

**Foreign Relations Committee Hearing**  
**Venue: Selwyn College**  
**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October '08**

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**Mr Chairman:** Let's start. Dou charaka. Honorable Members of the Foreign Relations Committee, Principal, Staff and students of Selwyn College, invited guests and witnesses, Clerk to Parliament and the Secretariat, stakeholders and members of the media and the public. Welcome to the first public hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee outside of Honiara. In fact, this is the first Committee hearing of this kind in our Parliament's history. I'm pleased that after 30 years of development Parliament is now in the position to reach out directly to the people. My Committee is very proud indeed to take this first historical step and we hope that after we have completed our provincial tours, we would have set a precedent whereby parliament continues to engage closely with the public, particularly those at the rural level in its inquiries and other work.

As you all know, this hearing is part of a series of hearings that this Committee continues to undertake in carrying its inquiry into and review of matters relating to the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands. Before I elaborate on matters relating to this hearing, I would like to first of all express the deep gratitude of my Committee to the Principal and Administration of Selwyn College for allowing the Committee to conduct its hearing for West and North West Guadalcanal in this school. For every hearing outside Honiara, we need a venue with access to power and telephone lines for the purpose of broadcasting and a strategic location to which most people within the district are able to travel without too much trouble. Selwyn College is a perfect for this part and the island and so my Committee is very happy with the school's assistance. Thank you.

I would also like to thank all invited chiefs, religious leaders, women leaders and youth leaders and all other invited guests and witnesses for coming to this hearing. Given the nature of our Committee's inquiry, it is very important to us that we hear directly the views of the people of Solomon Islands, especially those residing in the provinces. Since this is our first provincial hearing we hope that with your cooperation we can set a high standard for other communities that my Committee will visit later to follow. We appreciate your attendance and look forward to your contributions to our inquiry.

At this stage and for the sake of witnesses and the public, I wish to run through what this parliamentary inquiry is all about and to explain certain procedural matters that you might find useful during this meeting.

Perhaps I should start with some general comments about parliamentary committees, their functions and committee hearing procedures. Parliamentary

committees are established under the *Standing Orders* of Parliament and these committees carry out specific functions mandated to each committee by Parliament. These committees are in effect of extensions of Parliament, which unlike Parliament itself, have the capacity itself to inquire deeply into issues and go to the people and hear directly from the people about public matters that affect their lives.

This Committee, the Foreign Relations Committee, is one of five standing committees established by our Parliament. Our functions in a nutshell, centre around matters relating to foreign affairs, foreign policy and relations. One of our specific functions is to examine and report on the management of foreign assistance to Solomon Islands.

As you would know from the material our Secretariat has provided to you, this Committee has been tasked by Parliament to inquire into review and report on the Facilitation of International Assistance Notice 2003. This reference to the Committee was moved by the Prime Minister and passed by Parliament by way of a resolution on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2008. The Notice, which we are to look into, was published by the Governor General on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2003 as required by the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003. That Act became effective on making of the Notice. With the Act in place the Solomon Islands Government then entered into an International Agreement with various neighboring countries on the 24<sup>th</sup> July 2003 allowing what came to be known as RAMSI to enter and operate in Solomon Islands. This Agreement is specifically referred to in the Notice.

In terms of review, quite apart from parliament's constitutional powers to make, amend, or repeal any Act, the Facilitation Act specifically provides that Parliament must be given an opportunity once each year to review the Notice. This year, Parliament in accordance with the government's wishes, referred the matter to my Committee to inquire into and review the Notice. As I've indicated earlier, the review of the Notice effectively results in a review of RAMSI and its operations. This is because the Notice refers to the country's participating in RAMSI, the purpose for which RAMSI is in this country, the Agreement which facilitated RAMSI's presence and of course the Act that governs it.

In this particular hearing I will allow submissions and views on any matters I have just listed. My Committee hopes to keep this hearing as informal as possible but please do not forget the reasons for this hearing. We would like to hear your thoughts on RAMSI and its aims and operations in this part of Solomon Islands. As long as a witness' presentation is centred around these aspects of RAMSI, I will not interrupt. I will however interrupt if in my opinion a witness is presenting matters that are completely irrelevant to our inquiry. I say that only as a precaution and to respect the time of all present, but I'm sure we would not need to resort to that.

By the end of our inquiry and review of the Notice, it is expected that this Committee will be in a position to report to Parliament on all matters relevant to the

Notice. That report will make recommendations based on the evidence presented to the Committee from witnesses such as yourselves throughout the country and through written submissions received by the Committee. Such evidence will be tabled together with our report. This Committee will make recommendations to Parliament and through it to the government and RAMSI for action. Perhaps I should clarify at this point that this Committee after reporting to Parliament does not have power beyond the power of sensible reasoned recommendations supported by you, the public, to force the government or RAMSI to take any particular action. However, it is expected that if this Committee does its work well and makes effective and sensible recommendations, they will be taken up by all parties and Parliament and this Committee will certainly monitor that process.

Before I conclude and allow this hearing proper to commence, may I remind witnesses that what you say in this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege and cannot later be used against you in any legal proceedings whatsoever. Because of the strength of this privilege, this Committee expects all witnesses to ensure that their answers are truthful and confined to matters relevant to the terms of reference and the questions asked by Members. Providing false evidence to the Committee is contempt of the Committee, which Parliament may well act on. Witnesses should also not reflect or comment unfairly on/or defame others. The privilege that is provided by Parliament to witnesses must be respected and used wisely. I trust that as law abiding citizens with a common aim to contribute to the good governance of the country, witnesses will testify with a clear conscience and a good heart.

By now you would have noticed the presence of One News and the Solomon Islands Broadcasting Corporation. I wish to advise that all public hearings of this Committee doing this inquiry, today's hearings included, will be recorded by One News and televised within Honiara and other urban centres with television coverage each evening after a particular hearing. The SIBC will also broadcast all our hearings live for those in the provinces listening in.

We will now proceed with the hearing. Please, I would like to ask witnesses from the Tangarare Ward to come forward.

## **WITNESSES FROM TANGARARE WARD**

**Mr Celsus:** Those of you from Tangarare Ward, please come to the table in front. I think there are six of you and so everyone of you just come forward and sit down at the front here. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Good morning. I think we would like to start off this way. When we ask questions to you when you answer us try to tell us your name and which area you

come from in Tangarare. Our questions from the start are very broad. My first question is, and anyone of you can just come in, anyone who would like to talk can just come in.

The first question is, what is your view of RAMSI? It's a very general question and anyone can come in. What is your view of RAMSI?

**Savino Kokopu:** To start off with, my name is Savino Kokopu from Tiaro Bay, Tangarare Ward, West Guadalcanal Constituency.

For me personally, RAMSI is good provided that they abide by the decision of the Parliament of Solomon Islands on what to do and to follow what the rural people need. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you.

**Faustina Sodo:** My name is Faustina Sodo and I come from Tangarare in Ward 4. I am the coordinator of women at the Parish level.

I thank God for this special privilege for me to be invited to come and represent our good mothers from Ward 4, West Guadalcanal Constituency. I am taking this opportunity to convey to you all, especially RAMSI the greetings of all the women on behalf of the women of all the Churches and societies in my constituency. I congratulate RAMSI for your great achievement in giving your lives and talents to promote peace, unity and love amongst Solomon Islanders. Let us not lose their presence but this consultation should make efforts to identify and have a share in doing something for the sake of the survival and security of our community and society. God bless you RAMSI. Thank you.

**Joseph Tavava:** My name is Joseph Tavava, the chief of Fox Bay village, West Guadalcanal. RAMSI is a very good leader that we all want but mostly some parts are yet to be completed and we still need them to continue doing their work.

**William Kara:** I come from Tangarare Ward, Fox Bay. For me personally, RAMSI came into Solomon Islands to secure people of Solomon Islands, especially for us here at Tangarare. At this stage, RAMSI, as was mentioned by our chief, still needs to continue its work. It has not completed its work yet. If RAMSI pulls out today and today at the same time, something will happen. Thank you.

**Mario Chago:** I come from Satona. For me personally, I see RAMSI is a foreign group that came to assist us in terms of our security and look after us from what we have just gone through, the ethnic tension. We still need RAMSI to stay on further in the country. I hope you will take note that we still want RAMSI to remain in years to come. Thank you.

**Lawrence Kara:** I come from Tangarare Ward 4, West Guadalcanal Constituency. For me personally, I am very happy with RAMSI for coming to Solomon Islands to protect us. However, what we can see is that RAMSI is yet to complete its work. But now we must try to talk with RAMSI and see what is happening to us in Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you.

**Hon. Boyers:** Thank you very much for all your statements. I would like to ask a question to you. We have asked this same question to a lot of people that have already come before the Committee. Since this is our first time to reach the rural area and so we would like to hear your views. There were a lot of talks in the past regarding rearmament of the SIPF. There were some who said it's time to rearm and some said not yet. I want to ask you what are your views on this talk that it's time to rearm the Solomon Islands Police Force? Do you think it's the right time to rearm our police now or not yet?

**Faustina Sodo:** In my personal opinion, our policemen should not be rearmed as yet because all of us know very well that the root causes of the tension are not yet solved. Because of this reason I think our policemen are not yet ready to be armed with guns.

**Lawrence Kara:** For me, there is no need to rearm the Solomon Islands Police Force. Because as a person from the Weather Coast of Guadalcanal fighting against people of Guadalcanal using government machinery or otherwise arms. Therefore, I do not want to rearm the Solomon Islands Police Force. Thank you.

**Mario Chango:** For me, I share the same view. If you want to rearm the Police then you should also give back the guns to the owners of guns that you took from them during the tension.

**Savino Kokopi:** For me, I am still yet to agree on this. I do not want to see our local people joining the Police Force to be rearmed. Thank you.

**William Kara.:** I also support the idea of not rearming the Police. That can wait for sometime yet in the future. Thank you.

**Hon. Tosika:** As we are all aware, RAMSI came into this country to restore law and order and it came under a definition called 'public purpose'. Restoration of law and order has come about and that is why we've seen most of the military personnel of

RAMSI have gone back. In your opinion, when RAMSI's mandate, aims and purpose to remain in Solomon Islands is fulfilled, how long do you want RAMSI to remain in Solomon Islands or in parts of Guadalcanal?

**Joseph Tavava:** For me, RAMSI must stay on until the government and people of Solomon Islands think they can look after themselves. It is still too early for RAMSI to return. I accept Solomon to remain in the islands but they must work hand in hand with the Government and people of Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Faustina Sodo:** In my opinion, I think RAMSI's program is not yet completed, their mission is not yet completed. They brought with them peace, unity and love but I believe healing is not yet happening. Healing needs to touch the hearts of people in Solomon Islands, and this is for sure our responsibility with RAMSI too to guide us. Thank you.

**Mario Chango.:** In my personal opinion, we cannot tell you the specific time or year or month for RAMSI to remain. It must be according to our feelings and according to the wish of the government and the country. It looks like RAMSI needs to remain in Solomon Islands for 5, 10 or even 20 more years. The thinking of the people, mostly for us from West Guadalcanal to South West Guadalcanal we do not think RAMSI should go back yet.

**William Kara:** The short answer to that question is that RAMSI came here to restore law and order, but who is to address law and order. Is it the government or us? And as I said RAMSI must stay on a bit longer because the root cause of the tension is not yet solved. Thank you.

**Mr Y:** Thank you very much. So far RAMSI has done a lot of good work helping us in the rural areas and also the government and that is why those of us in the rural areas still survive and helping each other to achieve the good things that those of us living in the villagers are yet to receive in terms of development.

I want you to take note that RAMSI must remain in the country for at least the next 15 or 20 years. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much. Because of time constraints and we have a lot of witnesses here to interview, and so I .....

**Hon. Usa:** Thank you and good morning my good people of North West Guadalcanal and West Guadalcanal. This is just part of the question asked earlier on. Every one of

us fully agrees that RAMSI remains, nobody disputes that, and the answer given to the Committee is that there is not enough time yet to complete its work.

The Committee wants to get the public's opinion on what are the works that RAMSI still needs to complete. I'll give you a bit of background. If you look at the five or so years that RAMSI has been here in the country, we are seeing the crime rate in Honiara increasing, what is your public opinion is the specific work that RAMSI should be doing whilst they are here in Solomon Islands? I hope you understand me on this simple question. Thank you.

**William Kara:** In my thinking why I've said RAMSI should stay on is because the bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal are not yet addressed. Now while RAMSI is here I think it is good time for the government to address the bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal as the government so wishes of what the people think about these bona fide demands.

I would also like to suggest here that while RAMSI is here it's a good time that we could decide on what happened during the last five years. To keep them for certain reasons, RAMSI has to improve its stay here in Solomon Islands. Not only that but they have to liaise or talk with the government because most of us believe that one of the root causes of the tension is not addressing the wishes and demands, the so called bona fide demands of the people of Guadalcanal. I only wish that through this Foreign Relations Committee, which has come this distant for us to make decisions to assist the people of Guadalcanal to become friends and related with the people of Malaita and any other provinces within Solomon Islands.

As we know, the Guadalcanal people are very good people, only the seas are always rough and therefore we could share the goodness in us to the seas so that they are also calm. Because of the calm seas, the people of Guadalcanal can also become very calm people. Thank you.

**Faustina Sodo:** My thinking is very short. I would like the government to take note of our wishes, and when that happens, everything will touch the hearts of Guadalcanal people. I think it is God's plan for us to have peace for ever. Thank you.

**Lawrence Kara:** For me, RAMSI is good, we want RAMSI and we are depending on RAMSI. However, there is only one concern that we have. RAMSI and police officers are only stationed at Mbabanakira and Honiara. What about the areas starting from Mbabanakira to Lambi and from Lambi to Honiara? You have forgotten to tour around our areas to see what our problems are and see our sufferings. There are criminal activities such as drinking kwaso and smoking marijuana happening in our areas that we are very concerned about. Only Kakabona and Mbabanakira have police posts and

so we are concerned and we want RAMSI to comply with us by putting one more police post between Mbabanakira and Honiara. Thank you.

**William Kara:** To answer your question, RAMSI's presence in Solomon Islands or West Guadalcanal Constituency or Tangarare Ward, RAMSI came here to solve a problem and to restore law and order. Law and order within Tangarare Ward, I think, must not only be from Mbabanakira to Kakabona but it must be either in Tangarare Ward or within West Guadalcanal Constituency. That is my thinking on this. We need a police post between those areas. Thank you.

