whatever situation as prescribed in our national anthem. That experience testify the importance of investing more into the Education sector for peace building.

It is fitting at this juncture for me to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the Schools and Churches for stepping in early to maintain peace for our young people awaiting international intervention. Thank God that RAMSI came.

Much have been said about the successful operation of RAMSI and the need to champion peace and stability of our beloved country after the exit of RAMSI. I

acknowledged those remarks and concur that the onus is now entirely rest on our shoulders to decide where we want to lead our country in the next 14, 28, 58 years and beyond. We must not cry over spilt milk! Whilst I do acknowledged that there might have been more successful political options for the involvement of RAMSI in addressing the issues that have brought this nation in its knee in the early 2000. I wish not to dwell on the past but holds those memories as stepping stones of building a better tomorrow.

After 14 years of Helpim fren operation, I believe we have only one option and that is, to build this nation as true Solomon Islanders, led by the selfless spirit of our motto; 'To lead is to serve'. Today I sincerely thank the 15 Regional peace keeping team who RAMSI's helpim fren mission for stabilizing our country by bringing confidence back to our ordinary citizens, families can move freely and involve in daily activities. Women and men can do normal daily activities to enhance their standard of living. Youths and most importantly our children whom the future belongs can attend school again. It is now time for us to build selflessly and that is what I firmly believed in.

Within another 14 years, we the national leaders who are in this 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament regardless of where we sit today will be judged by our own making. Let us all take full responsibility in our respective areas of national duties to build this country and to be once again or even more better than the happy isles it was once known for.

On behalf of all the villages in the 50 constituencies throughout the country, I wish to sincerely say RAMSI tagio tumas. From my good people of Gizo/Kolombangara constituency, I am proud to say that RAMSI is indeed a true friend for a friend in need. Thank you for stepping in some of the most testing times in my constituency. Thank you for your help during 2007 Tsunami that took away the homes and lives of many people in my constituency. I was there in one of the schools when a team of RAMSI army officers

Arrived by helicopter to provide us with basic supplies to keep the lives of some 400 students. People will never stop talking about your good deeds because you touched their lives.

Mr. Speaker Sir, as a constituency that host the Western Provincial Government Headquarters, RAMSI's contribution to development of law and order in Gizo/Kolombangara, Western Province is one of the key successful stories. Improvement of law enforcement offices professionalism and skills has been significantly recognized by all of my good people in Gizo island and Kolombangara island including all of Western Province.

Whilst many ordinary people wish that RAMSI stays on, I agree with Mr. Quinton Divilence, the RAMSI Special Coordinator's statement that RAMSI's departure is a

vote of confidence in Solomon Islands. Please, add the support of my people whom I represent to be part of writing a new chapter of the prosperous Solomon Islands that will never go down the darkest part again.

Sir, in conclusion, I on behalf of my good caring people of Gizo/Kolombangara constituency will like to share our most heartfelt thanks to the people and government of Australia, New Zealand, Cook Island, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Island, Federated States of Micronesia Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu for bringing us peace and stability again. You have written historic memories of the true caring members with great sacrifice and we love you by saying, *tagio tumas, leana hola!*

With these few remarks I support the Motion and resume my seat.

**Mr ISHMAEL AVUI** (*East Central Guadalcanal*) (04:05): Mr. Speaker, RAMSI came to our shores because of our failures. We have not managed our shores of Solomon Islands well that is why we allow this beautiful country to travel through a theatre of war during the years 1998 to 2003.

I pay special tribute, however, to the efforts of the Prime Minister's during the last 14 years for the work they have done or to curb the tension as well as its effects. In particular I thank the Late Honourable Prime Minister, Bartholomew Late Ulufa'alu, Mr. Manasseh Sogavare and Sir Allen Kemakeza. These are the Leaders during the toughest of times, between the years 1998 and 2003, stood their ground to protect and serve the people of Solomon Islands.

RAMSI landed on our shores 14 years ago because we cannot solve a mess we have created. This indeed is an embarrassing history for Solomon Islands. But I thank RAMSI that this week the 'Helpem Fren' will conclude and celebrated for a work well done.

