

Mission Helpem Fren

A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands

Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group

May 2005

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum for the honour of participating in this historic and important work for the Forum. We also thank the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, his Government and the people of Solomon Islands for receiving the Group so warmly and for all the courtesies and hospitalities offered to us during our one week stay on Honiara.

2. We also wish to place on record our appreciation to the Solomon Islands Secretary for Foreign Affairs and his staff for the assistance offered to us during our entire stay and for the programme prepared for the Group for its work in Honiara. We also wish to acknowledge the support of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands in providing transport to Malaita and the Weathercoast.

3. Our appreciation also goes to all that we met, Their Excellencies the Acting Governor General/Speaker and the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and other Ministers, Heads of Diplomatic Missions, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs, other Government Secretaries, Provincial, Church and Community Leaders as well as representatives of the NGOs, including media, private sector, and civil society groups for giving their time so freely to meet with and talk to the Group. We would like to specially thank the people of Malaita and the Weathercoast for their very warm welcome.

4. We take this opportunity to wish the people of Solomon Islands well and God's blessings during this important time of nation building.

5. Finally, the Forum Eminent Persons Group wish to record their gratitude to Mr Peter Forau, Ms Andie Fong Toy and Ms Isabel Calvert from the Forum Secretariat without whose invaluable support the successful completion of the Group's work would not have been possible.

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INTRODUCTION

The establishment and composition of the Group

On 18 February 2005, the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Sir Allan Kemakeza, on behalf of the Government of Solomon Islands invited the Forum to dispatch an Eminent Persons Group with the objective of assessing the impact of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and the challenges facing Solomon Islands in the future.

2. Following consultations with Forum Leaders the Forum Chair, the Hon Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa, appointed a Forum Eminent Persons Group comprising the Honourable Kaliopate Tavola, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Fiji, Maiava Iulai Toma, Ombudsman of Samoa, and Mr Greg Urwin, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Group, with support from three senior staff from the Secretariat, visited Solomon Islands from 10 – 17 May 2005.

Terms of Reference

3. The Terms of Reference (TOR) for the Eminent Persons Group were as follows:
- To assess the overall impact of RAMSI since its deployment;
 - To assess the development priorities facing Solomon Islands in the future, to make recommendations on how the Forum can help;
 - In carrying out its task, the Group is asked to:
 - take into account cross cutting issues such as capacity building, youth, gender, sustainable development and sustainability;
 - elicit views on possible longer-term solutions to the underlying drivers to the initial conflict that eventually necessitated the regional intervention through RAMSI; and
 - consult with the Solomon Islands Government, Members of Parliament, provincial councils, constitutional holders, the National Peace Council, RAMSI participating governments and leadership on the ground, Royal Solomon Islands Police, Government officials, business groups, traditional leaders, representatives of civil society, faith based organisations, women, youth, development partners, CROP and other interested parties who may not be members of established groupings or organisations.
4. The Group was to report directly to the Forum Chair who would then forward a copy of the report to the Solomon Islands Government and the Forum.

Work of the Group

5. The Group assembled and met for the first time in Nadi, Fiji on 9 May 2005 for a briefing session and travelled together to Solomon Islands on 10 May. On 10 May, the Group was given a traditional Fijian welcome by the Participating Police Force (PPF) and a briefing by RAMSI. It began its formal programme with calls on the Acting Governor General and the Prime Minister on 11 May 2004. These were followed by meetings on 11 – 12 May with the Chair of the Leadership Code Commission and the Auditor General; the National Peace Council; Minister for Police and National Security, Minister for Peace and Reconciliation and Minister for Finance; the Chief Justice and the judiciary; Civil Society representatives; the Chamber of Commerce; the Premier of Guadalcanal Province; and the Attorney General. The Group also had the opportunity to hold discussions with the diplomatic corps. The Group visited Malaita Province on 13 May and the Weathercoast on 14 May. During the visits to the provinces, the Group met with the Premier of Malaita Province, and representatives of the chiefs, women, youth, the church, public service and business. From 15 – 17 May, there were meetings with chiefs from Guadalcanal Province; the Director of the Forum Fisheries Agency; Members of the Opposition; the Solomon Islands Churches Association; media; Magistrates; the Governor of the Reserve Bank; and a small number of individuals. The Group also received a number of written submissions. A copy of the Group's programme in Solomon Islands is attached at [Annex A](#).

6. In addressing our Terms of Reference, we were conscious of the expectations of all stakeholders that we produce a Report that is impartial, balanced and reflective of the needs of the people of Solomon Islands. Our assessments and views are premised solely on the information provided to us and on our judgments first of the impact of RAMSI thus far, and secondly of the kinds of options Solomon Islands may face in the future. We acknowledge that we will not be able to satisfy all interests, and that there are interests which fall outside of our Terms of Reference. However we are confident that the common positions on which we have based our proposals reflect the wider interests of the people of Solomon Islands.

Summary of Key Findings and Recommendations

7. In summary, since the arrival of RAMSI, there has been a return to law and order in Solomon Islands, the financial situation has stabilised, there are signs of economic recovery and the machinery of government is beginning to work again. Our conclusion was that a large majority of the people of Solomon Islands believe in RAMSI and want RAMSI to continue with its work. With the restoration of law and order, and the stabilisation of economic and social conditions, the military presence in Solomon Islands has been scaled down.

8. The stable environment now enjoyed in Solomon Islands is singularly due to the ongoing presence of the Participating Police Force (PPF). Any move to withdraw this assistance or even scale it down will seriously affect that environment. It should be noted that recently the situation has again become less certain with new threats simmering in Malaita.

9. RAMSI has been a success but there are a number of issues that need to be taken account of. Out of necessity, RAMSI has, since its arrival, adopted an interventionist approach. Without compromising the substantial security gains that have been made, it seems timely to adopt a more development approach with Solomon Islands being an equal partner, if not the driver. We recognise that RAMSI has taken some steps in this direction and that progress will not be easy given the breakdown in the machinery of Government and the loss of confidence in the leadership of the country. But the risk is an increasing dependency on RAMSI.

10. Not surprisingly, RAMSI is perceived as a predominantly Australian exercise. Given the desirability of it being a regional exercise, the Pacific representation in both the policing and civilian component should be strengthened where possible. The leadership of the Police Participating Force should also be shared with Pacific Islanders and the special skills of Pacific Islanders derived from their cultural background should be utilised more. At this stage, it remains necessary for RAMSI to occupy in-line positions in the non-security sector. This situation needs to be accompanied by a determined effort to build the capacities of Solomon Islanders. It is noted that the Government has failed to provide a local counterparting arrangement to RAMSI of a kind to enable RAMSI to implement capacity building in the institutions where it extends civilian assistance. As a result of this failure, in our view, RAMSI has been unjustly criticised for failing to embrace local arrangements for its civilian personnel in line Departments. This circumstance may also have made difficult the alignment of some RAMSI activities with approved Government Reform Programmes such as those espoused in the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP).

11. There is apprehension caused by uncertainty about the tenure of RAMSI and nervousness about the consequences of RAMSI leaving too early. We have recommended that the tenure of RAMSI should be measured by the achievement of tasks rather than be time bound. Concerns have been expressed about the fact that two policing systems are operating in Solomon Islands - the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) and the Participating Police Force. We have recommended a process of transition to a situation in which, over time the RSIP would clearly takes the lead.

12. Although law and order has been restored, there are still pockets of conflict and RAMSI needs to maintain its presence in as many places as possible. There are many calls for the instigators of the ethnic tensions – the “big fish” to be investigated and prosecuted. There are some critics of RAMSI: some of those criticisms may be valid; others reflect a vested interest in RAMSI’s early departure. Although those with such interests are a minority, their potential for causing disruption should not be underestimated.