**Mario Chango:** It looks like I support what the Chief has said in that we need to have an extension post for RAMSI between Kakabona and Marasa or even between Tangarare or Lambi so that RAMSI can be posted there. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much. I think that is it. Thank you very much for coming all the way from Tangarare to express your views. Our Committee would take all your views on board. Thank you.

#### **WITNESSES FROM WANDERER BAY**

**Mr Chairman:** It will be the same procedure like the first witnesses so before you answer the questions just tell your name and which area you come from for the records. I will start of. It will be the same question as the first group. What do you think about RAMSI in general?

**Joseph Tanochaku:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman. Before I answer the question I'd like to welcome you all on behalf of the community of Wanderer Bay Ward. My name is Joseph Tanochaku and I come from Wanderer Bay village on Wanderer Bay Ward of Guadalcanal Province.

Since time does not allow us to talk very long, we all know that RAMSI consists of personnel from Australia and other Pacific countries but we still need them until such a time it's fitting we can then allow them to go back. But in the meantime they must remain. Thank you.

**Margaret Pogo:** I come from Marasa village in Wanderer Bay Ward, West Guadalcanal Constituency. I have a short answer to that question. RAMSI came here in Solomon Islands as a foreign body, an independent body that came here to help us. It is also a good friend that brought us back from what has happened in the past. Thank you.



**Bataonio:** I come from Wanderer Bay village, Wanderer Bay Ward, West Guadalcanal Constituency. For me, I'm happy with RAMSI because it brings peace to us in Solomon Islands. Because of that I want RAMSI to stay on with us until such a time it is appropriate for them to go back. But right now, it's not yet time for them to go back. Thank you.

**Emanuel Puhi:** I come from Marasa village, Wanderer Bay Ward 5. In my thinking, RAMSI is from different countries coming here to restore law and order in Solomon Islands. They are still needed to remain in Solomon Islands until law and order comes back to the country before they can go back. That is all.

**Bartholomew Kae:** I come from Veuru in the Wanderer Bay Ward. RAMSI should stay on further time such a time they can go back at anytime after the full restoration of law and order in Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Hon. Ghiro:** As we all know, RAMSI has been in the country for about five years now. I would like you to tell the Committee of what are some of the successes, shortfalls and areas of improvement that RAMSI should address? Thank you.

**Joseph Tanochaku:** We all know that RAMSI has been in the country for the last five years. We also know that they have been doing a lot of successful work in the country, which is very well done, and so thank you very much RAMSI. But looking back to situations from the places we come from, I am talking about Wanderer Bay Ward, we are still living in fear.

I think today we talked about history of what has happened during the ethnic tension and what has happened after the fighting between Guadalcanal people and its brothers from Malaita. We are living in an area that all of you honourable Members here know very well of what happened after the ethnic tension in Wanderer Bay Ward.

The area between Wanderer Bay and Marasa has been declared during that time as a war zone and the elements that remained since arrests were made, or things happened and some people were arrested still lingers in the minds of some people. Because of that we want RAMSI to work closely with our police officers to look into this. I don't need to mention every thing in detail as you would know what has happened.

There are also other things that RAMSI needs to do. As far as we are concerned, we can see that RAMSI is only involved with the national government, with ministries of government, with private companies in Honiara, but we think RAMSI should come down to us. RAMSI should come down to provincial governments. It should be involved in how provincial governments collect their revenue. RAMSI should be involved in the expenditures of provincial governments in Solomon Islands. RAMSI should be

involved in education, and you name it. I think that should be the real work of RAMSI in its attempt of trying to assist us. Because doing those things can touch the hearts of the people, the heart of the government and the hearts of brothers in other other provinces can come together. That is what we see. That is why we want RAMSI to stay on to do that work in line with the government, our Police Force, our communities at home. That is what we want RAMSI to do and they are yet to complete their work. Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

**Margaret Pogo:** Since RAMSI arrived in Solomon Islands, especially the area we come from, it is RAMSI that took us back from what has happened there. RAMSI has helped us restore law and order and it provided security for us. When RAMSI came in, we, the women and children of that area are free to walk around and we are starting to bring back our own relatives and friends, our own people. But there are some needs that RAMSI still has to do in our area.

If you go to our area or you hear stories about that area, some criminal activities are still going on there right now. Those activities have been reported to RAMSI but they have not yet to solve them. Therefore, there are many problems that RAMSI still needs to attend to. I think if RAMSI goes back, the criminal activities that are being committed secretly now in our area will burst out in flame like a fire that is lit. Thank you.

**Mr Y:** Some of the things RAMSI is doing is good and some are not good. I say this in the sense that maybe RAMSI is only here to address tension related problems and not to do work in the rural areas. That is how I see it. The same goes for the Solomon Islands Police Force, in that both of them are not doing any work in the rural areas.

Criminal cases that happened in the rural areas were reported to them but nothing has happened. I want to tell them to help us by doing work in the rural areas. They should not only arrest people committing crimes during the tension. Criminal activities are increasing in the rural areas today, and who is going to solve them. It is RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Police. Thank you.

**Mr X:** In my view, RAMSI came to restore law and order in Solomon Islands. Apart from that there are also other things I have seen. For us at the Mbabanakira side, RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Police are stationed there. But what I am seeing is that a lot of problems are happening there, which we reported to RAMSI. RAMSI arrested those people and brought them to the police post but after that they released them to go back home. But in my view, anyone arrested must be taken to Honiara to face the courts before they can be released. When they went back the same problem happened again. I think RAMSI should arrest those people involved in the tension but are still

hiding in the bush. Many of them are still there. I want RAMSI to arrest those men and bring them to Honiara before we can feel free. Thank you.

**Mr Z:** For me, RAMSI is doing a good work at home and sometimes it's not. There is need for RAMSI to work with some of the communities in the rural areas. Our chiefs in the rural areas have been trying to put on things to prevent what normally would cause division to people in the rural areas. However, no one has assisted them in their efforts. RAMSI personnel stationed at Mbabanakira are just sitting around and going around drinking. I think the government may have given them license to drink because almost all the houses there are taking beer. That is my only comment, and thank you.

**Hon. Soalaoi:** My question is when RAMSI came in they have one specific mandate on what they are supposed to do, and as we all know they are here to restore law and order. Listening to our stories this morning, I think law and order has already been restored. My question is, what else do you want RAMSI to do?

I want you to know that RAMSI comes under one law called the Facilitation of International Assistance Act. It is that law that allows RAMSI to come into our country. Sometimes the things that we want RAMSI to do are not catered for within that law, it does not allow it and so they cannot do it. That is why sometimes when we asked them to do things they did not respond because they follow that law, they cannot operate outside of that law. This is a review and so it's a chance for us to know what else we would like RAMSI to do. My question is, what else do you want RAMSI to do apart from the restoration of law and order? Law and order is here already and so what else do we want RAMSI to do?

**Joseph Tanochaku:** Mr Chairman, this question is very, very important for us in Wanderer Bay Ward. You are asking us what else RAMSI should be doing. On behalf of the communities, the women and children of Wanderer Bay Ward we really want RAMSI to remain. The reason is this. We all know very well that those of us on the other side don't trust our own Police Force. We really don't trust them. To enable things improve I want RAMSI to stay so that it works in line with our police force, to bring back public confidence to our police force so that we can have confidence in approaching them. That is the main thing in regards to law and order for us. We do not have confidence in our police force in Solomon Islands. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** Thank you. For me, RAMSI stays in Solomon Islands and what they need to do at this time, is because it has already achieved a lot of things. My call to the government is like this; the government should give some conditions for RAMSI to follow. RAMSI should work according to the laws of Solomon Islands. The other things that RAMSI should be doing whilst it is here in the country, as other speakers

have already said that RAMSI came in to restore law and order and we said that law and order has been restored. But the area that we come from, the Solomon Islands Police and RAMSI should go into the communities and see for themselves whether law and order has been restored in the communities or not. Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, thank you. I support my colleague in her comments. I want RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Police to work together to maintain law and order in the rural areas, and find out whether it is sustainable, effective or not. They must do their job because we don't know these people. We are living in our villages but we hardly see them visiting us. We want them to visit us and talk with us about what law and order is about today. Thank you.

**Witness:** My view is also the same in that RAMSI and our police must work together, especially for us on the other side we see them there but every day they just go up and down in their vehicles to the seaside and back. They see problems happening but did nothing about them. They must do their work efficiently together in looking after people from the other side.

**Witness:** It's good that RAMSI is here with us in Solomon Islands. One thing I see is that they should work with village leaders throughout their stay here before they go back. That is my comment about that. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you, and two more questions.

**Hon. Kengava:** My question is, a lot of us have shared our views that we want RAMSI to stay on longer for some more years so that it finishes its work. But the longer it stays in the country, some of us are seeing RAMSI as operating another government in the country, it works like a second government. In your thinking, what should RAMSI be doing whilst it stays on longer in Solomon Islands so that they don't seem to be working like another government or work so that they do not seem to be taking over the work of the Solomon Islands Government? That is my question.

**Witness:** My view on this question that you are asking on whether RAMSI is operating another government in Solomon Islands, to me, we think that the National Parliament of Solomon Islands is the sovereign government of Solomon Islands. Now, it's you as parliamentarians that should be setting down guidelines that RAMSI should follow. That's what people from the rural areas want. We don't want to see RAMSI as another government, no. We want you to set down the guidelines that RAMSI should follow in whatever they are doing. And if they break the laws of Solomon Islands then it's up to the Solomon Islands Government to give the punishment to whoever is breaking the

law. That's what we want. We want you to set the guidelines for RAMSI to follow, and not RAMSI to put guidelines for you to follow. It's you as our representatives in Parliament to make the guidelines, make rulings for them to follow. Thank you.

**Witness:** We might think that RAMSI is like another government in Solomon Islands, but I would like to refer to what a previous speaker said today that the root causes of the ethnic tension are not yet addressed. And whilst RAMSI is here in Solomon Islands, it is not another government because it only provides security for us people of Solomon Islands. Now, whilst there is still security in the country I call on the government to address the root causes of the ethnic tension. Thank you.

**Witness:** What I want to say is that if RAMSI is kept too long in Solomon Islands, may be it would take over the government of Solomon Islands. Because of that view, the government should kick them out or support them in their work so that they finish their work and go back. That is my view on this. Thank you.

**Witness:** My view is a short one too. RAMSI comes under the government to provide security. Similar to what the other speaker has said, the root cause of the ethnic tension is the government's problem for not taking into account what has happened. You have not taken into account both sides - our brothers from Malaita and Guadalcanal. The same thing applies in the rural areas. They are fighting about the same things because the government did not solve the problems. RAMSI cannot go back unless the government solves its problems before RAMSI can go back. If RAMSI goes back before you try solving the problem then the same problem will arise. That's all.

**Witness:** All good answers have been given by my good colleagues. In my view, RAMSI is here under our government and so it must work according to what our parliamentarians have passed. RAMSI needs to remain in the country because the root causes of the ethnic tension are yet to be solved. There is need to solve this problem when RAMSI is still here in the country.

**Hon. Tosika:** Listening to your answers, there is one very important concern that you've raised causing fear to still exist in our communities or our people in Solomon Islands. That one thing is what you've said that the government is yet to address the root causes of the tension. If we are to properly understand this, in the olden days it is Christianity that brings about peace and unity enabling us to move freely amongst our communities. Churches also play a very vital role in bringing about people from the different islands to come together to one faith. There is the faith of Anglicans, faith of the Catholic, faith of United Church and the faith of other churches. And in our analysis of this fighting, we can look back to what our good Lord says in the Bible that

in the last days we would expect such things to happen. It's like a curse put to us human beings by God so that we realize our destiny is. What it means is that mother-in-law fights against daughter-in-law, sisters against sisters and brothers against brothers.

The ethnic tension, in my own personal view is fulfilling what the Scripture says because if the Scripture is not fulfilled then the prophecy by God for us human beings will be just lies. Because of that it is incumbent on us to rethink and redirect our thoughts, attitude and behavior towards peaceful coexistence that churches are bringing about during the heathen days.

Today, in my own view, and this is what I am going to ask about because it looks like Anglicans are fighting against other Anglicans, Roman Catholics are fighting against other Roman Catholics, the United Church members are fighting against other United Church members and the SDAs against SDAs because we have the same faith in these churches.

In my own view, the churches must reconcile their faiths first between the Anglicans of Malaita and Anglicans of Guadalcanal, between Roman Catholics of Malaita and Roman Catholics of Guadalcanal and so forth so that the same faith can work because we are drinking from the same cup and eating from the same plate.

I want to seek your opinion because I know that fear has engulfed the hearts, minds and souls of everyone of you here thinking that peace will easily come, but peace will not easily come. It is you as an individual, family and community that have to work towards achieving peace. RAMSI cannot bring about peace. This is something that you must clearly understand because we people from Solomon Islands must make peace and peace will only come about when our faiths are reconciled. What is your view on the reconciliation of faiths?

**Witness:** Concerning reconciliation that you've asked in your question, looking back at our own situation in the rural areas, I think the church is doing much more than the government in organizing reconciliation between communities. And that is a fact. The churches are doing their best. I don't want to hear Anglicans doing their own preaching and Catholics doing their own preaching. No. Through our experiences in the rural areas all the churches are working together to achieve peace. We are doing that in our small groups, small communities but we are waiting for you. We are waiting for you to do your part to reconcile Malaitan brothers with Guadalcanal brothers, to reconcile the Western people and Guadalcanal people, between any provinces in Solomon Islands. That's what we are waiting for. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, we are talking about reconciliation, and reconciliation is to make us become friends once again. In my view, before we reconcile, the government has to first address the demands. People in the rural areas, families and communities

will reconcile but the first thing is for the government to address the demands of Guadalcanal people. That's all. Thank you.

**Witness:** I have a short answer to that question. I must be healed first before I reconcile. That's all and thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much good people of Wanderer Bay Ward. We will take onboard your comments as the Committee discuss these things. Thank you very much.

### **SAVULEI WARD**

**Mr Chairman:** Just before we start just state your names and the area you come from. Let me start it off, the same question like everyone else who's got it so far. What do you think of RAMSI? What are your views of RAMSI?

**Robert Teteho:** I am from Verahue Village, West Guadalcanal Constituency: In my personal view RAMSI is great during. When the two warring parties fight each other, they signed the ceasefire and after the two groups went to sign the peace agreement at Townville, they came back but the law and order situation then was very fragile. Because of that, the presence of RAMSI in the country makes mothers feel better and normalcy comes back. Now, I can walk freely in Honiara. I think RAMSI is great but only that it must work hand in hand with the Solomon Islands Government.