The mandate of RAMSI was to help Solomon Islands recover and rebuild and it was prominent on three pillars, law and order, economic governance and machinery of government.

As someone who had involved directly with RAMSI advisors in the Ministry of Public Service prior and during the years 2003 to 2014, I would like to talk briefly on the contributions, which RAMSI has done to restore the machinery of government. Even prior to the ethnic tension, the machinery of government was experiencing a lot of difficulties due mainly to lack of adequate resources and complicated processes in the government.

This dire state of affairs was worsened when all aid donors left Solomon Islands because of security reasons. The ethnic tension was a final nail to a coffin. Salaries were never paid to officers for three months; decisions by permanent secretaries

were made under duress; basic resources to do work was lacking; government established processes and procedures were ignored and not followed. This scenario is seen in the core agencies of government, like in the Prime Minister's Office, the Treasury and the Ministry of Public Service and as well as the development ministries.

The integrity institutions are also affected, like the Auditor General's Office, The Ombudsman's Office, the Leadership Code Commission and the Ministries, including provinces. Because of this situation, we have to agree to a proposal to even send public officers on unpaid leave to their various homes.

The Arrival of RAMSI has seen expat advisors in key decision making positions in the Ministry of Finance, Auditor General's Office, Customs and Exercise and in Inland Revenue. In some, Solomon Islanders continue to perform their roles but with a strong support by RAMSI advisors, mostly from Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea to name a few.

Through the work of RAMSI, we have seen and experienced the Public Service regain capacity and confidence to start rebuilding. Ghost employees were removed from the payroll; retired officers repatriated to their homes; vacancies reduced; IPAM was reestablished; a code of conduct for public officers created and thought to all public officer; including provincial officers, the General Order was reviewed and a Public Service Act drafted—I hope the Minister of Public Service will bring this to be tabled in Parliament—HR processes streamlined and were made effective, payroll, which was centralized in Treasury was rolled-out to the Ministry of Public Service as well as all other Ministries. We have also seen that the backlog of audit reports were done with and audit reports tabled in Parliament. In the Inland Revenue Department, RAMSI was able to help strengthen and improve revenue collection to fund the government services.

The success of RAMSI is not only limited to the Machinery of government but is seen and experienced in the law and order and economic recovery pillars. RAMSI Helpem Fren is indeed a success story.

I subscribe to the observation expressed by the MP for Aoke/Langalanga earlier on this morning that this joint report should also recognize the many contributions made by many peace-loving Solomon Islanders. It takes two to tango. The success of RAMSI is because of the partnership and willingness of the host country, including the warring parties to realize failures and to make commitments with RAMSI in its programs to restore this country.

With that note, I pay special tribute to the Governor General then, the Prime Ministers then, the Permanent Secretaries, the Managers of the Private Sector companies, women groups, churches, SICCA and SIFCA, the premiers and

provincial MPAs, community chiefs, youths and all Solomon Islanders. They all play a part in the success of RAMSI. the contributions are regional and international bodies and organizations must also be given merit, especially the UN Agencies and NGOs. these individuals and bodies, have made sacrifices to restore this country back.

With that said, I would like to convey on behalf of my people the belated bereavement to the relatives of the 6 fallen RAMSI Officers: Adam Dunning from Australia, Private Jamie Michael Clark, also from Australia, Antonio Luciano Scriva from Australia, Chief Inspector Amos Solip from Vanuatu, Constable Sisiliah Puleheloto from Niue, and Ronald Edwin Lewis from Australia.

These people have given their lives in the course of assistance in Solomon Islands. We so sorry that these loss of lives had befallen their families because they came to help us. We in Solomon Islands shall remember them as they leave behind a legacy for us on the rising of the sun and on the doing down we shall remember them. Indeed our Pacific brothers and sisters have thrown their hearts unreservedly for Solomon Islands. with all the wealth that we have, we cannot pay back what RAMSI has done for us. we do not even have words to express our gratitude for the efforts to get this country out from the chaos of the tension. I therefore on behalf of my people of East Central Guadalcanal, to the Government and the people of Australia, New Zealand, thank you very much for your sacrifice and committing your tax payer's money to restore Solomon Islands.