13. We have suggested a number of development priorities for the Government of Solomon Islands to address. For sustainable peace, the underlying issues that led to the ethnic tensions need to be tackled. We have recommended the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict and suggest ways forward. Given the significance of land issues, we have also recommended that the

Commission of Inquiry consider land issues and how land reform can be used for development. Funding should be sought to record the genealogy of the people of Solomon Islands. The development of the provinces and rural areas, and the issue of land dispute resolution should be a priority. A new constitutional arrangement involving the establishment of a federation has been proposed. This is an issue for Solomon Islands ultimately to decide. We caution at this time against such an approach given its high cost and potential for division.

14. There is a strong need for reconciliation in Solomon Islands and efforts on this front seem to have lost some of their momentum. We have called for greater efforts to achieve reconciliation and rehabilitation and recommend consideration in time of the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, based on those international models which do not involve amnesty. Parallel efforts at local levels to facilitate reconciliation between communities, as is being undertaken by the National Peace Council should be maintained and strengthened. That said, a review of the Peace Council may be timely – what does it need to make its work more effective?

15. Chiefs may play a valuable role in conflict resolution especially land disputes. We appreciate that this is a complex area but suggest that consideration could be given to whether there should be formal recognition of the role of chiefs. If so, what form might this recognition best take?

16. There is very considerable room for improvement in the consultative relationships and cooperation between the central and provincial governments, and between the central and provincial Governments and the NGOs. We have recommended that consultative mechanisms should be established between Central and Provincial Governments and the NGOs.

17. Concerns have been expressed about poor donor coordination due to inadequate capacity within the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning and also limited capacity to engage with RAMSI. We fully support current efforts to strengthen the donor coordination role of the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning Department.

18. We have suggested areas where the Forum and its Secretariat could assist Solomon Islands. They include reaffirming support for RAMSI, the appointment of a Forum representative in Solomon Islands, assistance with donor coordination, identifying suitable Forum Island Country civilian advisors, using the good offices of the Secretary General to facilitate reconciliation and rehabilitation, and providing expertise in land matters. We have encouraged the Government to use the expertise of the Forum Fisheries Agency in fisheries management, the expertise of members and CROP agencies in development planning and rural development, and to implement the Regional Forestry Code. We have also suggested that the Forum monitor the preparations for, and the conduct of, the 2006 elections. The Forum Secretariat, in partnership with the Pacific Islands News Association, has been requested to assist the Solomon Islands media in training and in strengthening its organisational and legislative framework. A stocktake on the progress of the implementation of our recommendations, if taken up, should be undertaken in twelve months.

CHAPTER ONE: OVERALL IMPACT OF RAMSI SINCE ITS DEPLOYMENT

19. RAMSI's initial successes were strongly felt on the ground. With the arrival of the RAMSI personnel, there was an immediate improvement in the law and order situation in Honiara and subsequently in other parts of Solomon Islands. The circuit breaking effect of RAMSI's initial presence cannot be over-estimated. To date, eleven Forum members (Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu) have contributed personnel with the Federated States of Micronesia recently expressing interest.

20. The sense of security has very largely endured. Almost four thousand guns have been surrendered and are now removed from the community; a number of those responsible for the deaths and destruction in recent years have been arrested; many more investigations are underway; the justice system is working again; the Royal Solomon Islands Police is becoming a better, more professional body, capable of maintaining law and order; government finances have been stabilised; the delivery of services has improved; civil servants are being paid on time; funding for health and education has increased; and the economic situation has improved.

21. With the significant progress made in restoring law and order and stabilising economic and social conditions, the draw down of RAMSI troops began in late 2003. We support the decision to scale down the military component of RAMSI as well as the retention of a small company to protect the Participating Police Force and Royal Solomon Islands Police officers deployed to fragile locations in Solomon Islands.

22. In 2004, RAMSI focused on the consolidation of the rule of law, the beginnings of institutional strengthening and introduced some measures to revive the economy. Significant reforms have been introduced into the Royal Solomon Islands Police, and support for the justice system and prisons was introduced over that period. RAMSI has established a facility to assist institutional strengthening in Government and RAMSI personnel are in the Cabinet Office and Finance, Public Service, Health, Justice, Lands and Police Departments. RAMSI is also working on a specific Institutional Strengthening Project for the Health Sector.

23. Solomon Islands has experienced the fastest Real GDP growth amongst Forum Island Countries in 2004, of 5.5%. However, this is in the context of a loss of 25% of GDP during the conflict years and is arguably artificially inflated by the influx of RAMSI based cash into the local economy. Growth has been underpinned by an expansion in fishing, agriculture (especially cocoa and copra) and forestry. Forestry has been the main driver of growth, but logging is thought to be proceeding at an unsustainable rate. Introduction of new legislation to limit logging is expected soon and it will require political will to enforce it. If it is enforced, growth rates, which are supported by logging income, should drop significantly. Major new investments are required to achieve sustainable long run growth but few are on the horizon. A PNG based company has recently re-opened a palm oil plantation in the Guadalcanal Plains and there is some prospect that the Gold Ridge mine will be reopened.

24. The fiscal situation continues to improve. The recurrent budget balanced in 2004, with strong domestic revenue growth of 57% - a result of better tax compliance and increased revenue from customs and excise (largely derived from forestry exports). Debt restructuring and debt servicing continued and inflation halved from the 2003 rate of 10.1% to 6.9% in 2004. But debt servicing remains a very large problem and a considerable constraint on future growth prospects. Progress in the economy in 2005 relies on continued improvement in the law and order situation, stable public finances, and structural reforms to promote governance and sustainable private sector led economic growth. An Economic Reform Unit was established in 2004 within the Ministry of Finance, National Reform and Planning to design and implement economic reforms. Work has begun but has a long way to go, as the state of the economy is unlikely to promote fast or equitable enough growth.

25. The work of RAMSI in 2005 is characterised by moves towards sustainability and self-reliance. Here the emphasis has changed to capacity building and training. Over recent months RAMSI, with the encouragement and support of the Government, has expanded the scope of its work to include:

- Implementation of a range of governance programs under the broad heading of Machinery of Government: this covers assistance to and reforms in the office of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet; the Parliament; the Electoral Commission; and the Public Service.
- Extensive programs to strengthen the administration of justice, including assistance to the High Court, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and of the Public Solicitor, the Magistrate's Court, and the Prison Service.
- Support for the institutions which safeguard integrity in the public sector: the Auditor-General's Office; the Leadership Code Commission; and the Ombudsman's Office.
- Assisting the Economic Reform Unit within the Ministry of Finance, National Reform and Planning to implement the Government's plans for economic reform and to generate new reform proposals for consideration by the Government.
- Providing advice on a range of policy options for both Government and donors, aimed at boosting rural livelihoods.

26. We were advised that RAMSI's priorities for 2005 – 2006 include rural and provincial development, capacity development across all areas, public service reforms/recruitment and high profile trials, with law and order and government finances remaining central.

Issues Raised Concerning RAMSI's Role

27. In all our consultations, the support and appreciation for the work of RAMSI thus far was quite overwhelming. We heard from many people at all levels of society, especially those directly affected by the tension and the most vulnerable, that they feel able to think in terms of rebuilding their lives. RAMSI's overall performance, and particularly in restoring law and order, is widely seen as successful. We commend its excellent achievements in restoring law and order and strengthening Government finances. We believe the expressions of support for RAMSI are genuine and sincere. We urge RAMSI to use this support to enhance its work in addressing the following issues:

The role and tenure of RAMSI

28. Out of necessity, RAMSI adopted a crisis intervention approach to events in Solomon Islands. At the time of the intervention a rapid, swift and immediately effective response was required. This may have seemed intrusive and to have circumvented the sorts of processes that would have normally been introduced in, for example, a development assistance activity. Consequently, issues such as accountability to the Government of Solomon Islands, the transfer of skills, and regional ownership of RAMSI have, rightly or wrongly, begun to arise. It is important that the people of Solomon Islands understand that the role of RAMSI is to help create the conditions necessary for a return to stability, peace and a growing economy. There seemed to us to be broadening expectation that RAMSI will be responsible for, or will fix, everything. To some extent this reflects a loss of confidence in the leadership of the country but this misperception needs to be addressed to avoid the further growth of unrealistic expectations.