**Simon Pagini:** Thank you, Foreign Relations Committee. I come from Lambi, Savulei, West Guadalcanal Constituency. Before I answer your question, first of all I would like to thank your Committee for coming down here at the rural area to hear our views. This is the first time that we are going to give you our views. Thank you very much.

Moreover I would also like to thank RAMSI, especially for coming here to Solomon Islands for the good works they have been doing here in Solomon Islands for our people. Thank you RAMSI.

On your question, Sir, I do not have much to say but simply to say that I want RAMSI to remain in the country until we address or solve our problems. We should know that RAMSI does not come here to solve our problems, but they come here to restore law and order and to maintain it between our people here in Solomon Islands and in our communities. Thank you.

**John Lobo:** My name is John Lobo and I come from Kokona, the Savulei Ward. I do not have much to say on the idea of ousting RAMSI because in my personal view I see a lot of things that RAMSI still needs to do in the rural areas.

I as a pastor have observed situations here before the tension and after the tension. The reason why I said RAMSI should stay and help us in the rural areas and our communities is to restore the mentality of the new generation that has been lost during the ethnic tension. Their minds have been contaminated by things that have happened and so we need help from government and RAMSI so that healing can take place inside our communities. We must look after and bring back the minds of our new generation of Guadalcanal that have been lost. I said they are lost because they are not well educated at this time, schools have slowed down, financially they do not know how to manage money. What I am observing after the tension is what I am telling you here and that is why we need RAMSI to rehabilitate us. That's all I want to say.

**Mary Lobo:** I am Kokona, Savulei Ward, Lambi. In my view, RAMSI should continue to stay in Solomon Islands. I speak on behalf of the women of Savulei Ward and to say that RAMSI when they came to Solomon Islands treated people of Solomon Islands very well and they love people of Solomon Islands.

I also want RAMSI to still remain with us in Solomon Island because they assisted us in the villages by uplifting our schools and clinics, especially those of us from West Guadalcanal. I know that they are assisting people and that will encourage people, especially our new generation to improve their standard of education and also their lives. That is my reason why I want RAMSI to remain longer with us. Thank you.

**Father George:** I look after the Parish in the West Vaturanga District in the Savulei Ward. My personal view about RAMSI in Solomon Islands is that I really appreciate what RAMSI is doing in Solomon Islands and I believe that RAMSI offers a neutral ground where peace, love, reconciliation and everything can take place between and amongst families, relatives, people, brothers and sisters within Solomon Islands. If reconciliation is still a great need of the nation, then I need RAMSI to remain so that it offers that ground and avenue that is neutral for people to come together and find peace with each other. However, RAMSI does not have all the solution and answers. But I think Solomon Islands and each and every individual needs to heal ourselves so that we can be in peace, love and harmony. Thank you very much.

**Hillary:** I come from Mangakiki Village, in the Savulei Ward of the West Guadalcanal Constituency. My view on RAMSI in regards to the Christian way that you've asked is like this. RAMSI comes to Solomon Islands because something has happened. RAMSI cannot come to Solomon Islands without any reason. RAMSI comes to Solomon Islands because something has happened to people of Solomon Islands.

When I see is that RAMSI must still remain until the bona fide demands of Guadalcanal are solved. The bona fide demands of the Guadalcanal people must be



witnessed by RAMSI that the Solomon Islands Government has indeed solved them. That is my first point why I want RAMSI to still stay on in Solomon Islands.

The second reason why I say that RAMSI should stay on is because of what we've already heard from one of the speakers today that some of the people who caused problems during the tension are still hiding in the bush. RAMSI should also look into that. I would like to ask the Committee that you as the government must cooperate with RAMSI so that you solve the problems of the people of Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Hon Boyers:** I want to ask your views on what do you think about RAMSI's military personnel or may be police when they go walking around are carrying guns with them. What do you think of this? Do you think they should not carry guns around with them or is it okay for them to carry those guns around?

**Witness:** My personal view is that now that law and order has returned the military personnel of RAMSI should not be carrying guns around. But again, there was an incident at Weather Coast where a RAMSI personnel was attacked. I don't know how to explain to you my view on this because their safety must also be taken into account. But I fully support the thinking that RAMSI should not be armed when coming around the villages because law and order has returned.

**Witness:** For me, RAMSI personnel have been coming to Lambi most of the time, but they should first come to me so that I could tell them not to carry their guns around. They always listen to me when I told them not to carry their guns around but leave them in the trucks. When they came over they would usually camp there for a few days or one or two weeks before they return to Honiara.

For personal reasons they can bring their guns with them but not carry them around in the villages in front of women, children and men. They should just leave their guns in the trucks. Somebody may cut them like the incident at Weather Coast and so for personal safety they can bring their guns with them but not carrying them around the villages. I agree that they should also take their equipments around with them. But I disagree in carrying guns around. .

**Witness:** My personal view is that those carrying arms around is part of their work. For their own safety they have to carry arms around, and it's also their work. The environment is not the same around the country and that is why when those of us in the rural areas, especially women and children see guns being carried around they feel frightened. There is fear inside them when they see those big things hanging around their bodies and walking around with them. For me, if they come down to us in the rural areas, it would be good if there's a law or a step that they must follow to conceal

those arms. They can take the guns with them but they must be hidden from us. That's my view on this.

**Witness:** My personal view of seeing RAMSI personnel holding guns in the villages is the same as the other speaker. It's for their safety and also their job and so they can hold the guns. But there should be a law in place to guide them not to carry it in front of people when they go around the villages. We know it's for their safety because all the places are not the same but different. Like here in West Guadalcanal, I believe is not the same as the Weather Coast. But that's the reason why they must carry the guns around. That's all I can say about that question.

**Witness:** Mr. Chairman, regarding RAMSI personnel carrying arms around the villages during their tours or patrols, I believe this is not a big problem within Savulei because so many times RAMSI personnel just walk freely around the villages without carrying arms. However, we must also bear in mind that there are some people within the community who have been disturbed and traumatized during the tension and so seeing people going around with arms is affecting them mentally. This is causing another real problem to the church today. People have been affected and are in trauma.

We must also bear in mind RAMSI feels that they should be armed because people don't look at them the same way as others might look at them. That is why for security purposes they must carry arms around.

But for me personally, I want RAMSI to do away with carrying of firearms within the affected communities so as to lessen the problems that the church is facing today in dealing with people who are traumatized and affected by the past tragedy that happened a few years ago. Thank you very much Chairman.

**Witness:** In my personal view on this issue of carrying guns around the villages, if we look back at the tension days, RAMSI came in with the guns they are now carrying around with them. I think it's the guns that helped to cut down problems of the tension.

In my own view, I believe that our problem is not yet solved. I think it is good that RAMSI whilst going around our villages and communities, carry their guns with them because it's for their own security and safety.

**Hon Kengava:** Chairman, many have come up with the idea that RAMSI should stay until it finishes its work. That is the big statement that many were saying.

Besides keeping law and order, what other work do you think RAMSI should stay longer to complete?

**Witness:** If RAMSI accomplishes its work of restoring law and order, then I think RAMSI should be deployed to other government duties. I don't believe the ethnic crisis was sparked off by the Guadalcanal bona fide demands but it's successive governments since colonial times ignoring very important things that should bring about coexistence amongst people of Solomon Islands. Because of that, people of Guadalcanal were feeling the pressure, they became frustrated which led to them bringing their grievances through petitions that formed the bona fide demands that were presented to the government and yet the government failed to meet them. This resulted in the people of Guadalcanal getting angry, the youths taking the law into their own hands by chasing their brothers away and their brothers retaliated.

Now that law and order is restored, RAMSI and the Government should work together to see what should be the best way to govern the country so that they could look at the federal system of government and the police. I know a story of a woman who had a row with her husband, they fight, the case went to the police, but do you know what happened? The husband just walked away a free man, but the wife sustained injuries to her body. How the husband walked away free is something I don't understand. Things like that are making people in the rural areas to feel uneasy. Are we going to be okay?

I just don't know, in my personal view, whether RAMSI is working together with the police. I wonder whether the RAMSI police personnel are working together with our police. Even if cases are reported to the police there is no action taken. Even to RAMSI is the same. They just take note.

Those are areas, I think, that after RAMSI achieved its work of bringing back law and order in the country, the government should involve RAMSI to address.

**Witness:** Sir, I cannot properly answer your good question, but I think after law and order is restored, some primary works should be done by the government and RAMSI. One thing is police posts. Why did the government put police posts at White River, Kakabona and so on? Once upon a time a RAMSI commander also asked me that question. I told him that the answer is with the government, the province and the national government. We, the chiefs don't have the answer, we cannot build police posts.

An idea they told me is that they are willing to work with us, especially the government and people in the villages to put up police posts. We, at Lambi are ready but who is going to build the police posts. Is it the provincial government or the national government? We, the chiefs don't have any money, we are working for free. There are many things that the government and RAMSI should be looking at. They told me they are willing to do some primary work. I cannot talk any further but I want to urge the government on the same reasons raised by the other colleagues about the

police posts. Yes, we from Lambi are standby. The province also has title to a land there to build a police post. That's all. Thank you.

**Witness:** In my personal view, there are things that RAMSI should continue to do. On several occasions RAMSI personnel came down to Lambi to hold some awareness talks and I heard them saying that they have some plans - short term, medium term and long terms plans. I heard them saying that. Because I live in the rural areas I only heard over the radio information to say that government has funding assistance for farmers, for clinics, for schools, but we are still waiting until now for these things that we've heard in the media.

Because I heard RAMSI telling us that they have plans for medium and long term and that's why I still have in mind that RAMSI may still have some things to do but may be they are yet to do those things.

Since we are at the lower levels we didn't experience what the government has done in terms of assistance. We've heard of some assistances we can get from the government in terms of forestry, in terms of funding for cocoa, copra and so on, but we don't know how to access those funding. It could be such things are what RAMSI meant by their medium term plans or long term plans, and we are still waiting for those things to happen to us. I don't really know what's RAMSI's planning, but what they said is that they still have some plans to do, and that is what we are still waiting for. How those things will reach us down there is what we are still waiting for. And who is going to do it, whether the government or RAMSI is the question. Thank you.

**Witness:** From what I heard about RAMSI, I also have hope in them to help the rural areas because when they came to us in the rural areas they stated to us some of the things they can help the rural areas with. But one thing they also told us is that the government must allow them before they can do those things because they cannot do it on their own.

The same is said about criminal cases that we reported to them. They said that they cannot take people to court because that's the work of the Solomon Islands Police. They said that they are here to only strengthen law and order that has been restored to us. When I heard them saying those things I know that they have things for those of us living in the rural areas. RAMSI cannot do those things themselves, and so the government has to work together with them before those things can be realized.

**Witness:** That question, in my personal view, besides law and order what is next for RAMSI, I think it all depends on how we look at RAMSI. Is it an invasion or an intervention? I believe that RAMSI is here in Solomon Islands as an intervention force and that is why there is an act that mandates RAMSI in its work. RAMSI cannot work

outside of that mandate, but it must abide and work by that Act, which mandated RAMSI during its time in Solomon Islands.

I believe RAMSI has done a lot in regards to law and order. As previous speakers have stated, we need the presence of RAMSI in the country whilst the government deals with issues affecting the people of Guadalcanal and within Solomon Islands.

Another work that RAMSI is also doing is capacity building. There is something missing within our communities. Our traditional chiefs are powerless and they need to be strengthened. The connection between the police and chiefs is missing. I believe RAMSI should come onboard and help bridge this gap.

With regards to economical development, RAMSI's presence in Solomon Islands is giving confidence to aid donors to help us as a nation. I therefore believe RAMSI should remain and help us. I believe that most provinces in Solomon Islands want state governments. I also believe that no one is prepared for that. The gap not filled by the colonial powers before giving us independence, I believe today, is filled by RAMSI.

Solomon Islands is like a child that cannot hold a spoon by him/herself and so has to be fed. We were given spoon to feed ourselves during independence. That's why issues came up after we feel the pressure of something that keeps on pressing upon us. I believe RAMSI's presence in terms of economic development is really needed in Solomon Islands and also here in Guadalcanal, and specifically Savulei Ward.

With regards to security purposes, I believe RAMSI's presence as other speakers have already mentioned brings security to the people of this nation and that is why people are walking around freely everywhere inside our country.

In that regard, RAMSI must stay on until men, women and children within the country or Guadalcanal or whatever provinces feel secure. RAMSI must still be here until people right throughout the communities feel safe.

In regards to reconciliation, as I've already said today as well as other speakers, there is indeed great need regarding reconciliation. There is need for reconciliation between the government and the people, the people and the people and so on.

I believe that the presence of RAMSI being an intervener and a neutral party should provide an avenue for reconciliation and peace to be restored within our country. That is what I can say at this time. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** On the question of since law and order has been restored, what else does RAMSI needs to do in Solomon Islands, in my own personal view, I don't have many things to say but I still come back to my answer today.

RAMSI still has some work to do in Solomon Islands. The main thing, in my view, that RAMSI should look into with the Solomon Islands Government is to try and look for funding somewhere to help people who have problems.

We say that law and order has been restored, and that's true we've seen a little bit of that but the root causes of the problem are not yet solved. That is one of the things that RAMSI and the Solomon Islands Government must try to work together to address. Secondly, they must try their best to help those people who have been affected by the tension with some funding so they put their minds on those things and forget about committing problems. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much, that's it. Thank you, Savulei Ward. Your views will be taken onboard in our review of the notice when we have to do our report that will be tabled in Parliament. Thank you for your participation.

### **Witnesses from Barana to Kakabona Areas**

**Mr Chairman:** The leaders are Joseph Manahama, Mosa and Michael Liliau. When we ask questions, if you answer please state your name, and the area you come from for our records. This is just a reminder.

**Hon Usa:** I will ask the first question and as the Chairman has mentioned please, the first group take note properly of questions put forward to you and you briefly answer the questions put forward to you. I think the first question will be similar to the question the Chairman asked to the previous group.

First of all, I want to thank the good people of North East Guadalcanal for taking the chance to come. This is a good sign that you really care and I think we look forward to the review of the Facilitation Act. The question is, what do you think about RAMSI?

**Witness:** Yes my name is Michael Tohina and I come from Tandai Ward, Longu village. Everybody knows that RAMSI itself is one of our evacuators. RAMSI, in my personal view, has helped throughout the country and for us at Tandai Ward, it has indeed been a great helper to us. And so I thank the Government for bringing RAMSI into the country. What RAMSI has been doing is restoring law and order. Why I still want RAMSI to stay is because I want our police force to be involved with RAMSI.