To the Government and people of Fiji, vinaka vaka levu. To Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, tagio tumas. To Cook Islands, meitaki ma'ata, to Samoa, fa'afetai. To Tonga, malo aupito. To Niue, faka'aue lahi. To Tuvalu, fakafetai lasi. To Kiribati, ko rab'a ko bati n rab'a. To Nauru, tubwa kor. To Palau, sulang. Finally, to the Government and the people of the Federal States of Micronesia, kalangen.

Now that RAMSI has restored the law and order, build state institutions and our economy, we must not be complaisant and sit back and relax, we all must work extra harder so that the gains that RAMSI has made are supported. I am happy to hear from the Ministers as well as other colleagues who have expressed confidence and commitment to the future programs related to law and order, economic growth and the machinery of government in Solomon Islands.

My people and I are also committed to an united, peaceful, progressive and prosperous Solomon Islands. We salute you RAMSI for restoring us hope to go that path. with these few remarks, I support the Motion.

**Mr DICKSON MUA** (*Savo/Russells*) (04:17): Thank you for giving me the opportunity to briefly contribute to this Motion moved by the Honorable Prime Minister that Parliament resolves itself into a committee of the Whole House to

consider the National Paper No.19 of 2017, the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) 2003 to 2017 on the report that is before us.

The report is quite a comprehensive report which many speakers before me have also elaborated on.

I take this opportunity to first of all thank the Government at that time in 2003 headed by one of our pioneer leaders, I should say in the constituency, Sir Allan Kemakeza for the wisdom in seeing it fit to ensure this assistance is forth coming. It might be a different story if such idea does not materialise.

On behalf of the chiefs, church leaders, political leaders, village leaders, women, youth, children leaders, government seconded staffs, nurses and teachers and all the people, especially the children and women living and serving in the Savo Russell Constituency, I want to register our heartfelt gratitude in acknowledging the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) for being here and helping us in the past 14 years.

The Operation code name 'Helpem Fren' is a partnership between the people and Government of Solomon Islands and the 15 contributing Pacific Region Forum countries who arrived here in July 2003 at our request. Thank you very much Australia for leading it and meeting the major part of being the main funder.

RAMSI not only restore law and order or normalcy as we all known and said, but further than that by way of ensuring it lays the foundation for long term stability, security and prosperity. Through this Mission we had achieved much since the intervention as highlighted in the report. We witness law and order restored, national institutions rebuilt and the Solomon Islands economy has not only improved but reformed as well for the better.

This Mission brought in every Pacific Island Forum country, 15 in all with diverse cultures and experiences. I must thank our friends from these 15 countries, their governments, people and the thousands of military, police and civilian personnel from across these 15 countries who have served RAMSI and worked side by side with Solomon Islanders. The individual efforts of those who have worked with RAMSI have combined to make a great contribution to the success of the Mission and the continuing peace in Solomon Islands.

On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2003 at dawn, the first personnel arrived in their hundreds. A few days later we were amazed and even frightened when five military helicopters with fully armed military personnel landed at the Yandina Market field. I was on the pulpit that Sabbath morning when I have to cut short my sermon because of the noise and the excitement within the church as never heard of such before except on movies. On our way out to the market, they were demonstrating



and a lot of activities were going. These security forces came not in anger but rather as friends determined to assist a neighbor in need. Our people then felt safe from there onwards. Many relationships have been established with these officers during the course of their stay in the constituency.

With the arrival of this Mission, our Russell Islands people and our peace loving people of Savo felt secure once more, moving freely, especially using outboard motors to cross over the sea; there is no fear anymore. I can add on the many experiences we have seen and heard of but those are the past. Thinking of the past there is all rubbish, discomfort, sorrow, pain, hatred, restlessness, enemy, corruption, stealing and so forth. Let us forget what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead as individuals and country.