29. There is apprehension caused by uncertainty about the tenure of RAMSI and nervousness that if RAMSI leaves too early, Solomon Islands will revert to lawlessness. There is also a perception that the tenure of RAMSI is dependent on political whim. It was suggested to us that there should be some specific time line or alternatively an exit strategy for RAMSI and that these incorporate targets for capacity building and skills transfer. This would ensure that when RAMSI eventually leaves, Solomon Islanders are ready and able to take over the machinery of government effectively. The Group recalls the assurance by the Prime Minister of Australia that it would not withdraw its support for RAMSI until the job is done and the recent provision of a large sum of money in the Australian budget for four year's funding for RAMSI. The Group **recommends** that the tenure of RAMSI should be measured by the achievement of tasks rather than be time bound.

Regional representation

30. We heard concerns that RAMSI has a minimal regional identity and is perceived as a predominantly Australian assistance mission. Some Solomon Islanders said they felt that because RAMSI is controlled by Australia, it is not a regional mission. There were suggestions that RAMSI should be accountable to the Secretary General of the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat.

31. In reality, such views do insufficient credit to the contribution made by the Pacific Island Countries, many of them with few resources to spare. The Pacific Participating Force is, unquestionably, a regional effort that combines police contingents contributed by eleven Forum Member Countries. Each contingent has a Commander with all the Pacific Contingents being answerable to a Pacific Team Leader who is currently a New Zealander. Together all the contingents forming the PPF work under a Deputy Commissioner of Police. Given that Australia provides many of the resources required by the PPF, it seems natural that it assumes a leadership role. However we feel that there maybe scope for this leadership to be more fully shared with the Pacific Islands contingent to give fuller expression to the regional identity of the PPF.

32. In light of this, we **recommend** that a Pacific Islander should head the command of the Pacific Islands PPF contingent. Care should also be taken to place Pacific Island police officers in appropriate positions according to their current rank and not to have them reporting to more junior officers. RAMSI should also encourage longer terms for PPF police officers (currently on four months rotation).

33. We also heard that the Pacific Islanders serving under the PPF are well liked among Solomon Islanders. In our view this is because Pacific Islanders can relate well to the locals. We **recommend** that RAMSI take steps to make optimal use of this, particularly by supporting community policing initiatives as they have been shown to be very effective.

34. At the present time, there are only five civilians from Forum Island Countries working in the civilian component of RAMSI, and we heard complaints that this component was very much Australian driven. Our view is that while we appreciate the concerns about the fact that the leadership of RAMSI is assumed by Australia, this was inevitable given the circumstances in which the mission was mounted. There will need to be, over time, a greater commitment by other donors to take up some of the funding for RAMSI's work. On the issue of the lack of control by the Government, we were advised that all RAMSI personnel, either serving as advisors or filling in-line positions require the approval of the public service before joining Government Departments/Ministries. Although their work is not governed by General Orders, they do discharge work and duties delegated and prescribed by the respective Permanent Secretaries and they are accountable to the respective Permanent Secretaries. In our view therefore the Government has control over the civilian component of RAMSI. Perhaps there are weaknesses in the management of this component by the Permanent Secretaries.

35. We believe also that that engagement of a few more civilian representatives from other Forum Island Countries, other than Australia and New Zealand, will enhance the regional outlook of RAMSI. It should be noted also that one of the Deputy Special Coordinator positions is held by a civilian from Fiji. RAMSI is already considering increasing recruitment from Forum Island Countries but it perceives the limited capacity in the Forum Island Countries to be a barrier to deployment under the RAMSI civilian component. That is no doubt true, and if we are to make any progress, innovative

recruitment procedures need to be adopted. We should be seeking to identify very specific positions in areas where we know expertise to be available in Forum Island Countries and make specific requests to governments to make it available for defined and short-term periods. Qualified Pacific personnel currently residing outside the region might also be explored.

Two parallel policing systems

36. There are two policing systems operating in Solomon Islands - the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the Participating Police Force. The PPF is headed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police in the RSIP. We heard views, to the effect, that this dual system might be counter-productive to the long-term strengthening of the Royal Solomon Islands Police. We understand that members of the PPF are now only serving in advisory roles alongside the RSIP. Our view is that the Royal Solomon Islands Police was compromised during the tensions and its structure was basically dismantled as militants infiltrated the command of the force. In our view it was necessary for RAMSI to operate its police assistance under a separate command so that its officers were able to restore law and order and address the setbacks in the RSIP without being impeded by its limitations.

37. We heard views from some of the PPF Officers themselves that they prefer to work under a structure other than that of the RSIP. We also heard that there is still community distrust of the RSIP and that Solomon Islanders prefer to address their problems to PPF Officers rather than RSIP Officers, depending on the circumstances. It is acknowledged, however, that as the RSIP is rebuilt, it should gradually move into the driver's seat, with PPF providing support. At the same time, the people need to regain their confidence in the RSIP. Rebuilding the RSIP will be a key to the sustainability of the security of SI.

38. Taking account of these views, we **recommend** that PPF operations continue under a separate command but that its work be guided by a strategic plan outlining specific tasks. How long the PPF continues to operate must be determined by the achievement of these tasks and any anticipated scaling down must be accompanied by a corresponding up-scaling of the capacity in the RSIP. We also **recommend** that the recruitment process underway in the RSIP be continued as quickly as resources allow and that potential leaders must be identified and trained so that the aging command structure can be revitalised.

Role of RAMSI civilian personnel

39. RAMSI civilian personnel are deployed in Government Departments mainly as advisors. In some cases, however, RAMSI personnel are filling in-line positions especially in the Department of Finance and Treasury and also the Ministry of Health. Views expressed have differed. Some politicians, trade union representatives and a few NGO representatives shared the view that RAMSI personnel should only serve as advisors and that Solomon Islanders should be encouraged to take up in-line positions.

These views are premised on the need to build local capacity so that when RAMSI eventually leaves, Solomon Islanders are able to continue the work. One donor claimed that the civilian components of RAMSI are unsustainable in that the technical assistance is not linked to the Government's priorities, there is no effort directed at getting the Government to take ownership, and RAMSI is creating aid dependency.

40. On the other hand, we heard generally, including from high ranking officers in the public service, senior politicians and ordinary people, that there is merit, indeed necessity, in RAMSI personnel assuming in-line positions in the Public Service. The in-line positions which are now being filled by RAMSI personnel have been vacant for some time (there is about a 20% vacancy rate in the public service) and because the public service does not have capacity yet to fill these positions, it was important that RAMSI fill some of the key positions especially in the Department of Finance and Treasury and Ministry of Health to restore services. We were told there was much work to be done in the Department of Finance and Treasury but that the Department does not have the personnel to do this.