I want your Committee to tell the Commissioner of Police that everywhere RAMSI goes, our local police officers must go with them so that communities can have confidence that RAMSI is working together with Solomon Islands.

**Witness:** My name is Hilda Kii and I am from the Barana Community. My answer to that question is like this. Today if anything happens in the community people will tell us to report to RAMSI or call RAMSI. Why do we still say that? That means something is still missing somewhere if we keep on saying 'call RAMSI'.

I am involved in many surveys where we went around the whole country and everywhere we went to seem to be saying the same thing that RAMSI must still stay on. Why? That's what we have to look at. I would have thought RAMSI has to stay because they have to replace the things which caused the tension, the reasons why the young boys took up arms. RAMSI has to help the government to put something to replace their anger and replace whatever the purpose they fight for. I think that must be done before RAMSI can go back. It needs a whole day to answer the question. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Joseph and I am also from Barana community. In my personal view of RAMSI, I think it's up to the government to decide what else RAMSI should do for us people of Solomon Islands. For us the chiefs, we also have the right to think that way, but it's the government that brought RAMSI into Solomon Islands because of what has happened to us. What happened during the tension is a bit difficult hard for those of us in Guadalcanal and Malaita to forget about until some things are solved, and who is to solve them. That is why we, the chiefs of Barana are only waiting on the government to tell us what is RAMSI supposed to be doing in Solomon Islands. What we, the chiefs of Barana agreed on is that we will do whatever the government tells us to whether it is with RAMSI or whoever. For ourselves, we cannot do it; we will just look and wait. But if RAMSI has to leave then that would not be right with us too. That's my view.

**Witness:** Thank you, my name is Jacob Bubulo, and I also come from Barana village, Tandai Ward, zone one. RAMSI when they came in, I started to see there's a bit of improvement on law and order. I can see us being able to get a bit of money from gold, oil palm and logging. I am happy with RAMSI for being here and that's why we able to do that. RAMSI can only leave, for example, if we are alive again or our plate is full before I agree RAMSI should leave. But right now, even we ourselves are still hungry for money, which they came to restore law and order and that's why our financial situation has improved. That's my reason for wanting RAMSI stay on a bit longer.

**Witness:** I have the very shortest answer. RAMSI is a gift from God to the cries of the people of Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Witness:** I am also a representative of Barana village. In answering your question, I would like to say that RAMSI must stay on. That's all.

**Witness:** Thank you. My name is Jeffrey Maui, a youth rep of Kakabona area. In regards to your question, on behalf of the youth I would like to say that RAMSI is a good idea we would say originally because now youths can see that Solomon Islands

has a life jacket or a life raft. Our past leaders don't have such an idea and so it's like a ship without a life raft. RAMSI is like a life raft. Therefore, we the later generations have hope that should there be any crisis arising later, we would have somewhere to run to. We also thank God for this, and would like to say that whilst we appreciate RAMSI, other countries too should appreciate it because the first time we asked for such an assistance they don't respond and our country really went down. And when we asked the second time they responded but some of the things that should not have happened have already happened. RAMSI is a very good idea that our good leaders came up with because it brings back law and order and it also creates an environment where investors come back and invest which makes life a little bit easier. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** I am Beku and I represent Verahue. To answer that question, my personal view is just a short one. RAMSI should not go back because law and order is still not sustainable in our country. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Silverio Jolo and I'm also from Verahae Community, Tandai Ward. My short answer to that question is that RAMSI should not go back as yet because many things they started are not yet completed. As we've already heard, RAMSI came and formed an association within the communities and so we want them to complete establishing the associations that comprise men, women and children before they can leave. That's why I said RAMSI should not leave.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman my name is Charlie Victor and I am from Veraboli. To answer that question, 'what do you think about RAMSI', I think RAMSI should stay, because one, they must arrest Edmond Sae in Malaita with the guns that he has in his possession and who is still on the run. Second, they must take back all the arms that are still hiding somewhere. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Kanato and I represent a community in Kakabona called the Vatikola. My personal view on what I think about RAMSI is that I view RAMSI since its arrival as a good friend. I see RAMSI's work in Solomon Islands as a child with a sore leg who needs a nurse to treat the sore because she knows what type of medicine to treat the sore with. I regard RAMSI as coming to help us and listen to us when we tell them our problems. So they interacted with us, the two brothers in Solomon Islands to lessen the hatred we have about each other.

Socially, I see RAMSI as very good. They came in and do their job, law and order was restored, and therefore it should be time for us to look at ourselves because our behavior needs to be changed. That's what I think. RAMSI is doing its social work



with the government, and that's good. I applaud RAMSI for that. That's my view about RAMSI.

**Witness:** My name is Anna and I come from Tanavasa village also from Tandai Ward. The first thing I would like to say is to thank the government for bringing RAMSI into Solomon Islands which helped to restore law and order. Women are always on the frontline and so when RAMSI came we are free to go to town and do marketing and so forth. I on behalf of the women of Kakabona would like to say that we don't want RAMSI to go back; we still want RAMSI to stay on to do other things in our community. Thank you.

**Hon Ghio:** Almost everyone of you who are here want RAMSI to remain, which means if the government has a new partnership agreement with RAMSI what do you want to be included in that new partnership in terms of assistance from RAMSI.

**Witness:** I think whilst RAMSI is here I want the government to seriously think about involving its officers and workers to help RAMSI. For example, the policemen must be directed or tasked to go with RAMSI to carry out work in the communities, and not just stand and watch. They must go around and talk with the communities. They are there to support you in maintaining law and order so that our feeling of being secured returns to us.

Whilst RAMSI is still here, it's time for us to implement the reconciliation program we have been talking about. It's time for us to solve our problems we have been trying so hard to solve. We can't solve the problems ourselves if RAMSI is not here. It's like a father going away and mother and her children trying to solve the problems, but it's hard. That's what I think.

**Witness:** In my thinking on what RAMSI should be doing in partnership with the government, before the tension the community leaders have power in the village but when after the tension I seem to notice the power as weakening and the young people assuming power in their hands. I think one of the things that RAMSI should be doing in partnership with the government is to look at ways and means of restoring power on village leaders. In our country, village leaders hold power and reinforce community living and social control in the village, but when this power is taken over by young people like what we've seen during the tension then it may not work because generally we know that the young people are not yet put as leaders until they proved themselves.

Also as I mentioned earlier on, when any problems or disorder happens in the community, we always say 'call RAMSI', what does that mean? It means people who should be called upon to address problems are not strong or are not working. Therefore, there is need to strengthen our police force so that they perform like they

used to be in the past. I can see that they are not working like they used to be in the past.

Another thing is, why did the tension take place? It is because the people were not happy. Has RAMSI helped the government to make sure the people who started the problem are happy? Look at what happened in the Weather Coast? It means people there are not yet happy. May be it's a problem of development, may be what RAMSI is offering to the government did not trickle down to the village level. I think those are things we should be looking at.

We must replace the war zone with something tangible, something concrete that those people should hold on to so that when they are happy they will not cause problems. Problems come about when people are not happy.

**Witness:** I think if our government has good working relationship with RAMSI, it should just ask RAMSI to help our policemen by giving them good instructions on how our police should act or give them real power.

What some of us are seeing, like myself, the police officers in Honiara don't seem to have power in carrying out their duties. Unless RAMSI gives them power I don't think they will work. Their offices must be kept clean, they should not be chewing betel nut, but they must perform to their best so that people can trust them because they have power to look after us. Those are the things I am talking about.

For instance, just two weeks ago a problem happened in town. The police are there but they did not take any action even though the problem happened. Because of that, we think it's better for RAMSI to once again work with our policemen of Solomon Islands. That is why RAMSI must still stay for more education for our policemen in Honiara so that order and law is sustained and maintained here in Solomon Islands. That's all.

**Witness:** Earlier on today I appreciated RAMSI for restoring law and order because I can prove it. The question now is, what else should RAMSI be doing. I think it must involve heavily on church and education. It must involve itself in the community. That's all I can say about RAMSI.

**Witness:** I think this is a very important question. If the present government is thinking of having a new partnership with RAMSI, in my view, it must try to look at strengthening the role of chiefs in the community and it must try to help youths to become good leaders in the future in Solomon Islands. It must also come up with acts that can enable youths to properly use aid donor money for development, infrastructure, agriculture projects and things like that. It's very important that if the present government is thinking of reviewing RAMSI, then I think it must think about asking RAMSI to make development happen for people in the rural areas.

**Witness:** My name is Sabino Mele from Tanagai Parish, Veraboli Community. This question on what other ways RAMSI should assist in the new partnership agreement with the government, it is very good that we should not only look at the ethnic tension but we should also look at things to make us forget about the ethnic tension, to make things happen so that there's economic development to strengthen our country down to the grassroots level. May be those are the things that RAMSI can assist and at the same time safeguard and prioritize activities going on in our country.

**Witness:** I want to make a brief comment on this question of what else RAMSI should be doing besides law and order. If we look at the main point of this question, we know that ordinary people in the villages don't have the confidence on the police, and confidence cannot be taken overnight, it takes a long time. We are human being and there is blood in our lives that makes us to recall things. It makes us not to forget things that happened in the past. There is lack of confidence in our police officers because if you walk down the streets of Honiara today, many stupid and silly things happen on our streets at anything. There is drunkenness, robbery, pick pocketing, fighting, which is a reality. So what would make us want to send RAMSI back?

In my point of view, this is not the right time to send RAMSI back. There are many things that RAMSI should be involved in as we've already heard from other speakers.

Also, I can still see that officers in some of the government ministries, like the Ministry of Forests, Fisheries and the Ministry of Lands are always implicated as being corrupt. But that is incomplete if we only look at it one side. Because within the government system if we it to be good then the whole government system must be good. My comment is put all RAMSI officers to be technical advisors, lawyers and so forth. It's also sad that I doubt the professionalism of our locals but because we cannot do those things and that's why I am asking this committee to look into this. That's my comment.

**Witness:** As a youth rep, I will just comment like this. I don't think we should have any new partnership arrangement with RAMSI. I think what RAMSI should be doing is just to improve on the mandate it has in carrying out its duties in Solomon Islands. They should be doing more policing work. For example, at Kakabona we have a very nice police post there and when we ask RAMSI and the police officers of G. Province to man that police station 24 hours because a few times they have attacked that police post, but nobody listened to us, and so in the end we lost the post. So instead of making a new partnership with RAMSI, we think on behalf of the youths, to just improve on the work you are supposed to be doing because its end result is not having a police post.

I think RAMSI should involve more on policing work. People talk about law and order as being restored, but it's not really sustained and maintained so that if unfairness happens, RAMSI is still here. If they work hard at improving areas like that then we should look at where else they should come in to help.

**Witness:** In my personal view on what's the purpose of RAMSI coming to Solomon Islands, if it's for law and order then they are supposed to be working with Solomon Islands police officers. For us at home, people are still planting marijuana, they are still producing kwaso, and these are the things that are causing problems in the community. This is what RAMSI and the police should get rid off before things can become better.

**Witness:** My view about this question is that those of us at the front line always come across many problems such as drinking of alcohol and so on. Sometimes we ring the police but there were no response from the police even though we are just near the town. I want RAMSI to resume its patrol along the roads from White River to Kakabona. Our local police and RAMSI must do this work together. It must not be done by local police themselves but it must involve RAMSI as well. Thank you.

**Witness:** I will contribute very briefly to this question. I think the heart of the problem is the bona fide demands of the Guadalcanal Province. I think RAMSI has been here in the Solomon Island for about five years now working with the government of Solomon Islands. I'd like to ask RAMSI to work closely with the government to address the bona fide demands of the Government Province because that is the root cause of the problem which brought RAMSI to this country. All of you leaders sitting in front here, I think we need to address the bona fide demands because if we do not address these demands, we will still want RAMSI to be here even after 10 years it's been here in the country.

**Witness:** My personal view on this new partnership with RAMSI, I think what the Solomon Islands Government has mandated RAMSI to do has been done, at least it did it. It still needs to improve on a few things like what others have already said. For me, what will make a difference if we review RAMSI, I personally don't know the cost of RAMSI's stay here in Solomon Islands. If RAMSI has to stay, its okay for it to stay because we ourselves should take care of our own problems like reconciliation. But the cost of RAMSI's stay in the country is something I've been thinking about. Today, I think we are finically down and so RAMSI should still continue with its work in the country according to what it's mandated to do until such a time we see fitting for them to leave then they can leave so that we can stand on our own. That's my view.

**Witness:** In my personal view I still want RAMSI to stay in Solomon Islands because I want RAMSI and the government to work together to empower our chiefs so that the chiefs can have power to resolve many of the problems in our villages so that we stop calling RAMSI every time there is problem in our homes.

Mr Chairman: Thank you very much. I think I will allow one more question by Hon. Siriako Usa to be directed to the Provincial Assembly Member of Tandai. Can you ask your question now?

**Hon Usa:** I think I will just narrow or confine the question to the Provincial Member. It should have been for the public but the MPA is more appropriate to answer the question, may be with the assistance of Hilda Kii. The question is in relation to capacity building. What we are seeing now is that RAMSI is concentrating on the national government ministries, and we see line posts filled by RAMSI officers just to overcome corruption and things like that.

What is your view, like for us as a provincial authority, do we need RAMSI to come down to the provinces to help us in regards to capacity building?

**Mr Chairman:** This question is directed at the provincial member as well as Hilda.

**Witness:** This is one of the areas of concern. Now it's five years that RAMSI has been in Solomon Islands and yet they don't even have any thought of going down to the provinces. The provinces really need assistance. Provinces need advisors, they need engineers to direct them on how to implement their projects. They also need lawyers. At the moment provinces hire lawyers and that's why some of their cases get through.

I think RAMSI must look at the provinces and try to give them advisors, lawyers, administrators, accountants to help provinces, not only Guadalcanal but every province in Solomon Islands. Thank you very much for this question as it enlightens you that provincial governments are really in need of RAMSI assistance. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** I will try to give my personal views. We know that what is called the Facilitation Act brought RAMSI to Solomon Islands, and I think it limited RAMSI' work to only certain areas. I think they should widen or extend the Facilitation Act to include areas that are outside so that they can do other things in terms of facilitating development, services especially in many areas in the villages. They have clinics but may be there are no medicines for the clinic. They need a lot of services, which we in Honiara are enjoying but they are not. Perhaps they should widen what is in the Facilitation Act, which brought RAMSI into the country to include other things. If the national government itself is strong and not the provinces, which are directly involved in development provinces, then I think development will be a bottleneck. In other

words, development should start at the rural areas, which is bottom up approach, and then coming to the top, which is the town or the urban centres. It should also trickle down to the rural areas, empowering people in the rural areas. I think that's all I can say.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much. I just want to thank on behalf of my committee, the witnesses from Barana to Kakabona areas. Thank you very much. This time we will take a break and after the break will be witnesses from Bonege to Vura areas.