In Genesis 19 vs 26, I quote "But Lot's wife behind him looked back and she became a pillar of salt". Do not look back to our past, let us bury it and forget it. In Isaiah 43 vs 18 is Isaiah reminding the Children of Israel, and I quote "Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old". Let us look forward then because that is where we are heading. Let us move this beautiful country forward. With God we are doing it and will achieve what we wanted. Let us not repeat what has torn this country apart. This is a Christian nation and we must live a Christ like way.

In conclusion, once again on behalf of our people of Savo Russell's Constituency wish to thank the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI – Helpem Fren) for the great help for the last 14 years. Through you we are enjoying our happy isles once more. Through you we had law and order restored and even reformed. You have trained and given confidence to our Police Force. 'Tagio tumas olketa frens' from the Pacific Islands Forum countries. It has been a success story. With these few remarks I support the motion.

**Hon. Manasseh Sogavare:** Point of Order. I seek your consent to move suspension of Standing Orders 10 in accordance with Standing Orders 81.

**Mr SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

**Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE:** I move that Standing Orders 10 be suspended in accordance with Standing Orders 81 to permit the continuation of business until adjourned by the Speaker in accordance with Standing Orders 10(5).

*Standing Order 10 suspended in accordance with Standing Order 81 to permit the continuation of business until adjourned by the Speaker*

**Mr CHARLES SIGOTO** (*Ranongga/Simbo*) (04:28): Thank you for giving me the floor in allowing me to express my gratitude to honorable Prime Minister Sogavare for convening this special parliamentary session to bid RAMSI farewell. Within the

next five days, RAMSI will be leaving our shores after 14 years presence in the country.

RAMSI came into the country under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, the Bekitawa Declaration back in 2003. It has since contributed to the stability of the country, invested in law and order and established conditions that have allowed the economy to recover. All these are done with the participation of the people of Solomon Islands.

In contributing to the motion, the people of Ranongga/Simbo join all good people of Solomon Islands in registering our appreciation to all our pacific neighbors for responding to Solomon Islands request for assistance during our difficult period. RAMSI's experience in Solomon Islands is rich. It has gone through challenges, twists and turns but the vision to have a stable and secure Solomon Islands was never lost. We also wish to thank all Solomon Islanders who worked for peace, who stood for peace and are committed to peace to this very day. Our people in the provinces, the provincial members, the chiefs, community leaders and churches, thank you for all your work in unifying our diverse country.

Today, I bow my head in respect to all Solomon Islanders who have lost their lives during the conflict period. To RAMSI and all personnel that have paid the ultimate service, the sacrifice for their respective countries and the mission they signed up to. We thank God for their lives and service to our country and its people.

I acknowledge Australia's leadership of RAMSI and New Zealand support and all fellow pacific islands. The small islands developing states that have provided personnel to serve in the Mission. I thank Cook Islands, Fiji, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Palau, Kiribati, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and the Marshall Islands.

I also pay tribute to all past and present Prime Ministers that serve and guided our relations with RAMSI. Today, during our term in Parliament we bid farewell to a friend. Having attended Sunday's thanksgiving, I noticed that we were joined by past RAMSI coordinators. I too wish to acknowledge their presence and thank each of them for their contributions. The success of RAMSI is due to its flexibility to respond to the changing situation in the country. The military was withdrawn at the appropriate time and today it is a police and civilian mission.

With the departure of RAMSI on 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2017, we bring in a new era of relationship with our pacific neighbors.

We bring in a new era of relationship with our Pacific neighbors where RAMSI has been a success, never again we should go through any form of conflict. Never again should there be a need for another RAMSI in Solomon Islands in the future. We

have lost development gains during those difficult periods. We have rebuilt and unified this country and we are ready and should be open to do business with everyone.

I am not here to look back but to look forward. RAMSI has spent around \$3billion over the last decade. This is a substantial amount of money which was invested mostly on police, justice and governance. We must and should now send some of our police officers to UN missions beyond our shores. We have benefited from them sharing their experience with us, so let us share that with others who are asking for help. We must have faith and confidence in our people. This is time to think progressive and think big. This is our time to move beyond the cautious nature of doing business in this country and have serious conversations with our partners to look at our people in the provinces.