41. The work of RAMSI in addressing financial stability in the Government has paid handsome dividends. Since assistance was extended to the Department of Finance and Treasury there has been a substantial improvement in revenue performance, expenditure control and debt-servicing. This in our view has been achieved because RAMSI also provided expertise to fill the vacant in-line positions in the Department as well as appropriate advisory support. It is clear to us that this success would not have been possible without the intervention of RAMSI personnel in the hands-on implementation of its assistance to the Department. It is important to involve Solomon Islanders but there is a lack of qualified and experienced staff. We offer this same view in the case of the Ministry of Health. We believe there was and is a need for RAMSI personnel to fill the in-line positions at the Ministry of Health because of a skills gap in the sector and problems with securing local recruitment on a timely basis by the Public Service Department.

42. We believe also that it is not necessary that RAMSI personnel be employed by the Public Service under the same conditions as local public servants. In our view, the pay conditions of RAMSI personnel are not an issue as these do not impact on the Government's budget. The downside, of course, is the creation of an environment where the disparity in the conditions between RAMSI personnel and local public servants becomes an issue for some. We feel this is why it is important that RAMSI personnel not be employed under public service provisions. It needs to be clear that they are not working to the same conditions as local public servants.

43. On the issue of counter-parting, our view is that there has been no design by RAMSI to inhibit the employment of local counterparts. We believe the lack of local counterparts is the result of recruiting problems in the public service and that it is a concern for the public service to address urgently with whatever technical assistance is required. We agree though that RAMSI must identify and work with local Solomon

Islanders, including in the provinces, who demonstrate an ability to respond to training so that capacity-building becomes an integral part of RAMSI assistance.

44. We commend RAMSI for engaging in institutional strengthening and supporting the Solomon Islands Government to build its capacity to undertake useful reforms that will strengthen governance in the public service and create capacity for economic development. We support RAMSI continuing to provide assistance to the Government of Solomon Islands in these areas but it should do so according to a specific plan agreed to with the Government of Solomon Islands. We **recommend** therefore that priority be given to the formulation of a capacity-building strategy, to be agreed with the Solomon Islands Government, outlining the positions which RAMSI personnel should fill, and that there be identification and recruitment/appointment of local Solomon Islanders to serve as counter-parts to RAMSI officers. We further **recommend** that the Solomon Islands Government develop a Strategic Staff Development Plan that sets out clear career paths for capable and high performing local public servants which RAMSI can be guided by to develop a counter-parting arrangement that will be beneficial to Solomon Islands.

Continuing law and order issues

45. Although law and order has been restored, there are still pockets of conflict. We were told that “peace is yet to be built into everybody’s hearts”. There are a number of guns still to be recovered and this causes a feeling of insecurity particularly at the provincial level. There is also a fear that if RAMSI leaves, the bad old days will return. It is believed also that because of the “pay back” system, those in prison today will one day return home and carry out their revenge. Kwaso and marijuana are causing law and order problems and violence in villages. Domestic violence is also an issue. There are perceptions that RAMSI police are giving insufficient attention to this order of crime and that the RSIP is currently incapable of addressing it. We **recommend** that within its operational limits, RAMSI station PPF in as many places in the provinces as possible.

Instigators of the tensions

46. We heard many times of the need for RAMSI and the Government of Solomon Islands to continue to pursue the instigators of the tensions – the “big fish” – not just the followers. At the community level some felt that those that have been prosecuted and convicted have tended to be lower level players, although equally liable for their share of blame. The senior figures who have been arrested were perceived to have been so for activities, for example, relating to corruption rather than instigating the tensions. We **recommend** continued focussed support and strengthening of the Courts system (High Court, Magistracy and lower courts, and registrar services) and RSIP (both investigations unit and prosecutions arm) to meet the challenge of investigating and prosecuting those involved in the ethnic tensions including the instigators.

Critics of RAMSI

47. Critics of RAMSI fall into two distinct categories – those with valid, specific and constructively critical views; and those who feel that their individual vested interests are threatened by RAMSI's presence. We note the importance of communication with the people of Solomon Islands as a means of staying on top of misinformation as the latter group described above are clearly adept in their usage of the media. As RAMSI moves into a development phase, its communications effort should place more emphasis on the civilian side of its work. RAMSI might also seek to strengthen community policing initiatives as a means of counteracting some of the claims made against it. It was also suggested to the Group that a network of communication centres be developed so that villagers in particular are kept informed. There also seems to be uncertainty about the status of the Townsville Peace Agreement, the amnesty provided under that Agreement and the relationship between the Townsville Peace Agreement and the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003. We **recommend** that RAMSI continue to monitor the criticisms against it, continue to develop transparent ways to address constructive criticism and not underestimate the potential for disruption by critics with vested interests.

CHAPTER TWO: DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES FACING SOLOMON ISLANDS

48. Recognising the achievements of RAMSI and the Government of Solomon Islands so far but bearing in mind the concerns expressed, there are a number of issues that the Group would like to suggest the Government of Solomon Islands consider addressing. RAMSI and other partners would obviously have a significant role to play in assisting Solomon Islands to do so.

Underlying causes of conflict

49. For sustainable peace, the underlying issues that led to the ethnic tensions need to be addressed. We were told of a number of causes for the tensions including the failure of leadership, land tenure issues especially on Guadalcanal, and the lack of development in the provinces.

50. We heard that the problems of Solomon Islands relate to the failure of leaders at both national and provincial level to take measures to both prevent and respond to the tensions once they erupted into violence. Indeed, there are allegations that some leaders were the instigators of the conflict. We were told that the people did not fail Solomon Islands and in fact, it was the people, the churches, the chiefs and the NGOs that kept the communities together (at the micro level) during the conflict. There is still a lack of trust in leaders, including the public service. The people of Solomon Islands look to RAMSI for leadership. Public confidence in national institutions and leadership needs to be rebuilt.

51. We were told that land particularly in Guadalcanal has been alienated from traditional owners either by compulsory acquisition by the Government; by being properly acquired from traditional owners; or improperly acquired from traditional owners.

52. We observed that Solomon Islands is still a fragile community where provincialism remains entrenched and there are still strong animosities, particularly between people of Malaita and Guadalcanal. The lack of development in Malaita and its large population has meant that large numbers of Malaitans have moved to Guadalcanal and other provinces in search of education and employment. The mix of a matrilineal tradition on Guadalcanal and a patrilineal tradition on Malaita in relation to inheritance of land also exacerbated tensions. We would support the immediate development of small scale agricultural activities e.g. cocoa, copra, and livestock in Malaita as a means of lessening the need for Malaitans to move to the other provinces.

53. We were told of, and we observed during our visits to the provinces, the disparity in development between Honiara and the provinces. We were impressed by the willingness of villagers to help themselves, for example in small agricultural activities and businesses. They, however, expressed concern that corruption and favouritism were

affecting the consideration of assistance for rural development. We have noted that 2005 – 2006 priorities of RAMSI include rural and provincial development and we were told of the availability of EU funds for rural development. The Government of Solomon Islands also needs to be more efficient in transferring funds to the provinces.

54. Land matters cannot be separated from development. It was suggested to the Group that as Guadalcanal had provided much of the land for national development, a scheme should be devised to decentralise development so that other provinces can also allocate some of their lands for national development. This would create a sense that all traditional land owners share the responsibility for national development. We understand the registration of customary land is possible under the Customary Land Records Act 1994 and the Land and Titles Act 1969 but there has been little progress due to lack of resources. Technical assistance is being provided to look at this issue and in particular, the consolidation of the two Acts.

55. There was general support for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry with an independent Chair from the region to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict. We **recommend** that the Government of Solomon Islands consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry with an independent Chair to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict and suggest ways forward. The Commission of Inquiry should also consider land issues and how land reform can be used for development. We also **recommend** that development of the provinces and rural areas be a priority. The Government should also make the issue of land dispute resolution a priority; there are many regional examples to draw on in this area, and indeed some local machinery which appears to have fallen into disuse but which might, in whole or in part, be revived.

