



# Sustaining peace and stability

**Prime Minister RICK HOUEINPWE- LA delivered this speech yesterday at the launch of a new peacebuilding programme supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund:**

I AM honored to have been invited to address you and to officially launch this new peacebuilding programme supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund.

Sustaining peace and stability is the priority of my government hence the Government of Solomon Islands welcomes the support of the United Nations.

Through this programme and other government programmes, we will last towards achieving lasting peace and stability in our country.

I am very encouraged by the strong partnership the Solomon Islands has with the UN family of agencies, more especially the UNDP and the UN Women.

To that end I would like to take this opportunity to thank the UN peacebuilding team in Solomon Islands who have worked very hard to provide support under the first peacebuilding programme for the last 18 months.

The team has been working closely with relevant ministries including the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Ministry of National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation, and the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs.

The cooperation that exists between these agencies is an affirmation of that commitment.

Be assured the Government will on its part work towards cementing this partnership.

## Role UNPBF

The UN peacebuilding programme is important for two reasons. Firstly, RAMSI left Solomon Islands last year and we need to sustain many gains and achievements in the country, deepening of the peacebuilding through accelerating development and reform.

Secondly, we are preparing for the election next year and it is important to ensure the integrity of the process and a peaceful election outcome.

But equally important the UN peacebuilding programme is looking at peace in the broader sense. The program is about accelerating development, inclusive participation, and nation building.

In addition, the current UN programme design should allow for open dialogues on key development issues connecting to peace and stability in the country.

This is also my Government's commitment, but all of us have to work harder to deliver development and peace in our communities. Development of the Solomon Islands as a whole is essential to building long lasting peace in our communities.

We surely cannot have peace at the national level if soon, our communities are left behind.

Nobody should be left behind. This is our international commitment and it is our

governments commitment.

In fact it is SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions) which we will continue to work towards achieving.

Let me take this opportunity to comment the role of UN Peacebuilding Fund, and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) which are firm supporters of our efforts to building peace globally.

I am particularly grateful to the Secretary General of the UN and Chairman of PBC for this gesture of goodwill to bring peace in our country.

Government Policies to Sustain Peace

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to speak briefly about sustaining peace and what it means in practice from the Solomon Islands Democratic Coalition for Change Government standpoint.

The new Government's efforts to sustaining peace are on four broad categories.

First, we know that the Government ought to have an explicit and deliberate peace building policy for all our citizens irrespective of where they reside, and whether or not they are affected by conflict.

Our development agenda is in terms of public investments in the productive sector, initiatives to improve the quality of governance, and taking initiatives to hasten development in the rural areas. These are all geared to induce sustainable economic growth.

Development is at the heart of attaining lasting peace and it is for that reason that our development policies must be geared towards benefiting everybody.

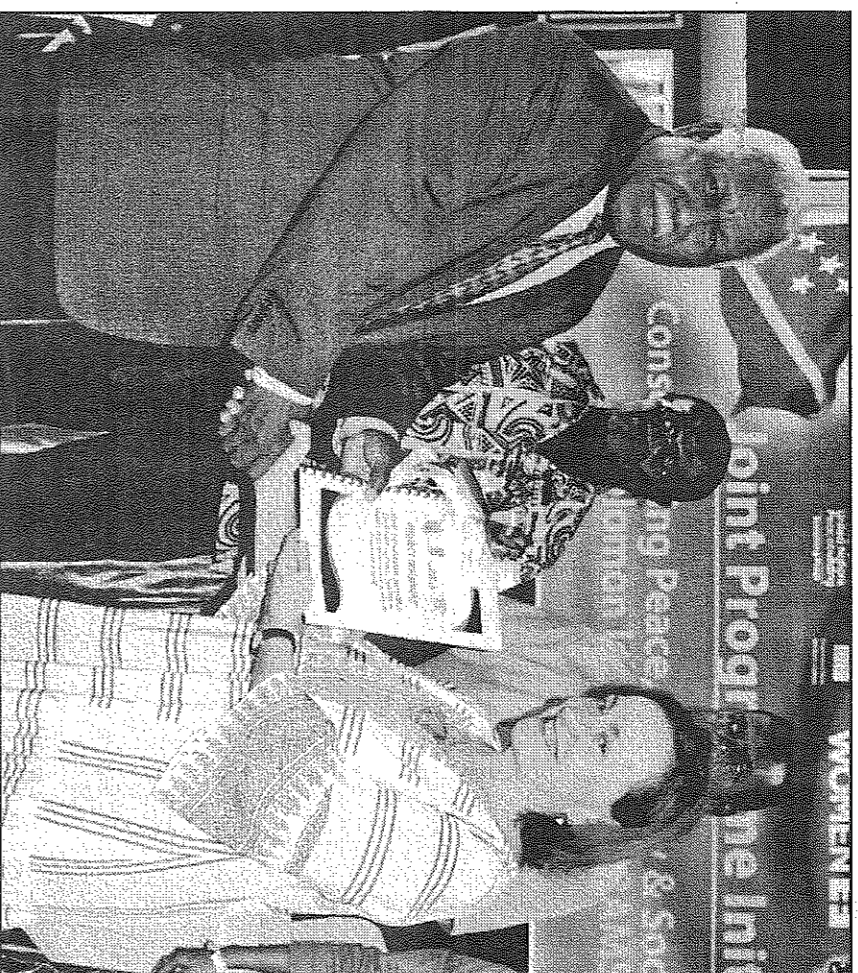
Second, the Government is of the firm belief that peace building initiatives must be continuous and well grounded in Government existing capacities for peace development. To this end let me state unequivocally that my Government endorses the commitment from the national dialogue last year.