Today we should not fear the future. Let us invest in our people and our provinces with large scale national projects. Once we secure our people's future will also guarantee the future of this beautiful country. It is time for us to build roads and infrastructures, feed ourselves with a vibrant commercial agriculture. Our country, our islands, our constituencies have great soils. I am confident we can grow commercial crops. Let our people produce onions, garlicks and other crops rather than importing them. Let us empower people to produce salt and sugar and save on foreign exchange. We should seriously look at having the whole country going into carbon neutral by building renewable energy infrastructures in the provinces. Invest more in the Solomon Islands National University and get in pacific technical colleges to aggregate our graduates with credentials to work as migrant laborers.

We have so much work to do. We cannot achieve these large scale projects without partnership, so let us seek that now. The post RAMSI era has allowed us the opportunity to redefine our relations with our neighbors and our partners. A new partnership is needed. We must establish new political relationships with our partners on sustainable development set of priorities which will open up economic opportunities of our people.

As we await to receive leaders from all countries of the Pacific, my people join you in conveying our gratitude one way or the other. We have shown the world that a lot of global issues can be solved regionally.

In closing, the people of Ranongga/Simbo recommit ourselves to the unity, solidarity peace, progress and prosperity of our nation Solomon Islands. God bless Solomon Islands from shore to shore. I support the motion.

**Mr BODO DETTKE** (*North West Guadalcanal*) (04:38): Thank you for giving me the chance to contribute briefly in joining other colleagues and most importantly a very big thank you to Australia, New Zealand and all the Pacific nations in joining hands

to come to our beloved country, Solomon Islands in its darkest hours. Thank you very much.

As the Member of Parliament for North West Guadalcanal, I also would like to say on behalf of my people, a big thank you to RAMSI which was very successful in which we all experience harmony today. We must look towards our future, so that we move forward.

I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his powerful speech which has a lot of important points for us to learn from. We the leaders of today to make sure that what happened in 2000 does not repeat in our future or our children's generation to come. We must learn to live together.

I must also want to thank a special person today, who is now also an Honourable Member, Mr. Jimmy Lusibaea for negotiating my release in the Ranadi area when I was kidnapped for the first time in my life. Thank you Honourable Jimmy Lusibaea for sparing my life so that I can stand here to thank all of you today.

I also want to thank the late Andrew Nori for also saving my life by taking the risk to shelter me in the office of the Opposition then who is now our prime minister. I was kidnapped from my house and brought to the office. I was apprehended and I was interrogated because of my support for the government of the late Bartholomew Ulufa'alu. I was to be punished for my choice. But also too, I really forgive you, Mr. Prime Minister for what had happened in the past. To the Honourable Danny Phillip and to Mr. Charles Dausabea, I forgive you all. We must move on for our future and for the future of our children. Let us forget everything.

We give a big thank you to RAMSI who came to help us to realise that our country is still not like those other countries in the world. We can leave together and we can work together. So big special thank you for late Mr. Andrew Nori to come and assist us with some of our big understanding, where at that time I have to leave the country or faced death or execution. Sad to say, but we must work together. I really forgive you Honourable Prime Minister but we must move on. I do not have any hard feeling towards you. but most of all I really want to thank RAMSI to bring peace to this country, so that we can work together and move on. That is what I can say today. Thank you very much.

**Hon. PETER AGOVAKA** (*Central Guadalcanal—Minister for Communication and Aviation*) (4:42): Thank you for the recognition accorded to me. I on behalf of the people of Central Guadalcanal constituency would also like to contribute to this special motion. I think it is timely at this week of the closing of RAMSI, which is the end of the month.

I would like to thank and acknowledge the presence of the dignitaries in the public gallery this morning and this afternoon. Particularly the former coordinators and the representative from the fifteen Forum Island countries. With regards to the backdrop of Solomon Islands, when we gained independence in 1978, there was not much to talk about before the independence. The British were in a hurry to leave us and give the responsibility of self-rule to our people. They introduced a Westminster system of government to a nation that we called Solomon Islands. Solomon Islands is a country of many little nations. I do not think that we were ready for independence in 1978. I think we will truly know what being independence truly means when RAMSI leaves. After the mistakes we have gone through, we will be, like the Late Solomon Mamaloni said, a nation conceived but never born but maybe we will be a nation conceived and born after RAMSI leaves.