56. Solomon Islands has an oral tradition but as it moves to become a written society, knowledge of the genealogy of the people especially as it relates to land ownership is at risk of being lost. We **recommend** that the Government of Solomon Islands seek funding for a project to record the genealogy of the people of Solomon Islands as it relates to customary land ownership.

57. We understand that RAMSI is assisting in the strengthening of the magistrates courts. We would strongly encourage this especially given the role of the lower courts in dealing with land disputes and conflicts at an early stage, and that it be a priority for the Solomon Islands Government. We were told that during the tensions, people took the law into their own hands as their grievances were not being addressed. Magistrates Courts with proper resourcing need to be located and established in the provinces. With appropriate safeguards, consideration could also be given to re-establishing traditional courts to attend to petty crime at the village level.

58. Concerns were raised with us about the non-implementation of the Townsville Peace Agreement and the Marau Peace Agreement. Others, however, acknowledged that some of the provisions in the Townsville Peace Agreement may have been unrealistic and included under duress. In addition, both the Townsville and Marau Peace Agreements

have expired. It would seem to us the Townsville Peace Agreement has achieved its purpose of bringing about a ceasefire and has now been overtaken.

59. We are aware that there is a proposal for constitutional reform, specifically to introduce a federal system of government. We heard views both in support of and against the proposal. Those in support see the federal system as the answer to the ethnic tensions. We were disturbed by the expectation that under the new system, provinces/states might be able to prohibit movement of people into their provinces/states. Those against highlighted the divisive nature of such a system in a country that is already divided and its high cost, when Solomon Islands is struggling economically. We were also told that the draft federal constitution is silent on the sharing of resources and tax revenue. It was proposed by some that a more appropriate approach to Solomon Islands current situation might be to concentrate on the more effective delivery of services to the provinces and rural areas rather than set up cumbersome expensive State government machinery. There was also some concern that this issue would be politicised during the next general elections. We are aware that Members of Parliament have been asked to consult with their constituencies on the Constitutional Amendment Bill.

60. A sensible suggestion that we heard was that there should be an independent assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed reform. We were told of some improvements for the stability of Parliament proposed in the draft constitution. These could be separated from the question of a federal system. We **recommend** that the Government proceed with caution with regard to the proposal for a federal system, given its high costs and potential for division.

Reconciliation and rehabilitation

61. The Group is of the view that there is a strong need for reconciliation in Solomon Islands with the priority being reconciliation between Malaita and Guadalcanal, and Malaita and the Solomon Islands Government. There were some indications that there also needs to be reconciliation between villages on the Weathercoast. Reconciliation should involve the chiefs, churches, youth and women, take specific account of women as victims of violence, and focus at the grass roots level before working towards larger reconciliation. We were told that there are reconciliation efforts being undertaken but the Group is of the view that these efforts need to gather momentum. There also seems to be reluctance by donors to be involved in reconciliation and the mediation necessary to bring about the reconciliation.

62. The National Peace Council seems to be the main body involved in reconciliation particularly at the grass roots level but the support it receives, including financial support, seems somewhat tenuous. We would suggest that it may be timely to review the National Peace Council to consider how its work can be made more effective. The respective roles of the National Peace Council and the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Unity in reconciliation also need to be clarified.

63. It was suggested to the Group that consideration should be given to the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission. At the same time, there was concern expressed that such a Commission should not undercut the investigation and prosecution of those involved in the ethnic conflict. The Group **recommends** that the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Unity, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, be tasked to provide a policy paper on establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission based on international models which do not involve amnesty. The Forum could assist in the preparation of this.

64. We heard several calls for rehabilitation particularly in Guadalcanal and we are of the view that reconciliation and rehabilitation must go hand in hand. We have noted that the churches as national institutions in being, might play a more proactive role in mediation, reconciliation and rehabilitation, as some of them have to their credit, done so in the past. Given their cultural background, the Pacific Islands contingent of the PPF could also play a useful role in mediation and reconciliation but they would need to be given the training, authority and resources to be effective. Peace and national unity components could also be included in school curricula and civic education programmes. We **recommend** greater efforts to achieve reconciliation and rehabilitation and call on donors to support these efforts.

65. We heard that many people in all sectors of society, women, youth and media and those in prison for tension related crimes have been traumatised by the ethnic conflict. We **recommend** that consideration be given to the provision of trauma counselling.

Rationalising operational aspects of RAMSI and Solomon Islands

66. We observed that with the restoration of law and order, RAMSI is moving to a development approach with the Solomon Islands Government and people taking more ownership of the process. Eventually, RAMSI will become essentially advisory, with Solomon Islands as the driver of nation building. Better operational synergy will be needed between Solomon Islands and RAMSI, and the Government of Solomon Islands should not be seen to be taking an arms length approach to RAMSI. We **recommend** that the Government of Solomon Islands become more proactive in facilitating the work of RAMSI at the interface, in order to maximise gains and be seen to be shouldering its responsibilities, and that RAMSI develop its programme to better reflect the Government of Solomon Islands' development priorities as identified in the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan.

Rebuilding the Government

67. As was observed earlier, many of the institutions of Government were virtually non-functioning at the time of the intervention. Institutions established under the Constitution to perform “watchdog” functions and to shore up integrity in governance have not worked for some time. We were told that the population feels isolated from government and unable to assert its rights and interests in vital matters including land and resource use.

68. The Auditor General has not submitted an annual report in the last fifteen years and has only recently submitted sectoral reports on customs, forestry and fisheries. We were told that the Office of the Auditor General was not independent as it was subject to normal budgetary processes and recruitment under the Public Service Act. There have also been delays by the Government in approving technical assistance to the Auditor General's Office. The Parliamentary Accounts Committee has also not performed its oversighting role.

69. We heard that the Leadership Code Commission is directly subordinate to the Prime Minister's Office and thus lacks independence. The Commission does not have the power to enforce its decisions and supports an amendment to its empowering Act. We were also told that to facilitate its work, the definition of "leader" needed to be more narrowly couched as it currently covers about 15-20,000 people including civil servants. "Leaders" are required to provide reports of their assets and the enforcement of this is not practical, given the numbers involved. We were also told that the Commission required more resources.

70. It is necessary to appropriately strengthen the offices of the Auditor General, the Leadership Commission and Ombudsman to enhance transparency and accountability. We note that there is a great deal of expertise and experience in the region especially in the operation of leadership codes and that a regional person is currently attached to the Office of the Ombudsman.

71. In addition, the morale of the public service seemed to have been at an all time low during the tensions and is only now slowly recovering. There were strong calls for the immediate reform of the Public Service Commission and its procedures, particularly in regard to recruitment and salaries. Significant delays in the recruitment of public servants have compounded difficulties in capacity building and skills transfer. We were told that there are suitably qualified Solomon Islanders but they need to be identified, including from abroad. It was suggested that, over time, the resources directed at RAMSI adviser packages might be utilised to recruit Solomon Islanders and other Pacific advisers. The closure of the Institute of Public Administration and Management (which has only recently been established) was blamed for some of the inefficiencies in the public service and the lack of understanding of the role of public servants.

72. We heard that the Solomon Islands Council of Trade Unions is undertaking a review of the "scheme of services" – their view is that inadequate remuneration is a key contributor to acceptance of corrupt practices and bribes as a subsidy to low income.

73. We were told that the Government does not have a coherent legislative programme and that Cabinet is slow or fails to provide policy directives on time to allow legal drafting to start. We heard that a number of areas - labour and police were mentioned - need legislative attention. The preparation of cabinet papers also needs attention.