We also support the resolutions from the provincial dialogue, Women Summit and Youth forums.

This is in addition to the TRC recommendations. We are adopting key resolutions from the committee in the SIDCCG policy programme, especially in the interest of accelerating inclusive development and maintaining stability.

The development of the peacebuilding strategy will be critical for purposes of implementing our peace building initiatives.

As well, the implementation of the TRC report, the finding from public consultations and the outcome of national and provincial dialogues last year will all contribute to the development of the peacebuilding strategy in the future and peacebuilding programme in the present. It is important to rec-



PM Rick Hou, left, receives a copy of the peace-building document.

ognize however that we do not have the capacity to implement essential peace building initiatives.

Besides, we do not have the resources or experience to develop and implement such programs ourselves.

It is precisely for that reason that the partnership the Solomon Islands Government has established with the UN Peace Building Fund and Peace Building Commission is so vital.

Through this partnership Solomon Islands may have access to assistance from our development partners.

Third, the SIDCCG wants the peace building agenda to be an endogenous process.

This requires strong and inclusive national ownership and leadership.

The commitment of our Government can best be exemplified by the leadership of the Ministry of National National Unity, Peace and Reconciliation, and the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in spearheading the implementation of the peacebuilding initiative.

Needless to say, Solomon Islands is one of a few countries that has a ministry dedicated for peacebuilding and reconciliation.

The launching of the UN peacebuilding support programme today will contribute to the work on our peace building initiatives. This programme should not be a stand-alone like many other programmes in the country.

It is important to have strong coordination on peacebuilding work and make this a collective effort.

Fourthly, SIDCCG is cognizant of the fact that peace policy is a multi-sectoral, all-encompassing policy deserving attention at the highest levels of national government.

In this respect I am sure I will be speaking for all of us to say that "We will never allow our country to

slide back to our darkest days of ethnic conflict we have experienced between 1998-2003."

But we all need to continue working to maintain this.

The Ministry of Peace, Youth, and Prime Minister's Office, will help guide our coordination and everyone's participating in maintaining peace.

As well, these agencies are busy assisting and preparing for a peaceful election next year.

My message on "Sustaining Peace and Stability" Ladies and gentlemen, let me now turn to the theme for this peacebuilding program, "Sustaining Peace and Stability".

The relevance of this theme cannot be overstated. In any society the need to sustain peace is important for its betterment and advancement.

Without peace, development cannot take place. Without peace, children cannot go to school.

Without peace we cannot realize our full potentials, and without peace, our aspirations will remain dreams.

The nexus of peace and development, therefore, cannot be exaggerated.

We need peace in order to have optimal and sustainable development.

The inverse is equally true in that we have to have development in order to have peace in our communities throughout the country.

But development is not just about achieving and sustaining a high economic growth rate.

It is not only about employment opportunities, or strong per capita incomes.

It is also about engineering a development pathway that will allow growth to take place but, at the same time, for people in our far-flung villages and communities to be empowered.

It is about creating the enabling environment,

a development pathway that empowers women and youth, harness comparative advantages in their localities.

It is about remaining engaged and having the feeling of worth and a sense of making a contribution to the welfare and betterment of the country as whole.

**On integrity or anti-corruption**  
The SIDCCG is fully committed to improving the level of accountability and transparency on many fronts.

We are committed to fighting the cancer of corruption.

So after their final revisions the Anti-Corruption Bill and the Whistle Blower Bill will be reintroduced into Parliament for enactment soon.

And in terms of the National Anti-Corruption strategy, I welcome the UN peacebuilding programme which is also looking at anti-corruption issues by supporting public education and civic awareness.

On Land and Natural Resource management Solomon Islands is a natural resource rich-country, but after many years, natural resource management is still a challenge.