The underlying issues are still smearing. Previous governments come and go but the Guadalcanal Bona fide Demand still remains and the underlying issues still remain, the issue of equal distribution of our wealth still remains. Thankfully, by Act of Parliament on the 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003, the RAMSI Treaty or the Facilitation of International Assistance Mission Act 2003 was passed by Parliament; this very house and hopefully this piece of law will die a natural death when RAMSI leaves by the end of this month and hopefully we will not need this treaty again, hopefully we will not go down the same path that we went down in 2000. A number of MPs have gone through atrocities. Some ended up in prison and came out. We have in our own respective way, experience the pain of the ethnic tension.

The mandate of RAMSI is clear and the three pillars that reflect their mandate speak for itself in terms of law and justice. A lot of Members who have contributed have highlighted the success of law and justice in our country. There is also the economic governance. A number of speakers, including the Prime Minister, the Leader of Opposition and other Members of Parliament have highlighted the importance and the good work that RAMSI has done in the economic governance. The third pillar, the machinery of government is also equally successful, but there are smearing issues that still remain. White collar crime is going on within the government machineries. This government or any government for this matter need to take control of these issues like corruption, wantok system, police bypassing some of the traffic issues and crimes. We cannot go away from the good work and the gains that RAMSI has done and we must build on that. RAMSI is a successful story in the Pacific and in Solomon Islands. It is a household word to our children. It is a successful regional cooperation and diplomacy.

RAMSI will leave but Solomon Islands will be here. Australia will be there, New Zealand will be here and there and our Pacific island countries will also be there. If we are to need any support, they will always be there to help us.

Where do we go from here? Where will Solomon Islands go? Where will our destiny lead us?

What brought peace to Solomon Islands is the willingness of our people to participate in this RAMSI Intervention. Not only that, but we have signed treaties, our warring parties signed treaties. The Townsville peace accord that we signed brought peace between the two warring parties. Have we done away with the Townsville Peace agreement? Has it now expired or no longer used or needed?

There is a lot of things in the Townsville Peace agreement that spelled out how we should address the issues in this country. This report is a good report but in my view it does not address the Townsville Peace agreement; land issue, the just distribution of our country's economic wealth, or the around the Guadalcanal bonafide demands, not yet. And I am calling on ourselves, the 50 Members, we are the Government, not only the executive Government, Independent, Opposition, we should work together to try and address some of these issues.

The Member for East Honiara was talking about development on Malaita and I agree with him. These are the ideas and thoughts that we should be talking about with our people so that we do not live with congestion of people coming in to flood Honiara. People can stay in their Provinces and work and build their provinces. That is the kind of activities that we the 50 members of Parliament should be talking about on the floor of Parliament and in Government.

We must be a nation conceived and be born. We cannot just remain in the womb and be there forever. We must be born. And the history of this ethnic tension must give rise to wisdom. We are called Solomon Islands and we must have the wisdom that King Solomon has in dealing with issues that are before us. RAMSI will be going, but these issues will not go away. They will be here and it is us who must address these issues.

In saying so, those are all the points that I want to raise. We will go through this in the Committee of the Whole House.

On behalf of my people and I too want to say thank you to RAMSI; RAMSI principles, Special Coordinator, from Nick Warner, Quinton Develin, Peter Noble, Alex Cameron; Assistant Special Coordinators, Mr. Masi Lomaloma and Niko Velu, the Participating Police Force Commanders; from Ben Mc David to John Tanty, the combined task force commanders from John Fenwen to Benton Gustin and the development coordinators from Margaret Thomas to Jane Lake.

I would like to thank the RAMSI principals for their hard work and to making sure that RAMSI provide the three pillars of mandate that they have been mandated to do so.

With this, I would like to sincerely thank RAMSI and I pray and hope that we will not go down the path we came from in 2000. With these few remarks, I support the Motion.

**Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE:** Thank very much, actually I do not have anything to say again.