74. We understand that RAMSI has an electoral assistance programme focusing on strengthening the capacity of the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission in the lead up to

the 2006 elections. RAMSI also has a one-year village level civil education project to enhance Solomon Islanders' knowledge and understanding of their systems of government and as a means of building the demand for a responsible and accountable government. We have suggested that the Forum should monitor the preparations for, and conduct of, the 2006 General elections in Solomon Islands, and support the work going on in the Electoral Commission, if possible.

75. The Group **strongly encourages** the Government of Solomon Islands to continue to strengthen all arms of Government including through proper resourcing, to ensure that there is an effective and responsive public service, and that the Parliament, Executive and the accountability institutions are performing their roles.

Traditional chiefly leadership system

76. We heard that the chiefs play a valuable role in conflict resolution, especially land disputes. There were calls to formally recognise the role of the chiefs and provide them with training and financial support. We **recommend** that consideration be given to whether the role of chiefs in mediation, reconciliation and consultation in the areas of land, good governance and justice should be recognised in the Constitution. The establishment of a Great Council of Chiefs could be considered to give structure to the chiefs' role but this needs to be worked out through comprehensive discussion, taking into full account local complexities. The Forum could support this discussion by facilitating the inclusion of various regional models in that discussion.

Increased Central/Provincial Governments synergy and cooperation

77. We were advised that there has been a breakdown in communications between the central and provincial governments and in the transfer of funds. We **recommend** that a focused effort to promote better dialogue, communication and consultations be made. There should be a similar focus on creating a better flow of resources from the centre to the provinces to fuel economic activities, to decentralise development, and build essential infrastructures.

Increased Central/Provincial Governments/NGO synergy and cooperation

78. NGOs, including the churches, youth groups and women, play an important role in a fragile state and this needs to be developed. They should be empowered with recognition, structures and resources. Consultative mechanisms should be established between Central and Provincial Governments and the NGOs but firstly, NGOs have to organise themselves and create peak bodies to dialogue with both levels of government. NGOs have an important role to play in nation building and once the consultative mechanism is established, donors can then avoid by-passing governments when extending assistance. With proper resourcing, churches should also be used increasingly in the provision of education, particularly vocational training.

79. We **recommend** that consultative mechanisms be established between Central and Provincial Governments and the NGOs.

Finances

80. Financial and budgetary stability has been achieved in Solomon Islands with Government revenue having increased considerably but the country had an external debt of \$1.462 billion at the end of 2004. If the debt were to be serviced fully, it would amount to 25-30% of the total Government budget. Only the ADB and World Bank debts have been serviced. We were told that a “Honiara Club” had been formed based on the principles of the Paris Club. The Minister of Finance is hoping to hold a meeting of creditors in September/October to address debt restructuring and rescheduling. The Central Bank of Solomon Islands 2004 annual report notes that preliminary estimates suggest that without debt forgiveness, the Government will not be able to fund debt obligations in the medium term.

81. It is **recommended** that the Government of Solomon Islands develop a sound understanding of the debt composition and consider appropriate options for restructuring and reprogramming this debt so its servicing can be prioritised and managed on a sustainable basis. This could be done with the support of development partners and in consultation with creditors. Sound debt management is an essential step towards rehabilitating the economy. Further, it is **recommended** that in the longer term the Solomon Islands can work to avoid such situations reoccurring through the implementation of the third of the Forum Eight Principles of Accountability which states “*Loan agreements or guarantees entered into by governments to be presented to Parliament/Congress, with sufficient information to enable Parliament/Congress to understand the longer term implications.*” This principle should be enshrined in law and presentations to the Parliament should be timely. Implementation of a more sound debt management system is **recommended**, again this is an area where donors can assist, as this would ensure government has up to date information on the composition, status and level of debt which would aid in good decision making. It should also be recognised that debt is only part of the problem and it is necessary to place all government expenditures on a more sustainable basis. The Secretariat could assist in facilitating technical assistance to help Solomon Islands establish a sound debt management system.

Economic Development – addressing poverty

82. Although preliminary estimates showed that real gross domestic product grew by 5.5% in 2004, there is currently heavy reliance on donors for funding of basic services such as education and health. We would caution the Government against becoming too reliant on donor support for the provision of basic services.

83. The improved balance of payments in 2004 was due in large part to excessive harvesting of logs. There are concerns with regard to the unsustainability of logging practices, the prices contracted for Solomon Islands logs being significantly lower than the average price of similar logs exported from other countries, the lack of remittance and tax relating to log exports, and the corrupt practices associated with logging activities. This reliance on one commodity, which is being harvested at an unsustainable rate,

makes the economy especially vulnerable. Corrupt practices particularly in the granting of timber rights are causing community violence. We **recommend** that the Government enacts and strictly enforces the Forest Bill 2004 and implements the 1995 Regional Forestry Code.

84. In a bid to attract investors, there are also concerns that the Government is giving away too much revenue through duty exemptions and remissions when it has significant debts still outstanding. There is a need to resolve land issues if there is to be security of land tenure for large scale developments. Chiefs have suggested that they should be consulted first before any such development.

85. We have already noted the importance of decentralising development to address economic disparities outside of Honiara. An increase in developmental information flow to the rural people will assist them in developing their own resources. This might in turn reduce urban drift. Infrastructure must however be provided in the provinces to attract investment and there must be protection and security of investment; the problems being experienced by RIPEL may be a case in point although that situation is clearly a complicated one. We noted that rural Government services are lacking, for example, agricultural extension and infrastructure facilities such as roads, communications and access to markets. We **recommend that** the Government of Solomon Islands consider other forms of economic activity, for example, aquaculture and tourism to spread economic development and lessen the dependency on logging. We have earlier noted that the palm oil industry is being revitalised and there is interest in reopening Gold Ridge. The Government may need to consider improvements to its investment approval processes and whether there is scope for the establishment of Tax Free Zones.

Donor coordination and collaboration

86. Donor representatives not only indicated that there was poor donor coordination due to inadequate capacity within the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning but also, according to some donors, limited opportunity to engage with RAMSI. We understand donors have attempted to bridge the gaps through donor led roundtable meetings. RAMSI, we were advised, does not participate in these meetings. Donor representatives also strongly supported the need for engagement by other Pacific Island contributors, and suggested that the EU model of aid financing be considered i.e. collective pools of aid funding to support a coordinated programme rather than bilateral programmes only. UNDP is to provide initial assistance to help strengthen the aid coordination unit but strongly urged the Forum Secretariat to take a leading role in donor coordination and management.

87. We **recommend** strengthening the donor coordination role of the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning Department. Donor assistance also needs to be prioritised against the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan and multi-annual aid programmes should be negotiated. Provinces should also be consulted when development plans and budgets are being developed.

Education

88. Solomon Islands has a high proportion of young people and there are not enough educational facilities at all levels. We heard that primary education is critical but receives minimal resources. There are also not enough jobs to absorb the working population in the country. We understand that the Government has recently adopted a policy on technical and vocational education and training and we look forward to its implementation. We **recommend** that the Government implement its policy on technical and vocational education and training, as a priority, in order to keep young people in the provinces. The regional education project (PRIDE) may be able to assist in implementing some aspects of the technical and vocational education and training policy and/or aspects of the education sector strategic plan. Peace and reconciliation training and civic education should also be part of the school curricula. Where possible, educational facilities, including tertiary facilities, should be situated in the provinces.

