

## UN RESIDENT COORDINATOR'S REMARKS

# PEACEBUILDING is JOURNEY

Remarks Ms.  
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United Nations  
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Coordinator

As the Representative of the United Nations agencies working in the Solomon Islands, it is a great honour for me to stand here before you at the launch of a 2nd UN programme in support of peacebuilding in Solomon Islands. I would like to especially acknowledge UNDP and UN Women who are jointly implementing this project.

Today's launch is cause for excitement, and hope for all of us. To explain my hope and my excitement, I would like to take the opportunity to first look back. I will then take a look forward, to the future.

Looking back: What in incredible few years we had supporting and helping to create more space for meaningful dialogue on the difficult issues that had given rise to the Tensions in Solomon Islands.

Ten member the day almost two years ago when we launched our first peacebuilding support programme. What stood out for me as particularly special, was the palpable sense of commitment - on the part of the Government, and - on the part of people outside Government to tackle the root causes, to search for solutions.

We knew at the time that RAMSI was drawing down. The regional police mission officially closed mid last year. During that time, our project helped to open up valuable space for dialogue. I wanted to share with you my recent conversation with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on the unique role the UN can play as facilitator of dialogue in many parts of the world. He reiterated, however, it is not just any dialogue that's needed - but dialogue on the most difficult, painful, often controversial issues.

That was the kind of dialogue that took place in the Solomon Islands. Dialogue in the provinces. Dialogue in the capital, at the national level. And most importantly: Dialogue inclusive of all stakeholders in the development of Solomon Islands: Women's groups, youth representatives, religious leaders, chiefs, Government officials, Members of Parliament, academia, civil society.

The United Nations also supported important policy processes, emphasising women's participation in decision-making processes. We also helped to identify and energize young peacebuilders in the country from places that have been most affected by the past Tensions. We facilitated support for the Government and others to look further into those recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that still needed to be followed up on.

The achievement last year of a joint National Communique, which was adopted by all key stakeholders present at last year's National Dialogue here at this location is an impressive achievement. In a way, your Communique represents a



blueprint for peacebuilding action in Solomon Islands.

It touches on the issues and challenges that people in this country are concerned about when they talk about building a peaceful and strong society.

These issues were identified as: Sustaining peace is sustaining development in the country; Strong leadership; inclusive governance; including anti-corruption efforts; women and youth empowerment; Tackling land disputes and land reform; Reconciliation and follow up on outstanding recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission; Helping to implement the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; Education; rural development; and follow up on the resolutions of the Provincial Dialogues.

Taken together, moving all issues forward at the same time and in a manner that they inform each other, will take a lot of commitment and stamina. Especially in an election year, this will not be easy. (But what is easy in life...)

And this brings me to today, and to look to the future. In New York at United Nations headquarters, our colleagues at the Peacebuilding Fund have recognized the commitment by the Government and the people of Solomon Islands, as well as the work that had already been done over the past years. They agreed for the Peacebuilding Fund to sponsor an exceptional second programme in Solomon Islands, again jointly implemented by UNDP and UN Women.

The idea of the programme is to be catalytic, to be ambitious, focusing on support what other partners don't support so easily - resolving bottlenecks. This includes creating continued space for dialogue, supporting structures in Government and outside that will continue these dialogues when we are long gone... and to keep working on tackling the most difficult and sensitive issues that go at the heart of the challenges of the past Tensions. The programme also draws on the findings from a peoples' perceptions survey which validate largely the areas of focus of the communique.

Indeed, this is an ambitious agenda. But it is also an exciting agenda. I would not expect anything less than the highest ambition - neither from you, our Government partners; or

from the Solomon Islands' civil society; religious leaders; academics; women; men and youth... nor from myself and my United Nations colleagues working so hard to help you achieve these goals.

I would like to take this opportunity to also invite other donor partners to join in the journey. Peacebuilding to me is a development challenge, a political challenge and a challenge of equal and two-way dialogue at the same time. With this spirit of ambition, openness, and our hope for the future of progress and peace, I am sure that the country's peacebuilding challenges can be overcome.

The United Nations is with you in this challenge. Not just with some catalytic resources, but also with our hearts and minds.

And finally, I saved the most important message for last. And that is, that peacebuilding is a long-term endeavour. Peacebuilding is a process and we are in it for the long-haul. Peacebuilding needs to go beyond elections and the Government or political dispensation of the day.

We need to recognize it as such - especially the international community and donor partners when we consider providing resources for peacebuilding.

On behalf of the UN Country Team, especially UNDP and UN Women, I thank you for being here and for continuing the peacebuilding journey in Solomon Islands. With this, I wish you all a very productive, energizing and stimulating project implementation period.