I have moved this motion to allow Members of Parliament as leaders to say thank you to our friends who have come to help us. It has been an interesting journey and if we are to count the five years before RAMSI arrived when the ethnic crises actually started in 1998 to 2003—the official period of the ethnic crises, it is almost 19-20 years of interesting journey. There were ups and downs but we pulled through as a nation. We showed resilience that we can come out of the problems that we have faced. And that comes out very very powerfully through the 19 or almost 20 years journey that we have travelled.

Of course 14 years of that was positive response from our friends led by Australia and New Zealand who came specifically to address the very important pillars in the thinking of the leaders including those strategic thinkers in Canberra, with our people here, including some of our officials who have contributed to the formulation of the strategy—if we address it we will set the basic foundation and pillars to address governance and nation building. And so it strategically targeted three or four specific areas. And they came with that mandate and they have achieved it. They have fully achieved their mandate. So every who talked fulfilled the objective of this motion and that is to allow Members of Parliament on behalf of the constituents, to thank our friends who came.

Yes appropriate questions were raised, where do we go from here? We talked about the underlying issues, the issues that we still need to address. We are fully conscious and aware of that, and our strategy as rightly pointed out by the Leader of Opposition, most of these thinking on a way forward is summarized in this TRC's report which Parliament is yet to look at.

Work is progressing very well with the consultant that we have engaged to put together this comprehensive reparation program that will address—in our thinking—all the underlying issues that we need to address.

Much of the issues that we need to address to move forward, some of the very important ones require the understandings of the Members of Parliament. For example, one of them is the State Government System. That is borne out of the demands of our people and it took quite a long time. Of course the first report was in 1987, it resurface again after the ethnic crises where our people from Guadalcanal came very powerful and very clear to say that the path to go down is a government system that give more autonomy, more right of decision making on how people

benefit from all their resources. So we came up with this federal system, and it needs the decisions that will come through us leaders. This month, and then of course Cabinet will look at it.

Some of the key issues or pillars as well is addressing corruption. The bills for addressing those issues are ready. Some bills are already tabled here and we had to deal with some fears that members of parliament had. We have done that and a new revised Anticorruption Bill is ready and it will go back to Cabinet. We will withdraw the bill from parliament. It will go back and Cabinet will look at a revised bill which is now ready to come. These are just examples of very important fundamental pillars that we need to address, and it requires the input and decisions, and positive stance of the Members of Parliament.

As I said I do not have much to say except to say thank you very much to those who have spoken. My brother the Member for North West Guadalcanal raise one very important issue here which I think there's a lot of misunderstanding. I believe the does not need to forgive me, there is no need to forgive me on this one. And I think the appropriate thing to do here is to thank us.

The story is like this since that issue is now raised on the floor of parliament. I was the Leader of Opposition, a very very trying time in the history of this country. I was sitting in my office when suddenly there were trucks; and sounds going '*bang bang bang*' next to my office. Almost 30 vehicles were parked outside and they pulled my brother the present Member for North West Guadalcanal. I do not know where they took him from—I just want to clarify this story because it was raise on the floor of parliament. They say to me there and then that, 'we want to get this person and we will eliminate him'. And I said to them, you cannot do that. You have brought him here and he will remain in my care. I called the Minister for National Planning to sit down and talk with me. And we sit down with him and the late John Garo, who is also the former Member of Parliament. There was shouting outside, '*naf na mifa wande go nao, givim out come*'. And we had to call the late Andrew Nori to come and sort things out because he was the cousin of the late John Garo. That was the only person we know and he is also a member of our church and he is the lead Spokesman of the Malaita Eagle Force. So we have to call him to come and tell him to deal with the case, with these people.

So if there is any misunderstanding on this thing that we might have a part in the plan to take both of them—and I know they went and pulled out the late John Garo from the Hospital. He was under treatment and they bring him to my office.

So you do not need to forgive. I think myself and the Minister for Development Planning did our best to rescue a situation that could have been a disaster that day.



But we thank God for his wisdom for his continued guidance, he leads us through those very trying time.