I think among the many causes for this problem is that resources owners have become spectators.

There is no sense of a difference between living on handouts and staying on a sustainable development pathway.

We must therefore find ways to ensure community, and resources owners are directly involved in the development process.

Land owners and communities must not be spectators or remain bystanders.

They must become active participants to support and facilitate development.

Local government for local development Ladies and gentlemen, I am informed that one of the issues highlighted dur-

ing the national dialogue was financing for local development.

I acknowledge that issues surrounding financing for local development and small enterprises still need serious attention.

But it is true that rural development is slow mostly due to inefficiencies in the delivery mechanisms, for example the Provincial Government system.

So in our search for better and workable mechanisms we now have the Constituency Office as a channel to ensure rural development is realized.

TRC and Reparation work

We will continue to work on addressing issues from the past.

However, with a focus on the future, I would like to ask the Ministry of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace to take a lead on finalizing the reparation framework and create a basis for the establishment of the National Reparation Commission to look at these issues more comprehensively.

We will also need to focus on collective reparations and reconciliations promoted through communities own initiatives.

The government cannot afford and does not have the resources for supporting financial compensation.

But we will use every resource available for development, to rebuild communities and the country as a whole.

## Women and Youth

I am informed that Solomon Islands is the first country in the Pacific to adopt a Women Peace Security strategy in our national action plan.

But we still need to strengthen women's participation at all levels of decision-making, including in the National Parliament.

Let us encourage political parties to include and promote women candidates in the upcoming national general elections. The Ministry of Women and Youth will also launch the national youth policy this year.

We need to bring our youth into our development discussions and participation. Let's all work together on this.

## Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen, in conclusion, as all of you are aware, security and the general environment has remained largely stable and governance has improved. This does not excuse us from working harder. In fact we must all work together in order to maintain our peaceful coexistence. All of us must be instruments of peace.

I appeal for unity amongst all our people and all public officers. I appeal for everyone to work together to make a peaceful future for our country. You are all the leaders of this country. Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great. We can be that generation.

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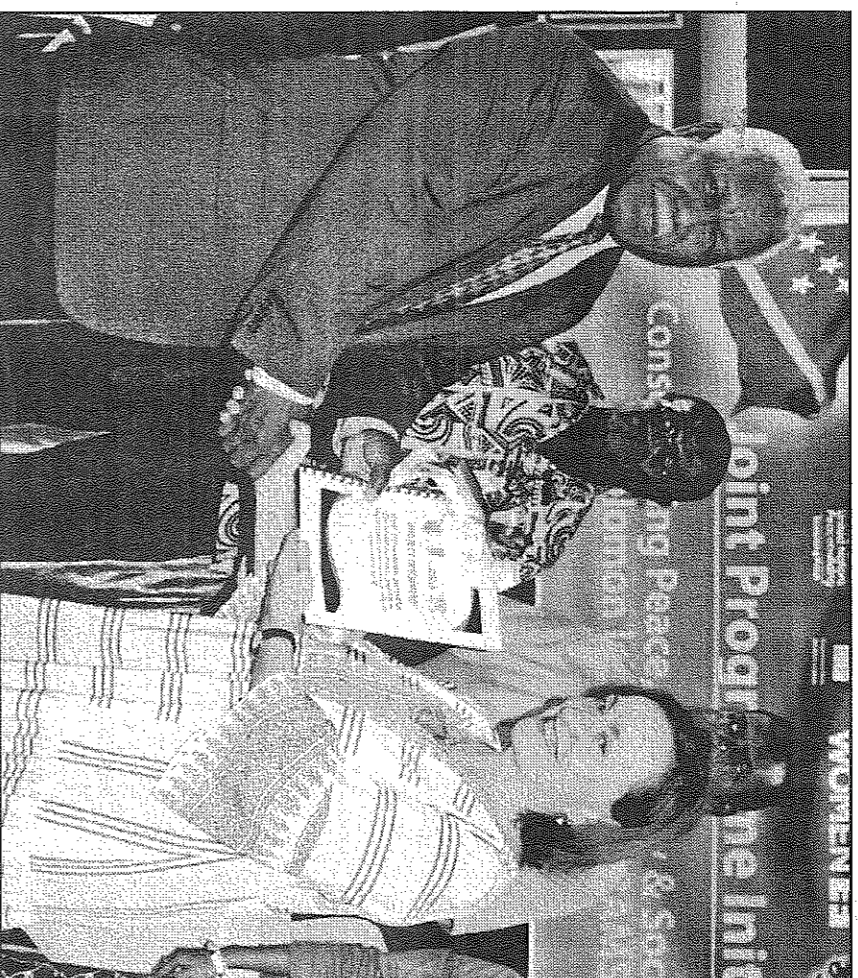
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