*Lunch Break*

### **Witness From Bonege To Vura**

**Hon Usa:** Good afternoon witnesses from Veraboli, Bonege to Vura. I think you've already heard the questions asked to witnesses earlier on. I think I'll pose the same question to you, and the question is, what do you think of RAMSI?

**Witness:** My name is Philip Gii, and I am from Tandai Ward 1. I come from a small community of Bonege. Thank you very much for this question, and this is what I will say.

RAMSI is here in the country, and everyone agrees that they should stay on because there are still things that they need to solve. I think RAMSI has been here in the country for five years now and what it came here in the country to do has already been solved, and that is to disarm the ex militants, and restore law and order.

Whether I say RAMSI should stay or leave, the problems that have happened in the country were caused by ourselves and therefore it would be good if we solve the problem ourselves. For a different country to come and solve our problems will be a bit difficult. But what RAMSI is here to do has been solved already. So whether RAMSI leaves or stays, for me it all depends on you our leaders of Parliament.

**Witness:** My name is Peter Gii, and I come from one small community at Bonege. It's good that all of us know that RAMSI comes to Solomon Islands to help restore what has happened to us. For me, I see the problem as already solved.

Why I want RAMSI to stay is that they still have work to do. For me, I can see many more things happen that they should solve before they leave, especially problems at the market. First we cannot freely do our marketing. Secondly, one of our boys has been stabbed in the market a few weeks ago, and who is going to solve this? RAMSI. RAMSI must solve that problem. Thirdly, the demands of people of Guadalcanal are still not resolved. If the demands are put to the government or parliament, it's true you can solve it, but you will not be able to do it as quickly as possible because we want it resolved as soon as possible.

Within those concerns, I see that four people from Guadalcanal have been killed. And who is going to solve that problem? It's true the government can do it but for now I don't think you will seriously look at it. That's why I agree for RAMSI to stay on in Solomon Islands to solve that kind of problem. We, the people from Guadalcanal are not free to sell our produce at the Main Market because every time there is fighting, fighting and fighting at the Main Market. Our local policemen are there but they didn't solve this problem. The women run away from their market produce, and that's why we want RAMSI to stay on here at Guadalcanal. Thank you Chairman.

**Witness:** My name is Derrick Umi. I say the same thing as the others, and that is, we don't want RAMSI to go back. I as a chief from Bonege would like to say that RAMSI came here and helped us. We want RAMSI to still be here until they solved our minds.

**Witness:** Mr. Chairman, my name is Pulitamba of Tandai Ward, West Guadalcanal. I think on this question of RAMSI staying on in our country, I accept that. I want RAMSI to stay and do other things that they need to fulfill before they can go back if allowed by our leaders.

What I see is that RAMSI must help us with development through projects, through our provincial government so that projects can reach our grassroots people in the village.

Secondly, we all know that many criminals are still around our homes, the public roads and even in the market place. Our police have been trying to solve these problems but it's hard for them. In my personal opinion, I want our government to empower RAMSI to arrest people who are committing crimes in our villages and in public places because our own police, the way we see them is that they are no longer doing their jobs. The government must look at how we can tackle the problem of people who are still doing criminal activities. We must solve that problem by reducing it. That's all and thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Michael and I am from Tandai Ward. On the question of RAMSI's presence, in my view if RAMSI goes back, problems will arise again. To me, the presence of RAMSI here at this time, they should stay on until real peace reigns in our communities.

RAMSI's stay in Solomon Islands is good and its going back would be too early. They should stay on until such a time real peace is seen in our communities and the whole of Solomon Islands.

**Witness:** My name is Maria Kunji and I am the chief of Vura village. My view of RAMSI is that I want RAMSI to still stay on until everything demanded by the

Guadalcanal Province is met. If RAMSI goes back I believe no one will solve the bonafide demands of the Guadalcanal Province.

I think the government must give more power to RAMSI to help our police address crimes that are happening in the villages. It would seem to me that there are no policemen in town now. I say this because if you go down town and to the market you would see drunken people there, and even in the villages it's the same.

I think you should give power to RAMSI so they help the police in identifying the roots and bottom of the crime. One thing I seem to notice as well is that producing and drinking kwaso is on the rise, and so there is need to tackle that problem. Kwaso is ruining many young people today. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Chris Kelly and I am one of the youth reps from Tandai Ward, Kakabona area. My view about RAMSI is that RAMSI is one of the assistant body from foreign countries who comes to help us and at the same time it is a neutral body and therefore is best fit to solve our problems of the ethnic tension. As one of the youth reps, I have interacted with many youths and so I understand their moves and behaviors. I see that RAMSI needs to stay on a bit longer. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Madelyn, and I come from Vura village. In answering the question on what my thoughts are about RAMSI, RAMSI brings back peace and unity to our country. They are great people and that's why foreign countries come and help us in bringing about peace and order.

In the past, we had the Townsville Peace Agreement but problems still persist, we still have problems but when RAMSI came in things started to go back normal. That's why I said RAMSI is great because of its great help to us in this country.

I would also say that we should not allow them to go back quickly. I have a few reasons for saying that. As a woman living at Kakabona, which is closer to the town, I used to go to the market and sleep overnight at the Main Market. The same problems expressed earlier by chiefs and others often occur at the market. There was the problem of drunken men going to the market at night harassing women, men and children who spend the night there. Some people were also killed at the market. That is why I think RAMSI should stay and address these problems with our local policemen, because it would seem to me that the police are not working in the night, we never see them patrolling our areas at night. I don't see any policemen patrolling our areas, and RAMSI officers too. They don't patrol our areas.

I would like to suggest that they should work hand in hand to patrol the market areas at nighttime because we, the women and children, used to spend the night there because we are going to sell our produce the next day just to earn a bit of income for ourselves. That's why I said that our local policemen with the PPF and RAMSI should work hand in hand together to provide security for us at night. RAMSI should stay on



much longer. Our government should empower RAMSI as well as our local policemen to look into concerns like that.

**Witness:** My name is Mary Botokoli and I come from Tandai Ward, Kakabona area and I am a youth rep from the Tandai Parish youth. As one of the youths I used to see in our communities the youths that normally misbehaved in the communities. What I want RAMSI to do is to try and put some efforts into bringing the youths to standards expected of them. Thank you.

**Witness:** We seem to be repeating the same things. My concern about RAMSI's stay in Solomon Islands is that they should continue to stay. What I can see is that at the beginning of our program you mentioned that RAMSI came to restore law and order, and that has been done but those of us in the community have not felt whether that's been done. I know that you leaders in the government know this.

Our feeling is that most of the problems still exist today but people to address the problems are not there. I think our local policemen and RAMSI should work together to solve the problems that are now increasing in our communities.

Secondly, RAMSI came in and helped the government and all government ministries are now coming up but what about our provinces. The same problems of corruption that exist within the national government also exist within the provincial governments. Because of that RAMSI should also go down to the provinces and help out there. Thank you.

**Hon Tosika:** I think every speaker expressed that RAMSI should work closely with the police. As you are aware when RAMSI came in they disarm the country, which means disarming of the state of Solomon Islands by destroying all the weapons that form the basis of the security of our country. We also understand that some people have taken the law into their own hands. But with this view that you now want RAMSI to remain in the country, some people we interviewed said that now is appropriate time that we should look at rearming our local police on the basis that they are vulnerable to instruments like knife, spear and things like that.

The Police, in this case, as I experienced when they walk along the streets don't feel safe because they don't even have those things with them. Before, the police don't carry arms around in public but the arms are stored in the armory on standby for situation or circumstances that would warrant their use for the purpose of restoring law and order.

Nowadays, we also have very new and young police officers who would want to serve our country. In most cases only RAMSI officers are holding arms, and our policemen are not. They are not even trained to hold arms at this point in time I am now talking.

If RAMSI goes out and our policemen are not trained to handle guns and not trained to be disciplined because the Police Force is a disciplined force or the Force is not trained then you would expect circumstances and situations that you mentioned will happen because there is no preparation.

In your views, do you think the Police should be prepared now for the future and trained with RAMSI so that when RAMSI exits there is a force that we can depend on to take care of the security of our country.

**Witness:** My concern and view at this moment is that it's good for our policemen to train with RAMSI but to hold arms, I don't think is right, may be sometimes in the future because this country is not going down but we are going up so that if anything happens it is good that they have already trained for it. Thank you.

**Witness:** On this issue of our police holding guns, to me is good but I think it's not really good yet for them to hold guns. If RAMSI goes back may be it's good for them to hold guns for safety purposes. Because if RAMSI goes back who will look after us. It would have to be our policemen. But this time it's not yet right for them to hold guns.

**Witness:** Chairman, in my view, they must train with RAMSI on the use of guns so that when RAMSI leaves they can comfortably hold the posts left by RAMSI officers. I think that's all I can say.

**Witness:** In my personal view, training on the use of guns is alright because RAMSI is doing that. But for them to hold guns is not yet right. This is a very young nation otherwise our policemen hold guns and some things happen. Training is good whilst RAMSI is still with us.

**Witness:** Chairman, rearming the Solomon Islands Police Force, I think, would be too early. It's too early because the peace process does not really come down to our communities so that we see the peace process as real peace. Rearming the police is not right because we have already seen what has happened. Some of them will be true and honest but some will use the guns according to their thinking, which is not safe for our country and people. Rearming of the police, I would say is not right at this time, it's too early to look at rearming of the Police.

**Witness:** On rearming of the police, I don't think it's time yet to rearm our police because at this time we are still in the tension even though we might say there is peace. I don't believe there is real peace in our country.

In my view, it's enough that RAMSI is armed because they've been using guns for a long time now. They know the rules of using guns. I think we are not yet fit. If

the police are rearmed, it will not be long before we see what has happened will happen again. If we go into state government, I would support that idea for our police to be rearmed to provide security in the states.

**Witness:** My view about the rearmament of our police for is too early as some have already expressed. What I can see is that we are still strong in our system of wantok system, which is very much alive in Solomon Islands. I see that as a danger for our police to hold guns. This system, for example, if one of my uncles is a policeman and he is armed, and I am someone who is a criminal, it would be difficult for him to disturb me because he is my uncle. In my belief, wantok system is still in existent in Solomon Islands and so we must not allow our police to hold guns.

**Witness:** In my view, rearming of our policemen is too early. RAMSI personnel are carrying guns around with them whilst on patrol, and when they come to our villages, women and children are often afraid scared when they see the guns on the bodies of officers and even some were pointing their guns at just any directions. For our policemen, I would say it's still too early for them to hold guns. We must look into our peace agreement to see the peace is real before our policemen can be trained to carry guns. But at the moment I think it's too early.

**Witness:** It's good for RAMSI and our policemen to carry guns with them at the place of training but when they come down to the rural areas they must not carry guns. That's all.

**Witness:** My view on the rearming of our local policemen is the same as others. When RAMSI goes back then our local policemen can be armed. I think at the moment because of the presence of RAMSI they should be trained on how to handle and operate the guns. That's all.

**Hon. Soalaoi:** Mr Chairman, I think all of us have heard views that very much support the presence of RAMSI. I want to ask a question that is a bit different. Of all the things that RAMSI has been doing, are there anything that RAMSI has done in the country or in your communities that you do not want?

**Witness:** The question is, is there anything that RAMSI has done that you do not want. In the community where I live, since RAMSI arrived I only remember them visiting us two times but we are only at their doorstep. They did not visit us often, only two times. In the community where I come from, RAMSI isolated itself from us and we did not know what RAMSI is doing.

What RAMSI has been doing in this country as a whole is good, but I didn't see RAMSI promising anything it should be doing for my community. May be communities that live along the roads can say something different, but the area where I come from, RAMSI never visited us nor promised us anything. But to look after the country and restoring law and order is very nice and good and I'm very happy with them. Thank you.

**Witness:** RAMSI usually paid a visit to our small community but they did not promise anything for us, and we are very happy to see them. When they come to us we would sit down and tell stories but they didn't promise anything to us. It's very good for RAMSI to come in and look after us in Solomon Islands. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** For me as a chief in one of the small villages, my observation of RAMSI is that when there are incidents in our areas, they just drive past the road, passing news to people asking is that or this person there. No, we don't want that. They should come to our villages, talk with chiefs and look for people who are involved in causing problems. Thank you.

**Witness:** RAMSI personnel sometimes come to our community at Vura to visit us and gave awareness talks. That is acceptable. They didn't promise anything to us. What they have been doing to this country is keeping law and order, which we all experienced as very good.

Sometimes when we told them that we had gatherings at the village, they would make patrols to our village and so the village is very peaceful and quiet. But sometimes if they don't come, social problems caused by drinking alcohol would occur. I accept RAMSI for coming to our village, and the good work they've done is what all of us have experienced.

**Witness:** There's only one bad thing I see about RAMSI. Since RAMSI arrived in the country and has been going around my community, I didn't see any thing from RAMSI. But in regards to its good side, I can see development happening in my community. RAMSI would come to our community and talk about things that can develop my community. They take the lead in talking about things that would develop the community. They are leading us and this still goes on at this time. That's what I can see as a good side of RAMSI within our community. They lead us in good ways, in ways of development and in ways of health. They lead us, showed us and gave instructions to us. That is one good thing about RAMSI. They should remain in the country because they always visit us showing us some good ways on how to change our living.

**Witness:** When RAMSI comes to our village sometimes, we didn't doubt them because their job is to patrol the villages and provide security to us. That is good.

I cannot see anything they directly helped us in the village with, but their only help is coming around for patrols, which is making people afraid to drink alcohol and things like that. We are very thankful when RAMSI arrived because our area is peaceful a bit at this time.

**Witness:** I haven't seen RAMSI planning to do any development or anything in my village that we might have asked for. However, I once met a RAMSI officer last month and we discussed how we can construct a soccer field for the youths, and I'm still waiting for him to fulfill what we discussed. If he failed to fulfill that promise, then that is the bad side of RAMSI that I see.

**Witness:** In answering the question, I would like say that I didn't see any thing bad that RAMSI might have done to our small community because everything they've been doing is fine.