Media

89. The Group has noted the role of the media in fighting corruption and ensuring that the people of Solomon Islands have access to information. We were told of the need for legislation to strengthen Public Service Broadcasting and freedom of information, and training for all media. We **recommend** that the Forum Secretariat, in partnership with the Pacific Islands New Association, consider ways of assisting the Solomon Islands media particularly in regard to training and strengthening its organisational and legislative framework

CHAPTER THREE: RECOMMENDATIONS

90. The recommendations drawn from the discussions in the previous chapters are as follows:

- (i) That the tenure of RAMSI should be measured by the achievement of tasks rather than be time bound.
- (ii) That a Pacific Islander should head the command of the Pacific Islands PPF contingent. Care should also be taken to place Pacific Island police officers in appropriate positions according to their current rank and not to have them reporting to more junior officers. RAMSI should also encourage longer terms for PPF police officers (currently on four months rotation).
- (iii) That RAMSI take steps to make optimal use of the fact that the Pacific Islanders serving under the PPF are well liked among Solomon Islanders as they can relate well to the locals, particularly by supporting community policing initiatives as they have been shown to be very effective.
- (iv) That PPF operations continue under a separate command but that its work be guided by a strategic plan outlining specific tasks. How long the PPF continues to operate must be determined by the achievement of these tasks and any anticipated scaling down must be accompanied by a corresponding up-scaling of the capacity in the RSIP. We also **recommend** that the recruitment process underway in the RSIP be continued as quickly as resources allow and that potential leaders must be identified and trained so that the aging command structure can be revitalised.
- (v) That priority be given to the formulation of a capacity-building strategy, to be agreed with the Solomon Islands Government, outlining the positions which RAMSI personnel should fill, and that there be identification and recruitment/appointment of local Solomon Islanders to serve as counterparts to RAMSI officers. We further **recommend** that the Solomon Islands Government develop a Strategic Staff Development Plan that sets out clear career paths for capable and high performing local public servants which RAMSI can be guided by to develop a counter-parting arrangement that will be beneficial to Solomon Islands.
- (vi) That within its operational limits, RAMSI station PPF in as many places in the provinces as possible.
- (vii) That there be continued focussed support and strengthening of the Courts system (High Court, Magistracy and lower courts, and registrar services) and RSIP (both investigations unit and prosecutions arm) to meet the

challenge of investigating and prosecuting those involved in the ethnic tension including the instigators.

- (viii) That RAMSI continue to monitor the criticisms against it, continue to develop transparent ways to address constructive criticism and not underestimate the potential for disruption by critics with vested interests.
- (ix) We **recommend** that the Government of Solomon Islands consider establishing a Commission of Inquiry with an independent Chair to investigate the causes of the ethnic conflict and suggest ways forward. The Commission of Inquiry should also consider land issues and how land reform can be used for development. We also **recommend** that development of the provinces and rural areas be a priority. The Government should also make the issue of land dispute resolution a priority; there are many regional examples to draw on in this area, and indeed some local machinery which appears to have fallen into disuse but which might, in whole or in part, be revived.
- (x) That the Government of Solomon Islands seek funding for a project to record the genealogy of the people of Solomon Islands as it relates to customary land ownership.
- (xi) That the Government proceed with caution with regard to the proposal for a federal system, given its high costs and potential for division.
- (xii) That the Ministry of National Reconciliation and Unity, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, be tasked to provide a policy paper on establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission based on international models which do not involve amnesty. The Forum could assist in the preparation of this.
- (xiii) That there be greater efforts to achieve reconciliation and rehabilitation and call on donors to support these efforts.
- (xiv) That consideration be given to the provision of trauma counselling.
- (xv) That the Government of Solomon Islands become more proactive in facilitating the work of RAMSI at the interface, in order to maximise gains and be seen to be shouldering its responsibilities, and that RAMSI develop its programme to better reflect the Government of Solomon Islands' development priorities as identified in the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan.
- (xvi) That the Government of Solomon Islands continues to strengthen all arms of Government including through proper resourcing, to ensure that there is

an effective and responsive public service, and that the Parliament, Executive and the accountability institutions are performing their roles.

- (xvii) That consideration be given to whether the role of chiefs in mediation, reconciliation and consultation in the areas of land, good governance and justice should be recognised in the Constitution. The establishment of a Great Council of Chiefs could be considered to give structure to the chiefs' role but this needs to be worked out through comprehensive discussion, taking into full account local complexities. The Forum could support this discussion by facilitating the inclusion of various regional models in that discussion.
- (xviii) That a focused effort to promote better dialogue, communication and consultations, between the central and provincial governments, be made. There should be a similar focus on creating a better flow of resources from the centre to the provinces to fuel economic activities, to decentralise development, and build essential infrastructures.
- (xix) That consultative mechanisms be established between Central and Provincial Governments and the NGOs.
- (xx) That the Government of Solomon Islands develop a sound understanding of the debt composition and consider appropriate options for restructuring and reprogramming this debt so its servicing can be prioritised and managed on a sustainable basis. This could be done with the support of development partners and in consultation with creditors. Sound debt management is an essential step towards rehabilitating the economy. Further, it is **recommended** that in the longer term the Solomon Islands can work to avoid such situations reoccurring through the implementation of the third of the Forum Eight Principles of Accountability which states *“Loan agreements or guarantees entered into by governments to be presented to Parliament/Congress, with sufficient information to enable Parliament/Congress to understand the longer term implications.”* This principle should be enshrined in law and presentations to the Parliament should be timely. Implementation of a more sound debt management system is **recommended**, again this is an area where donors can assist, as this would ensure government has up to date information on the composition, status and level of debt which would aid in good decision making. It should also be recognised that debt is only part of the problem and it is necessary to place all government expenditures on a more sustainable basis.
- (xxi) That the Government enacts and strictly enforces the Forest Bill 2004 and implements the 1995 Regional Forestry Code.

- (xxii) That the Government of Solomon Islands consider other forms of economic activity, for example, aquaculture and tourism to spread economic development and lessen the dependency on logging.
- (xxiii) That the donor coordination role of the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning Department be strengthened. Donor assistance also needs to be prioritised against the National Economic Recovery, Reform and Development Plan (NERRDP) and multi-annual aid programmes should be negotiated. Provinces should also be consulted when development plans and budgets are being developed.
- (xxiv) That the Government implement its policy on technical and vocational education and training, as a priority, in order to keep young people in the provinces. The regional education project (PRIDE) may be able to assist in implementing some aspects of the technical and vocational education and training policy and/or aspects of the education sector strategic plan. Peace and reconciliation training and civic education should also be part of the school curricula. Where possible, educational facilities, including tertiary facilities, should be situated in the provinces.
- (xxv) That the Forum Secretariat, in partnership with the Pacific Islands New Association, consider ways of assisting the Solomon Islands media particularly in regard to training and strengthening its organisational and legislative framework

CHAPTER FOUR: ASSISTANCE BY THE FORUM

91. The Terms of Reference require the Group in assessing the development priorities facing Solomon Islands in the future, to make recommendations on how the Forum can help. In addressing this, the Group was conscious of the complexity of the issues and assistance that is available under RAMSI and from other donors and partners. The Group has therefore focused on those areas where the Forum and its Secretariat have comparative advantage. The Group suggests that:

- (i) In view of the level of uncertainty by the people of Solomon Islands regarding the tenure of RAMSI, the 2005 meeting of Forum Leaders reaffirm its support for RAMSI and the need to stay the distance.
- (ii) A Forum representative to Solomon Islands be appointed, funds permitting, to liaise with RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government, facilitate reporting to the Forum Chair and members, and promote other regional initiatives.
- (iii) That the Forum Secretariat, together with other agencies, assist the Government of Solomon Islands particularly the Ministry of Finance, Reform and Planning to coordinate international donor assistance to Solomon Islands and strengthen its aid coordination unit.
- (iv) In order to facilitate more regional representation in RAMSI particularly in civilian areas, Forum Island Countries be targeted for specific positions. The Forum Secretariat should also assist in the identification of suitable civilian advisers. Regional representation in the police and military should be sustained. Funding needs to be available to facilitate regional representation in both the civilian, policing and military components of RAMSI.
- (v) The Good Offices of the Secretary General could be used to facilitate reconciliation in Malaita and Guadalcanal.
- (vi) Forum members could assist Solomon Islands in providing expertise on land matters.
- (vii) The Government of Solomon Islands should be encouraged to make use of the expertise of the Forum Fisheries Agency in fisheries management.
- (viii) The Government of Solomon Islands should be encouraged to implement the 1995 Regional Forestry Code.
- (ix) Forum members' and CROP agencies' expertise in development planning, and rural development be utilised.