This is probably one of those misunderstanding that continues to lingers around regarding the involvement of the former Prime Minister or the then Prime Minister, that there seem to be this thinking that we masterminded what happened in the year 2000. Ask my Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Infrastructure Development, I was investigating for three months. when the RAMSI's arrived here. And the thinking was that this will be the first person to go to jail because he is the one who master mind this thing. When they interview them , we do not know about the involvement of this person. They came here and the RAMSI rang me and said, Sir can you come up to the parliament because we want to talk to you. I said for what? They said you just come and you do not need to be concerned about anything. Myself I was never concern about anything. I came here and there were saluting and we sat in the conference room. They said we have been investigating you for three months and we find nothing on you. I am still around, there were talks that they will be investigating and arrest me to jail for part of ethnic crisis. It was confirmed by the groups that did all the investigation.

I just want to be clear on that. I do not even intend to be going that far but since that matter is raised here. I know that there is a lot of misunderstanding and one of the symposiums that will happen tomorrow. I am very critical about some academics who will be sharing some of their thoughts there. There are a lot of rubbish written about leaders of this country on what had happened during the ethnic crisis. There is 14 years and now we have reached the end and there a lot of rewriting of some of the nonsenses that are written, implicating some of the involvement of some of the leaders. I will just be opening that symposium and probably get out of it, before I got bogged down in saying something about what people say about it.

I have seen academic writings and a lot of people get degrees out from what had happened to us. Taking advantage of this and seemed to say that this know what is happening in this country. They never know not even half of, maybe  $\frac{3}{4}$  of what happen to this country and what led this country down the path of the ethnic crisis. Those academic know very little about it.

Sorry I do not intend to go down that far but since it was raised. Tomorrow as I have said, I will be opening a symposium that we will be talking about some academic discussion. I will open it and leave for that reason. But my request to those academia, the people who write this things is that you need to review that we have reach the end of the line. You trace it back and see and re write some of this nonsenses because our future children will read the rubbish.

With that I want to thank all of you. I want to thank the Members of Parliament to express their heart and say thank you to our friends who have come here and help us. With that, I want to move that the parliament resolves itself into the committee of the whole House to consider National Parliament No.19 2017-Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands RAMSI 2003 -2017. A joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14<sup>th</sup> Year Intervention.

Thank you very much Mr. Speaker and I beg to move.

**The SPEAKER:** The parliament resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider National Parliament paper No.19 2017-Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands RAMSI 2003-2017. A joint report by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI on the 14<sup>th</sup> year Intervention.

### *Motions*

#### **MOTION OF SPECIAL ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. MANASSEH SOGAVARE** (*East Choiseul—Prime Minister*) (05:08): The deliberation of the whole house on the report will be done when Parliament resumes after this special adjournment.

I move that at the adjournment of Parliament on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Parliament shall adjourn to Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017. This week we will be fully occupied with RAMSI activities where all us will be engaged in and so we cannot meet. We are also waiting for a few urgent bills, which are mostly financial bills. And if everything goes well, we would also want to see the Dual citizenship Bill come to Parliament as well. However, it all depends on work that officials are doing.

To allow these work to be completed and to complete RAMSI's celebration, I request that this Parliament adjourns today to Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017. I beg to move.

**The SPEAKER:** Honourable members, it has been moved that at its adjournment on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017, Parliament be adjourned to Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017. I will allow a few comments on this motion before I put the question.

**Hon. JEREMIAH MANELE** (*Hograno/Kia/Havulei—Leader of the Opposition*) (05:10): Thank you very briefly, let me first thank the Honorable Prime Minister for moving this motion of special adjournment that at its adjournment on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017 which is today, Parliament be adjourned to Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

The reasons outlined by the Honorable Prime Minister are straightforward. We all know the ongoing celebrations this week to celebrate and farewell RAMSI. The Government also needs time to complete work on some of the bills. Those are very obvious and clear reasons. Probably, I guess on behalf of some of us who are members of the Bills and Legislation Committee and the Public Account Committee,

we hope that some of these bills could come to Parliament in a reasonable time frame so that the Committees could schedule their hearings before Parliament resumes on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July. This side of the House has no difficulty supporting the motion.

*The Motion agreed to*

*The House adjourned at 5.12pm*