**Witness:** My view of RAMSI is that they only patrol along the roads but they never get to the village I come from. I think all of us have seen the good side of RAMSI, and that is restoration of law and order.

**Witness:** May be my community is further inland and so we never saw RAMSI officers coming to our village. We only saw them along the main road. I cannot tell you anything about RAMSI's bad side because RAMSI never visited us in our community.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much, that's all. I thank the witnesses from Bonege to Vura areas.

### **Witnesses from Tamboko to Tarou Areas**

**Mr Chairman:** Can I call the witnesses from Tamboko to Tarou areas, leaders Charles Tara, and Sabe.

**Hon. Usa:** Thank you and good afternoon to witness from Tamboko to Tarou and also. I think you all were sitting around here and you would've heard the questions we posed to witnesses of previous areas. The general question that is put across to you witnesses from Tamboko to Tarou is, what do you think about RAMSI in its work so far that you've seen here in Solomon Islands. What are some of your general opinions about the work of RAMSI?

**Witness:** As a small group from Tamboko and Tarou, first of all I welcome the Chairman and your committee member for this session. This interview is very important for North West Guadalcanal and West Guadalcanal. My name is Charles Tanda, and I come from Tamboko, Tandai Ward.

I see the presence of RAMSI here as very important in the sense that law and order has been restored in the country. My only comment is that I want RAMSI to continue with its work and they must stay with us until all our problems are addressed.

**Witness:** I don't have any bad feelings about RAMSI. Many times when they are on patrol they would come to our village and talk very nicely with us. A lot of times we meet them too and they would talk very nicely with us. I do not have any bad feelings about them. Everything I see and think about RAMSI is very good. They've been doing a very good work to our country, Solomon Islands. They helped us, they've restore law and order in our country, and that is what we want. I'm very happy indeed with RAMSI.

**Witness:** My name is Benedict Tanga, and I do not have any bad feelings about RAMSI. Most of their work has been successful but they are yet to complete their work. I think RAMSI's work is very good for us in the rural areas. But assistance in terms of finance is missing because I think that is the government's responsibility. RAMSI comes through the government, and so I'm very happy with what RAMSI has been doing in my village and the country as a whole.

**Witness:** My name is Steven Matekave. I will talk a little bit in regards to market houses. There are two market houses that our women used to sell their produce in and those two houses are no longer safe. I want to put across to the Committee to try and put RAMSI personnel to protect those two market houses.

**Witness:** My name is Ben Tovo from Tamboko, Tandai Ward. Everyone says that RAMSI is good because they've done a good work. What RAMSI came here has been achieved very successfully. But we must review it because RAMSI came in with all its powers from Australia. They don't have the respect that we normally have in the rural areas. For example, once a criminal ran away and they came looking for him in my village of Tamboko, and they came with the army and everything. According to our custom they should come and see the chiefs first. However, that is not what they did. They came and kicked the doors of almost all the houses. They almost break the doors of all the houses in my village. RAMSI came in to do good things but we must review them. When they go down to the villages they must follow our customs and cultures of Solomon Islands.

**Witness:** My name is Alfred from Tamboko. My view of RAMSI is that RAMSI consists of foreigners, our Pacific friends. Although we are holding them up for so many years now, one day they still would have to go back to their homes. And so I think whilst they are still here with us, the government should just restructure our own police force to carry on the work when RAMSI leaves.

**Hon. Ghire:** As we all know RAMSI has been here for five years now. We just want to know what are some of the successes, shortfalls and areas that RAMSI needs to improve on?

**Witness:** I think to improve the work of RAMSI in Solomon Islands, first of all there must be a review of the Act. As we all know RAMSI has restored law and order. That's the first point. The other point is to look at some projects for the communities. For example, in the last three or four months, a group of RAMSI officers went to my village to hold a meeting on budgeting and things like that, but since then until now I didn't see them going there to my village any more. I think the best way is to review the Act so that it goes inline with what the government wants them to do. That is the first part.

The other part is that they must understand how we live because many times RAMSI just go into the villages without following the customs, rules in the village. I think we should review the Act to make it suitable and appropriate to the lives of Solomon Islanders. Thank you.

**Witness:** I go along with what the previous witness has said that the Act must be reviewed. I say this because when they come to our communities they told us about projects that they would do in the community. But after that we waited for them to come back and do what they told us, but nothing happens until today. I think if the Act is reviewed they might work according to it.

**Witness:** Everything that RAMSI has been doing is very much appreciated. I'm not against any one. Everything that they've been doing in the village is good but all these things cost money, nothing is free. That's all I want to say.

**Witness:** In my view, RAMSI must go down to the rural areas and help the women, children, girls and youths in the rural areas.

**Witness:** What RAMSI came to do is well know to all of us. What RAMSI has achieved is what we are enjoying at this time, which is almost like before the tension. The only bad thing about RAMSI is that they don't respect our customs and cultures. This is because they are foreigners and they might not know. They might have read about our customs and cultures but they need to come to the rural areas and see our needs, our

cultures and our customs in the carrying out of their work. Just like other volunteers when they came in, for one week they learn our pidgin, our cultures, our customs before they go out to the rural areas. Thank you.

**Witness:** What RAMSI has done is establishing structures in the community on how people can work together. They also formed committees such as crime prevention committees, community policing and modern policing. The bad thing about this is that they did not complete their work. They just left it half done.

**Hon. Tosika:** One thing the government is doing at this time is enter into a partnership framework with RAMSI. I think a lot of time people misunderstood this by saying that RAMSI is running another government and the Solomon Islands Government is running another government. It was because of this thinking that the government and RAMSI want to align policies so as to achieve one purpose and that is why they entered into this partnership framework. I understand that a concern raised by my brother there is in regards to the cultures, norms, and traditions of Melanesian people that cannot match the culture of Western people.

In your view, in terms of our culture and customs, when the two parties - RAMSI and government discussed this partnership framework, do you want this particular part to be included as one of the things the government should seriously look into?

**Witness:** I think the most important part is RAMSI's arrival here in the country. At the moment because we rush in bringing the foreign groups here and that is why those concerns were not included in the Act. But as I speak on behalf of myself, I think it is good for the government to seriously look into that concern.

**Witness:** In my opinion, the government should work together with RAMSI. They must work together and they must also come down to the villages to give awareness talks to us in the villages. Only by doing so, these things can work. We know that these people are from different countries so they must work together with the government.

**Witness:** RAMSI didn't come here by themselves, but they were invited by the Solomon Islands Government to come here. They are not here by themselves. If RAMSI works by itself and the Solomon Islands Government works by itself, we cannot succeed. We must work together as one before we can succeed. Thank you.

**Witness:** In my view, when those people left their homes and come here, they are in your hands. When they come down to the rural areas, they must come to the chiefs first, and the chiefs will tell them what to do in the village.



**Witness:** What you've said sounds very good in that our government and RAMSI will try to build their relationship so that they can work together. The question you raised is whether it is alright for the rural people to come into the two groups. An important thing is to empower chiefs so that they have power in the villages.

**Witness:** This partnership between RAMSI and the government, in my view, the communities or people at the grassroots level will respect and talk with RAMSI. The first thing they have to do is to adopt the traditions and norms of people in the grassroots area. It is good for both of them to look at our traditions and norms.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much. We are running out of time but thank you very much, witnesses from Tamboko to Tarou areas. Can I call the witnesses from Visale to Aruligo areas? The leaders are David Tetehe and Raymond.

#### **Witnesses from Visale to Aruligo Areas**

**Hon. Kengava:** I am going to ask a question, and if you want to say what you think about RAMSI then you can say it.

After listening to many presentations from witnesses for the whole of today, one thing that comes out very clear in my listening is that many of us in Solomon Islands want RAMSI to stay until they finish their work. My question is simple. If we want RAMSI to stay until it achieves its work, who is the best body, authority or person in the country that can decide for us that RAMSI finished its work. Does it have to be RAMSI itself or our Parliament?

**Witness:** Thank you Mr Chairman, and thank you Honorable Members of Parliament. First of all, I would like to thank you for your presence here. Before I answer that question I would like to thank most sincerely the government of the day in 2003 for having wisdom in bringing RAMSI to Solomon Islands.

I also would like to thank the Assisting Regional countries who, at our darkest time, have given their arms to support Solomon Islands. The question is asking who is supposed to be responsible for RAMSI's stay or its going out. I think it's very simple to my understanding. Only the floor of Parliament can decide for the land. I think all in all, Parliament should decide whether RAMSI should stay or go back. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Raymond and I come from Sahalu Ward, Visale area. I think who should decide whether RAMSI should leave or not must be the government and not RAMSI itself. In my view, because the government represents the communities whoever represents the government in the constituencies is supposed to come down at the community level to talk with people in the communities on why the government wants RAMSI to go. I think this is my short answer to that question.

**Witness:** My name is David Tetehe, and I come from Gorabau Community, in the North West Guadalcanal Constituency. I think all the answers starting from the beginning are just the same, and so I will be different in my answer.

In my view, I fully support RAMSI to remain in the country as long as it wants. When RAMSI first arrived, one of its sayings is this: "I will stay until I turn every stone". However, I do not believe it has turned every stone. They might be half way or quarter way in turning the stones upside down. I support RAMSI and I congratulate them for doing a great job during our darkest hours for restoring law and order and that's why today we are enjoying the environment. That is my only reason for supporting RAMSI.

**Witness:** I support RAMSI. My name is Sebastian and I come from North West Guadalcanal, Visale. I support RAMSI to remain in the country because they brought back law and order from a corrupt government. There was corruption in the government right down to the grassroots level. It is good for every one of us to hold hands together to sustain law and order. If there is no law and order at the grassroots level then it means there is problem in the family, there is problem in the community and thus problem in our nation and the whole world.

**Witness:** My name is Badista and I came from North West Guadalcanal, Tambulivu. I support RAMSI. It will be just the same word starting from the beginning until now. We all say the same things. I support RAMSI because they were not here because of the provinces and the communities, but it was the government that brought RAMSI into our country. In my view, I think these three parties must work together before they can decide on whether RAMSI should stay or go back. That's all.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, thank you for having this chance to say something about our community. My name is Pascal Kona. My observation of RAMSI and the government is that the government and RAMSI must work together. If they don't work together nothing good will come out of our country. When RAMSI, the government and people from the rural areas work together we can have good things in our country. That's all I want to say.

**Witness:** This question has been answered by many of us. I want to thank you for this opportunity and say this short answer. RAMSI comes to Solomon Islands to restore law and order. I can see a lot of things happening in our homes because I live at the Sahalu Visale parish. RAMSI goes up and down the roads but a lot of things are still wrong with us. People use dynamite to kill fish, people drink kwaso and go around causing

problems. I want the government to give more powers to our local police and RAMSI to enforce the laws and rules.

One thing I see is that if the government gives power to the chiefs, to RAMSI and our police force they will have the responsibility of arresting people. Because if we only wait for RAMSI and the police to attend to our problems, then I think it will take a long time before law and order is restored and enforced in the rural areas.

If the government gives power to the chiefs, the chiefs would be able to make arrests and hand it over to the police and the police take them to the court before law can be seen as working effectively. I can see many times RAMSI going up and down and a lot of things are happening in the rural areas, but I fail to see them catching the criminals. Therefore, I strongly believe that the government must enforce the law so that it comes through the chiefs before it comes to us. The chiefs must have power to make arrests in maintaining law and order in the rural areas. That's all I can say. Thank you Chairman.

**Witness:** My name is Bernadette Uro, and I'm the Program Coordinator for the Catholic Women Parish. On your question of who has the responsibility to get RAMSI out, and whether it is RAMSI or Parliament my view is this. You Members of Parliament were elected by the constituencies and so whatever happens to RAMSI and they go back, you must come down to the constituencies and inform us the reasons as to why RAMSI has to leave. Because what we are feeling down there in the rural communities is not felt by those of you up there. We feel what is happening at home. There are many things happening at home which you did not see and feel. So the presence of RAMSI has helped cool down many problems in the communities as well as in town. We are even very scared of going down to the town because that is the root of every problem before it comes down to the rural areas. When problems come down to the villages it goes out to the communities and that's the worse place you would ever be at this time.

My short comment is before RAMSI goes back, I want you to come down to us and tell us that RAMSI will be leaving us. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Martin Mauria, and I live in a small community at Takabauru in North West Guadalcanal.

Today I've heard many answers all saying the same things in regards to RAMSI. I heard from you Members that many people within the government want RAMSI to leave and many want us to learn everything for our own living in our communities. But I am very happy to see RAMSI here in our country.

**Witness:** My name is Brian Tuva and I come from a village in West Wing community, Sahalu Ward, North West Guadalcanal. I talk as a youth representative. To answer the

question you asked as to which organization has the right to evaluate the work of RAMSI whether it's almost complete or not, to me as a representative of the youth, I would say that the right person or authority to evaluate the work of RAMSI in this nation must be all of us and not the parliamentarians themselves. It must come from the grassroots, up to the provincial level, and then the parliamentarians would then decide whether RAMSI has completed its work or not. But I support RAMSI to stay back. Thank you.

**Hon. Boyers:** Today we listen to comments from one of the groups that came earlier, and one comment that stuck in my mind is from one person who said that churches are doing a good work than the government. And I think that is very true. We then questioned ourselves may be it's because churches have good relationships and they also live with the people. About three weeks ago we interviewed the General Secretary of SICA where he was questioned on the relationship of churches with RAMSI, to which he said it's not much but he would like to see improvement in relationship.

What I seem to get from your stories today is that when RAMSI comes to people in the villages, they must go and see the chiefs and not aggressive and kick open doors. Some women groups also talked today including youth leaders, which made me think that the church comprise of everyone like church leaders, chiefs, women, men and youths.

Our Committee is to assess the relationship between the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI in trying to develop a new framework. I want to hear from you whether you want RAMSI to have a closer relationship with you through the church so that church could develop more programs through youth, women and culture? Do you think church is the right conduit for RAMSI to have more direct link with the rural people? What do you think of that?

**Witness:** Since I'm a representative of the church in Visale, I totally agree with a part of your question that since the arrival of RAMSI in 2003, RAMSI never made contact with catechists of local churches in the rural areas. But the churches also have ministries like what the government has. They have ministries of women, youths and all sorts of organizations. Now, if RAMSI is interested to work in partnership with the government as well as people in the community, then they must work according to the programs that churches already have like programs for women, youths, catechists and all sorts of lay associations that exist in the church.