- (x) The Forum monitor the preparations for, and conduct of, the 2006 General elections in Solomon Islands, and support the work going on in the Electoral Commission, if possible.
- (xi) A stocktake of progress of the implementation of the recommendations of the Group's report, if taken up, be undertaken in twelve months time.

92. Given the level of interest and participation in the Group's work, we suggest that our report be made generally available to all stakeholders in Solomon Islands once it has been accepted by the Chair and the Government of Solomon Islands.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

93. RAMSI has been successful in terms of restoring law and order, stabilising the economic and social conditions and beginning institutional strengthening but the hard part lies ahead. The Government and people of Solomon Islands must take the lead in rebuilding the nation and not waver from this path. The members of the Pacific Islands Forum will continue to play their part in assisting Solomon Islands.

Annex A

PROGRAMME FOR THE VISIT OF THE FORUM EMINENT PERSONS GROUP TO SOLOMON ISLANDS, 10-17 MAY 2005

Tuesday 10th May 2005

- 12:10pm Arrive Honiara International Airport.
Met by: PS/Foreign Affairs.
- 12:30pm Depart VIP Lounge, Honiara International Terminal for
Solomon Kitano Mendana Hotel.
- 2:30pm Briefing with RAMSI – Venue: GBR RAMSI Headquarters
(see Annex 1).
- 6:30pm Welcome reception hosted by the Deputy Prime Minister of
Solomon Islands, the Honourable Mr Synder Rini.

Venue: Honiara Hotel.

Wednesday 11th May 2005

- 8:45am Courtesy call on the Acting Governor General, Sir Peter
Kenilorea.
- 9:30am Meet with the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, The
Honourable Sir Allan Kemakeza.
- 11:30am Meet with Chairman of Leadership Code Commission &
Auditor General.
- 12:30pm Lunch
- 2:00pm Meet with Chairman, Mr Paul Tovua and Members of
National Peace Council.
- 3:40pm Meet with Appropriate Cabinet Ministers: Minister for
Police & National Security, Minister for Peace &
Reconciliation, Minister for Finance.
- 6:30pm Dinner Hosted by RAMSI Special Coordinator in honour of
the EPG.

Venue: Lelei Resort

Thursday 12th May 2005

8:30am	Meet with Chief Justice and Members of the Judiciary
9:30am	Meet with NGO representatives: DSE, Civil Society, SIDT & Honiara Civil Society, National Council of Women.
12:30pm	Lunch Break
1:50pm	Meet with Chairman & Members of the Chamber of Commerce.
3:05pm	Meet with the Premier of Guadalcanal Province, Honourable Arabola.
4:15pm	Meet with Commissioner, Royal Solomon Islands Police.
5:30pm	Meet with the Attorney General
7:00pm	Dinner with Heads of Diplomatic Missions/Donors at New Zealand High Commission residence.

Friday 13th May 2005

Trip to Malaita (see annex 2)

Meetings with Forum Secretariat Staff

10.00am	Donor Roundtable (EU, UNDP, AusAID, NZAid, British High Commission)
2.00pm	Roundtable with Trade Unions
5.00pm	Meet with Paul Daokalia, Desk Office, Rehabilitation (Malaita) Department of National Unity, Rehabilitation and Peace

Saturday 14th May 2005

Trip to W/coast (see annex 3)

Sunday 15th May 2005

4:00pm Meeting with Chiefs from Guadalcanal

6.00pm Talking truth radio program

Monday 16th May 2005 (Whit Monday)

8:15am Meet with Director of Forum Fisheries Agency

11:00am Meet with Deputy Opposition Leader, Honourable Joses Sanga and Members.

12:30pm Lunch Break

2-3pm Meet with individuals

3:10pm Meet with SICA Representatives.

4:20pm Meet with the Media representatives

5:00pm Meet with Members of Parliament: Sir David Kausimoe, John Moffat Fugui, James Mekab

7:00pm Dinner hosted by the Secretary General of PIFS, Mr Greg Urwin.

Tuesday 17th May 2005

8:15am Meet with Magistrates.

9:30am Meet with Governor and Deputy Governor of Central Bank.

11:00am Meet with Leader of the Opposition and Members of the Opposition

12:00noon Meet RAMSI representatives

2:00pm Depart Honiara International Airport for Brisbane.

End of Programme

Annex 1

Programme for the Visit to RAMSI HQ, GBR on Tuesday 10th May 2005

- 2:00pm Depart Hotel for GBR
- 2:30PM Met at GBR gates by Special Coordinator
- 2:35pm Welcome – GBR car park
- RAMSI Principals
 - PPF Commander and Contingent Commanders (or most senior officer in GBR at the time)
 - Military Commander and Contingent Commanders / Los
- 2:45pm Tour of GBR
- Special Coordinator / Principals
- 3:15pm Briefing by RAMSI Senior Management Group (PPF Conference Room)
- 4:45pm Kava ceremony with Police / Military Contingent Commanders (Leafhouse)
- PPF Contingent Commanders (or most senior officer in GBR at the time)
 - PIC Military Los
- 5:45pm Depart GBR for Hotel
- 6:30pm Welcome reception hosted by the Honourable Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Sir Allan Kemakeza.

Venue: Honiara Hotel.

Annex 2

Programme for the Visit to Malaita, Friday 13th May 2005

7:50am	Assemble at Honiara airport – arrive promptly to view safety video
8:30am	Depart Honiara
9:10am	Arrive Auki
9:30-10:45am	Meeting with Premier Moli at the Provincial Assembly Headquarters ¹
11:00am-12:30pm	Meeting with Bishop Terry Brown and other church leaders at Auki Diocese office ²
12:40pm	Depart Auki for Malu'u
1:00pm	Arrive Malu'u Lunch in leaf hut adjoining police station
1:30pm	Meeting with community representatives – Invitations have been extended to chiefs, church and youth leaders from North Malaita
3:30pm	Depart Malu'u
4:10pm	Arrive Honiara

Accompanying officials and media

William Soaki, Department of Foreign Affairs
Paul Ash, RAMSI Deputy Special Coordinator
Ian Bate, PPF
Local media representatives (2)

¹ Transport provided by PPF officers

² Morning tea will be provided

Annex 3

Programme for the visit to Weathercoast, Saturday 14th May 2005

8:20am	Assemble at Honiara airport – arrive promptly to view safety video
9:00am	Depart Honiara
9:30am	Arrive Weathercoast
9:30-11:00am	Meeting with community representatives ³ at Peochakuri / Kolina (will confirm location asap)
12:00pm	Depart Peochakuri / kolina for Mbambanakira
12:30pm	Arrive Mbambanakira Lunch
1:00pm	Meeting with community representatives ⁴
3:00pm	Depart Mbambanakira
3:30pm	Arrive Honiara

Accompanying officials and media

Patricia Maike-Tani, Department of Foreign Affairs
James Batley, RAMSI Special Coordinator
Paul Tovua, Chairman, National Peace Council
Ian Bate, PPF
Local media representatives (2)

³ Invitations have been extended to surrounding villages including chiefs, church and youth leaders

⁴ Invitations have been extended to surrounding villages including chiefs, church and youth leaders