I think it is better that any program that RAMSI works by in regards to youth, women or whatever must be through the ministry of youth, women and children and right down to the church, the diocesan level or parish level or the local church level. All the ministries that exist in the government are also within the structure of the churches and are functioning very well at this time after the tension.

I would also like to mention here that the first groups of people who brought back the minds of the ex-combatant during the tension are church workers. They held workshops and awareness talks on peace building throughout the whole of North West Guadalcanal. This is a true thing that happened in 2002 to 2003 - the church workers before the arrival of RAMSI.

I suggest that any programs RAMSI might want to do with youths, women and even children are already in existence in the churches and so they should work with the church ministries. Thank you.

**Witness:** To answer this question, I would like to say that RAMSI to us in Visale, and I would like to share this with us here, especially you parliamentarians or this Foreign Relations Committee, RAMSI since last year has worked very closely with us at Visale. They did maintenance work on our clinic that is run by the church and the province. You can witness this yourself if you drive down to Visale where you would see in front of the gate of our cathedral the clinic I talked about that was maintained by RAMSI. They fixed the toilets and other facilities inside the clinic and they also provided furniture because they love the church and are working in very close relationship with us people of this Parish here at Visale.

I want RAMSI to have a good relationship with church workers as long as they live with us here in Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, in my community here at Aruligo, I cannot tell you the relationship between RAMSI and the church because I don't know how they might come in touch with each other. Every time RAMSI comes around my community, they only come to do community policing. When they did that they are doing it to the same common people of the churches within the community. In regards to other assistance like technical assistance, I cannot see any such assistance. But I hope that if RAMSI remains in the country and people know how to go about in such an approach in the community, then we hope to maintain relationship between churches and RAMSI.

**Witness:** I represent the youth but in my belief in regards to the church with RAMSI, I think they are working together. As one of my friends has already said, what RAMSI has done to a clinic in my community is very much appreciated. In regards to the churches, they are nurturing people spiritually through prayers. RAMSI is doing its part through physical rehabilitation like games and sporting competitions and so on. Even today RAMSI is still continuing to do that.

**Witness:** I support the thinking that RAMSI must work with the youths and the church because our community at Tuvu has a local church that RAMSI officers used to come

and worship with us a few Sundays. They also assisted the youths and that's why I support RAMSI to work within the community and church. Thank you.

**Witness:** I am going to contribute in regards to RAMSI's relationship with the church. I know that RAMSI usually comes to our community to hold awareness talks on the relationship between the church, RAMSI and the government. I understand that these three authorities have been working together inside our country because we cannot do things by ourselves.

What I seem to get from what you are saying is that churches are not very much involved in the peace building process. But it's the church that works amicably with the government and RAMSI. I think we must work together as one. Thank you.

**Witness:** It looks like we will be giving the same answer. RAMSI is doing a lot of work in regards to giving awareness talks to the churches and our people. I believe that churches, the government and RAMSI must work together so that peace can be achieved successfully in our country.

I am happy with the way RAMSI is holding awareness talks with us and doing some developments in the community. We are still waiting for RAMSI to come and assist us in any development. Thank you.

**Witness:** On the relationship between RAMSI and the community, there are only a few times that I see RAMSI personnel come to worship and later give awareness talks to us. They also support our soccer teams once upon a time and they are doing a lot of work, especially the maintenance of our clinic at Visale. I don't stay at home most of the time so that I can see RAMSI coming to our home, but I know that that they also paid a visit to our community at Kolupa for community building awareness. Those are areas that I see RAMSI working together with us in the communities. I support RAMSI for the good works that have been doing and are continuing to do for us in the communities. Thank you.

**Witness:** I'd like to say a few things about RAMSI. It's true that RAMSI is working with the churches and that is why we are seeing peace today in our communities.

It's good that RAMSI is still here because youths of each community must go to prayer services so that there is peaceful coexistence in the homes. .

**Witness:** My brief answer to that question is like this. There are ministries in the churches, and I am talking about the Catholic Church because I am a Catholic. As my other colleague has stated, the Church has a ministry of youths, the Sunday School, the women's ministry and so forth. I would say that I support the call for RAMSI to come out and be involved in the ministries of the churches by supporting the church through

whatever means relevant to the various ministries that are already in existent in the churches. Thank you.

**Hon Usa:** Thank you witnesses. I think we talked so much about economic development and social development. I would like to take us back to law and order. I think many witnesses earlier on today mentioned that they want RAMSI to remain in the country – all of them, but yet in their statements said that they still fear for their lives in the market, the public places and even in the communities.

What is the problem? Can you help us identify what is the problem of RAMSI and the police officers for not overcoming law and order yet? Because you see the continuous sale of kwaso at the market, there is continuous threat at the market, there is continuous harassment at the Weather Coast, with due respect, and in some of our communities in North West Guadalcanal.

Whilst we are saying on one hand that we appreciate the work of RAMSI yet these problems are still creeping in and increasing in the community. What is the problem? Is it because they are not doing their work effectively or what is it? Can you help the committee to know what the problem is? We only want short answers from you.

**Witness:** I think that's one very interesting and important question so far. As you've said many witnesses support RAMSI but they complain that selling of kwaso is still going on, there is a latest murder at the market. We are confused with your question because if we support somebody then that means he has completed his job or he is doing his job very well.

For me personally, I shouldn't blame RAMSI for the whole problem. I think there is need to build up our local police officers; they need to improve in their work. I think RAMSI is trying its best to develop our local officers, but I think the local officers themselves don't want to improve themselves, so I blame RAMSI and the local police officers for their weakness and our police officers need to be improved, there must be more capacity building for our police officers by RAMSI.

There is also an area I am concerned about and that is the recruitment process of our police officers. I think the process takes more into consideration the academic side, like Forms six or 7 as candidates for recruitment rather than looking at their attitude and behavior. Because of this, once they are recruited as police officers with a bad behavior by the Police Academy then for sure that bad behavior will continue even in the Force. I think the police should look more at the recruiting process and take into account candidates' behaviors and attitudes before they can be accepted to be recruited as a police officer.

It is also clear that the working relationship between RAMSI and the RSIP is very weak. I say this because looking back at the colonial days, police officers don't use

vehicles but they walk in twos as one beat for the whole 8 hours walking along the corners of Honiara up to King George and back and so nothing used to happen at night and day times because you see police officers in every corner of the town. But now you could hardly see police officers in some parts of Honiara for 48 hours. I think the weakness is in programming police officers serving in town or maybe because they rely on logistics and so they don't patrol on foot. That's the reason why we find nowadays whenever accidents happen there were no police officers to attend to incidents immediately.

In my own understanding I would like to recommend that RAMSI should provide full training for local officers on capacity building, discipline and management techniques. Secondly, when there is recruitment of candidates for police officers, they have to take into account a candidate's behavior and attitude before accepting him/her for police training.

**Witness:** I go back at the first question that was asked to previous speakers on what do we think about RAMSI in Solomon Islands, and most answers support RAMSI to remain in Solomon Islands as long as they want.

One thing that may have happened, but in my view has not happened is that RAMSI has not provided enough training for our police officers or they may have provided enough training but our local police officers may have taken law and order into their own hands. Also they are doing patrols, but why is that criminal activities continue to be committed and increasing at the market areas, and especially along the streets of Honiara.

In our experience sometimes when meeting our local police officers on patrol in twos or threes along the streets, when a harassment incident or assault happens at a corner somewhere there they will turn the other way. That goes only to mean they know the people committing the crimes are their uncles, cousins or brothers and so they would not be able to arrest them because if those people are arrested the relationship between them would not be cordial. That is why the question was asked and we've heard from many of the witnesses that RAMSI must stay back in Solomon Islands simply because of certain grey areas. That is why a majority of witnesses today said that they don't want RAMSI to go back as yet. The market areas is especially the worst as well as along the streets and shops where a lot of customers go in and out to buy goods where you will find robbers pulling out wallets, pick pocketing, pulling out purses and running away with huge amounts of money. That is all I want to share. Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, the increase of criminal elements within our communities and town areas is an ongoing problem before the ethnic tension until now, and so we don't know who to blame. Whether we are going to blame parents or church leaders or chiefs



or provincial leaders or national leaders, we don't know who is to be blamed for the problems. We don't know who is weak there.

In my view, it's going to be like as because we are facing hard times now because of the high rate of school dropouts and our government cannot afford them job opportunities within the town boundaries. For us in the rural areas, the chiefs too are disabled in dealing with such problems. In my experience of some cases that I reported to the police, the excuse always is no transport, not enough police officers and so on. But where are the half kwaso and marijuana, why can't you produce them. This means police officers and chiefs are not competent in dealing with problems like that. Therefore, we need to look very carefully at this very important question because of the continuous production and consuming of illegal drugs and alcohol in the rural communities and harassment. All these are continuing.

I understand that this is also the same situation in our town even though there are patrols by police officers and RAMSI. Problems happen after police officers left, like in the market place something bad happened after an argument.

I would therefore like to suggest that whilst RAMSI is here in the country, it must try to improve its community policing programs. It must put more effort into community policing. My experience in the community is that chiefs sometimes act like judges, police officers and prosecutors. Chiefs are performing many roles in the village without any form of assistance from the national government and provincial government in order to support us, especially logistic support. Thank you Chairman.

**Witness:** To answer your question, Mr Chairman, it is good that law and order is restored. But there is lack of officers, like in town we know that problems are on the increase because of lack of security. At the village level, I think we ourselves are not doing enough. For example, chiefs have taken oaths but they are not doing enough work. Even government officers who have take oaths are not doing their work. I think it is good if everyone of us work together to restore law and order.

Law and order can be restored if every one of us provides security in the town or inside the villages. We must work together to secure our homes and towns. Thank you.

**Witness:** In regards to your question, Mr Chairman, I think it's our attitude and way of life that normally spoils things. I say this because sometimes when our local police officers and RAMSI go to the rural areas to arrest criminals, they would befriend them and so instead of arresting them the criminals just go away free. I believe this is happening because I know three times when our local police and RAMSI tried to arrest some criminal boys at home for drinking kwaso and smoking marijuana but when the boys kindly talked with them they just left them and when the police went back the

next day the same problem happened again. That's why I said the attitude of Solomon Islands people is different to RAMSI if they do the work themselves. Thank you.

**Witness:** On that question of RAMSI, the communities and the government working together, in my view I think it's you the parliamentarians that has the right to work together in order to maintain law and order in our country because without you parliamentarians, government and RAMSI nothing can be achieved for the people of this country. I would like to ask you to work together as one with the government and RAMSI. This is my brief comment on this question. Thank you.

**Witness:** I also have this question in my mind even before you asked the questions. As a previous speaker had mentioned, in the past when we were under British rule, every corner you turn you would see policemen in groups of two patrolling the streets and everywhere I used to join the police force in the past and we were on shift every four hours and this arrangement is very good until the time we stand on our own and things started to change.

The question asked by the Chairman is also in my mind. About two weeks ago a boy from my home was stabbed at the market place when a knife went through his back and he died on the spot at the market place. And the question I have been asking is the same question where are our police officers, where is RAMSI, where is law and order, when is it going to be enforced.

This country has now been independent for 30 years but where are our local police officers so that they provide security to our town and villages. This is a very important question if considered carefully will take us a whole day to explain that there won't be enough time to do that. Some people will be giving the same answers to that question. But the question must be seriously considered in that the government must build up our police force and RAMSI so that they work like the police force during the time we were under British rule.

Today RAMSI police officers (PPF) are using vehicles to travel up and down the road from White River to King George as well as up the hills. Our local police officers also use vehicles when on patrol, but criminals don't use vehicles, they walk on foot from one corner to another and from one shop to another.

When we were under British rule until the time we were independent, the British were doing a good work by providing excellent security for us at that time. But when RAMSI arrived they use vehicles when traveling around and our police too used motorbikes and so whenever there is any problem happening in the places that we talked about earlier on where guests have left, things still remain the same, unless there is a change to the system of patrols undertaken by our police with RAMSI before it can work. That is my brief comment and answer to that question.

**Witness:** The question is how are we going to do things so as to help the committee to look at how to assist RAMSI and our local police, which some of us do not have confidence in our local police. This is because a lot of problems are happening in our communities and when these are reported to the local police nothing happens.

But I would like to touch on things that have been there for a long time now since I was child and I hear it as well. Today, there are many more people than before in the olden days, the colonial days. In the past, when someone murdered someone or his brother he would be hanged. This may sound funny but it's something that is worth looking at again. RAMSI is going to be fed up with us too. They have families back home and they too would want to go back to their homes to see them. We may talk about our local police but nothing will work out to our satisfaction. Before I used to hear from my father and mother that when someone committed a serious crime like killing someone, he would straightaway be hanged. I mention this so that punishments like that reduce the problems that we are experiencing at this time. That is my funny story I would like to share with you. Thank you.

**Witness:** I would like to comment about RAMSI when they come to our communities. They come to us and would like to set up village policing at home so that we can work together to build peaceful communities. When we work together with RAMSI and the police we discussed things to do with village policing. But when we went back home everything died out. So the question you are asking is, what can we do so that RAMSI's work in bringing about peace is a reality to everyone in this country. Thank you.

**Witness:** I would like to give a brief answer to that question because my Parliament Member said that he only wants short answers. A very short answer I am going to give is as follows: provide many boats and engines for people to travel quickly in them. Another thing is provide enough vehicles for the policemen to use so that they quickly attend to problems. The motorbikes and hiluxes are only used within Honiara but when cases outside of Honiara are reported they will give the excuse that there is no vehicle because it is used by others. By the time the vehicle is available for use, time has gone by, and crime was committed already. I think if vehicles are available or a place that needs a boat to go quickly to is not there but wait for tomorrow or next week and by the time the police gets to those places, problem has been committed. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Thank you very much, thank you witnesses from Aruligo to Visale area. Can we have the final witnesses from the Maravovo areas please?

Witnesses from Maravovo

**Hon Usa:** Thank you witnesses from Maravovo. I think you are the final group before we come to witnesses from Selwyn College School. I think time is against us and so I

would like to ask the witnesses to listen properly to the questions and give straight short answers.

I think I am going to pose the same questions as usual. We have seen the work of RAMSI since they come to Solomon Islands under the Facilitation Act. What are your general views of RAMSI and what are your views on the work of RAMSI so far in Solomon Islands? Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, thank you very much for taking time to come down here with your committee. Before we make any contribution to that question, I would like to thank you for coming and for your presence here today, for availing yourself. Thank you very much.

My name is Fr. Peter Jim and I'm an Anglican Priest from the Weather Coast but residing here at Maravovo village. Before I proceed with my presentation, I would like to first of all say that the Facilitation Act, which provides for RAMSI to come here maybe is not well explained to people in the rural areas, and that's why some of our statements are confusing. I'm sorry for that statement. If our people understand what is really in the Facilitation Act they would be clear and their contribution would be very clear too.

I think the Facilitation Act provides for RAMSI to come and address the law and order problem that we've had, to build the machinery of the government, to strengthen the work of the Police Force and economic recovery in Solomon Islands. I think that is well understood by everybody.

Now because the Facilitation Act does not provide for other things, this could be the reason why the review comes about to cater for some of the things not catered for in the Facilitation Act. For example, maybe some of their work is not included in the mandate of the Act such as support towards capacity building of the communities, building of roads and bridges, support to youths in our villages so as to keep the youths busy by engaging them in other activities so they do not engage in criminal activities.

The other reason maybe is because other things that have been mentioned by other colleagues are usual in the sense that we've been hearing all these in and around many times and so you may be tired of such a thinking or idea. But it is a suggestion or idea that each and everyone should participate and contribute to in this discussion or this meeting.

Another reason why we have this review is to identify the areas of weaknesses of RAMSI and to improve on some of the areas to cover some of the areas not catered for.

In regards to rearming of the Police, I think this is not good for our people because most of our people in the islands are very fearful of the police when they carry arms around in their hands. The government should put a time frame for RAMSI to work towards so that things are not confused here and there around this area. For example, in the first five years RAMSI should do this and that and so on and so forth,

build infrastructures, maintain law and order, maintain the government machinery, economic recovery and all that. The next five years should be for other things not covered.

On the issue of rearmament again, we don't think it is a good thing as I mentioned earlier, but if the government has a law or an amendment to the Facilitation Act that if RAMSI goes back then the Facilitation Act should approve that whenever any problem arises such as the tension, we can immediately call RAMSI to come back and maybe our people will not fear because they know that somebody to guide them are there and they can easily come to assist us.

This is a brief statement from me. Thank you very much Mr Chairman and I'll leave it to others to say something else.

**Witness:** My name is Ambrose Nika. To answer the question put to us, I think it's time for the present government to properly look at the Facilitation Act because for us to make any suggestion as requested by the questions, personally I don't have any means through which I can make any act against the present Facilitation Act that mandated RAMSI to come into our country. To review, amend or repeal the Act, I think it should be those of you up there as our representatives who should know where and how to go about that question. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Philip and I represent Paru Community, Sahalu Ward, North West Guadalcanal. Our understanding of RAMSI in our community is like this. RAMSI comes under the invitation of our government when our country was in trouble, and their three mandates were to restore law and order in our country, address the machinery of government and its workers to work according to established rules made by parliament or the executive government, and third is to address economic recovery.

The results or achievements that we think RAMSI has achieved in those three areas are like this. On law and order, as we've heard from other speakers and on the radio by other provinces, law and order has been restored although as expressed by other speakers today not maintained because a lot of bad things are still happening. As we all know, the peace we have is fragile in view of the fact that the bona-fide demands of the Guadalcanal Province are not yet addressed.

Also to add on to that, many communities within this province, Malaita and other provinces don't reconcile with each other yet. So it's quite a long way for us to really say that true peace has been achieved in our country.

But this all adds up to the fact that whatever others might think, we still need RAMSI in those areas whether or not other areas we think are added.

I think basically in my community that is our understanding about RAMSI and what is still needed. Thank you very much Chairman.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, my name is Anthony Limansara and I'm from Maravovo, and the paramount chief of the Sahalu Ward. To answer your question on what has RAMSI achieved so far since it arrived in Solomon Islands, so far we, in this area recognize some parts of law and order as being achieved by RAMSI. There is some assistance we received from a few cases we reported to them. They also helped by working in most government ministries. For that reason, I think there is still a need for some more achievements by RAMSI in the future. Thank you.

**Witness:** I am Patson and I come from Paru village. What I would like to share with us is that I don't want RAMSI to go out. That is my main concern. I say this because I know the work of police officers at the Central Police Station in Honiara. I know what they are doing because I used to work for a very long time for the government during the colonial days. I know their work is not satisfactory. When we call the police if there is a problem in our villages they never come. But how can things be right in the rural areas because if we say grassroots level but how can the grassroots work to put things right. The policemen should come and talk with chiefs in the villages to address criminal activities happening in the village. That is the reason why I think RAMSI must not go out, they must stay until every work is done. That is my view.

I am not against the police but since I have been working for the local court and so I know how they work very well. That's all.

**Witness:** Thank you for giving me time to share my thinking on this question, and I only have a few things to say. Yes, RAMSI comes to Solomon Islands because of the problem between Guadalcanal and Malaita Province. Their coming here is one hundred percent accepted by me. RAMSI comes here to resolve a problem between two brothers. I'll make an analogy of this as a family with two brothers fighting each other. They fight until the father and mother told them to stop fighting. The parents tell them to stop fighting and they give lollie to one of the brothers and a gum to the other. That is what RAMSI is simply doing. But this is what I think RAMSI should be doing. RAMSI should start at the beginning. Our culture here in Solomon Islands is that the first thing to do in solving the problem is to find out what is the cause of the problem. What is the cause of the problem which made the two brothers to fight? That is the first thing that should have been done.

I want RAMSI to go back one step and start from the beginning. In my view, RAMSI started at the middle. I think it must try to go back and find out what is the root cause of the tension. I think that's the first thing RAMSI should do before giving out gum and lollie to the two brothers fighting each other. Anyway, but I support RAMSI to stay here and complete its work before we reconcile because the last man to talk must

always be someone who has nothing to say because all good things have already been said. I think that's my brief comment. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** I'll introduce myself first, and I live just next to this school. Before I tell you what I think, I would like to thank this big group at the front for giving us this privilege come before you, sit down and tell you our concerns, feelings and things that we see are happening at home at in town.

I would like to say that RAMSI has been doing a lot of good things since they arrived in our country because you Parliament Members want us to return to law and order and that's why you requested RAMSI to come to assist us. So today you are here again to find out from us whether RAMSI should go back or not and so we are telling you that RAMSI should not go back but they must stay.

What I would like to say to us today is that I want RAMSI to stay and provide more training to the Solomon Islands Police Force, empower them, give them more knowledge, make them to have confidence to look after our country. If they just wear uniforms and go around, they will never be brave, not at all. I believe and can see as well that when the police attend to a report, and when criminal boys in our areas behaved badly they did nothing at all. That's not right!

I want to tell you members who are here today, RAMSI, our policemen and women, our Parliament Members of this Foreign Relations Committee here today to give authority to the police to empower the police. But despite of what I am saying, everything has been running very smoothly. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is John Rave and I come from Maravovo Community. I will be brief in my answer to that question.

On the question whether RAMSI should stay or not, I support the idea that RAMSI must stay but I want them to increase their number. In regards to rearming of our police force, it needs looking at it very carefully. I accept it but it should be sometimes in future and not right now.

RAMSI and the Police need to be provided with transport to work in the rural areas. There is need for more police posts, at least one or two in each constituency. Because when any problem happens in our community, we cannot come here to Honiara but we go to the nearest police posts. Thank you, Mr Chairman.

**Witness:** My name is Noella Savani, and I come from Labukulila Community. I represent the women and youths in our community.

In regards to the question whether RAMSI should stay with us in Solomon Islands or not, I see that without RAMSI there would be no proper education, no health services, and the absence of governance in our country. RAMSI's coming into the

country has brought back services for our youths and children. So I need RAMSI to still continue with the government in their work in Solomon Islands.

**Witness:** My name is Judith Mary, I come from Ngautu village, and I am the Mothers Union Leader in Lavavasa Community.

To me, RAMSI comes under the SIG and chiefs in the rural areas, which means I am not going to tell you anything about RAMSI, but my concern is on fighting and harassment that is taking place in the rural areas. I question what is causing the fights and harassments in the rural areas? I will answer it myself that what causes those problems is drinking of kwaso and beer. It's drinking business.

This is what it is like. When young people go down to Honiara by vehicle they would drink alcohol whilst in Honiara and upon their return to the village they would start shouting along the roads, around the village behaving disorderly, which would then end up in fighting and harassment in the village. I think what we should be looking at is how to avoid these types of behaviors caused by beer and kwaso? Thank you, Chairman.

**Witness:** My name is Nellie Lepu. Before RAMSI came to Solomon Islands, there is harassing of children with mothers in our communities, and that is what we still fear. In my personal thinking, I am very happy and thank RAMSI for coming because without RAMSI and the government, I believe the ethnic tension would still continue.

I can say here that since RAMSI came here to Solomon Islands, they supported a lot of good things for women in our communities. I am one of the women representatives of Lavavasa Community and it is very good that some parts of the lives of mothers and children are beginning to improve after the tension. Because of that RAMSI must stay on to avoid what had happened to us before. Their presence here is very important because it enable us to freely travel around our communities. Thank you.

**Witness:** My name is Anna and I am the Mothers Union Leader here at Maravovo. I am not going to talk very long but I'll be just very brief. I, on behalf of mothers in my community want RAMSI to stay because mothers and children are still living in fear. Thank you.

**Hon. Soalaoi:** Under the law that RAMSI comes under there are some privileges and immunities. This means whilst they are here and do anything that is against our laws, our courts have no power to charge them. A recent example of this is what happened to the student nurse who was killed where we have problem in trying to charge the officer responsible until Samoa agreed for us to charge him before we have control. But it's hard for us to charge them because the law called the Facilitation Act protects them



because they have privileges and immunities. That is what I want to question you on that when RAMSI officers commit crimes we have no power to charge them. What are your views on this? I don't want every one of you to answer but anyone can do so if they have something to say about this.

**Witness:** Law is there because of an act. If you, our parliamentarians see there is need for that law to be changed then you should change it so that such people are sentenced according to our laws. But since, as you said, that Act does not condemn or accuse them, then why did they come to Solomon Islands to enforce law and order. If they break our laws then our government should be enforcing our laws. That is what I think about that area. They are here and are supposed to comply with our laws when they are here in Solomon Islands. The laws they are enforcing here in Solomon Islands are not different from theirs. If they do something wrong against our law then they are liable to be punished or sentenced here in Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Witness:** My view is different from my colleague here. I think immunity laws are not only confined to RAMSI but they also apply to situations where a contingent or military personnel go to assist other countries. An example is the Australian and American armies who are in Iraq right now. To make it conducive for them to come and help us, I think this is a clause that entice their governments to allow them to come and help us.

A particular case in point the committee member raised, which happened recently I think in the end goodwill prevailed and so the case will be heard in Solomon Islands. In such cases, it has to be goodwill between the Participating Countries and the Government of Solomon Islands to look at. If the Participating Countries do not allow their personnel who break our law to be tried in a Solomon Islands court, then obviously our government will know that that country is not assisting us. I think it only helps us because of the money involved or something of that nature.

In this case, I would say that goodwill is called for between the participating countries and the government of Solomon Islands, and there is not need to change that law to allow this kind to happen. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** In my view, that is between our government (you parliamentarians) and the participating countries that come in to work with us. You are the right people to deal with it any clause of the law whether to add on to it, repeal or amend it. For those of us outside we don't know how to go about it. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** My answer will be very brief and straightforward. Firstly, I would like to say the clause that caters for that area is already there. The only thing I want to suggest here is that it depends on the nature of the crime. If it is a small crime maybe he can be

free but if it's a big crime then he must be punished for it, and when the law is reviewed that part must be included. Thank you Mr Chairman.

**Witness:** What I have in mind is for RAMSI to train our Police Force so that you work together. If you work together with chiefs in the rural areas things will be orderly and no problem will happen. Young people of today are criminals and are bent on committing crimes caused by two sources, kwaso and marijuana. And so I want you to train the Police Force so that we can work together with chiefs in the rural areas. That is all I need. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** I will be brief in my answer to this question. The question asked is how we are going to deal with RAMSI officers who cause trouble here. And you gave an example to the student nurse who died of accident caused by a RAMSI Police. My answer is, leave that to the highest decision making body of the country. Decision must come out of our Parliament. You are to come up with laws on how to deal with such cases.

**Witness:** I know RAMSI has been here for five years and so if our laws cannot take RAMSI to account then we need somebody to come to the community and explain to the people about the laws of Solomon Islands and the laws of other countries as well.

We've been listening on the radio and we know that some problems have happened to our friends who are here to assist us, but we don't hear if those problems have been tried or heard in our country. We want awareness so that we know why Parliament does not review this particular law so that they can be punished here in our country.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, I will say this. The Member who asked the question is from Tikopia. Now if you cause a problem here in Guadalcanal we are going to charge you according to Guadalcanal custom. We will not charge you according to Tikopia custom. This is the same with RAMSI. If they cause problem here in Solomon Islands then they should be charged according to the laws of Solomon Islands. But to make them follow their own laws is something that you parliamentarians should know because you are ones who mastermind that or made the decision.

**Witness:** My name is Marie Noella. To answer your question on how to deal with RAMSI when they cause any crimes in our country, in my opinion it is up to Members of Parliament because you are our voices and therefore everything is in your hands. Liquor licenses too are in your hands so as to reduce crimes that are happening in Solomon Islands. May be you should not bring beer into the country too so that crime is reduced.

**Witness:** I support the concern raised by Marie Noella. Crime starts from beer and it's the bottom of every problem. We want you to also look into this concern about beer. When anyone goes down to Honiara and gets drunk, problem is going to happen in the village.

**Witness:** You are here today for one purpose and that is to hear our views about RAMSI and to look into those views. The question is on RAMSI breaking the laws of Solomon Islands. In my view, if they break our law then the decision is in your hands to put them in jail.

**Witness:** My thinking is like this. We may ask whether they have their own laws or they should abide by our laws. In my thinking they should abide by our laws and not their own laws. What is good, perhaps, is for them to follow our laws. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** Time is getting late, and I understand everyone would like to go home, it's getting dark and you have a long way to go, but thank you very much witnesses from the Maravovo area.

### **Witnesses from Selwyn College**

**Hon. Tosika:** Teachers and students of Selwyn College, I as a member of this Committee would like to thank all the chiefs and elders. There is one formula I want you to take back home with you to your home or community if there is nothing you have taken from these interviews. The formula I would like you to take home with you is this: **Love + Honesty + Respect = Peace and Prosperity**. That is what I want you to take home with you because I find out that a lot of you who presented yourselves today have fear in your minds and hearts. But you must understand that the peace that God is giving us still exists within you. And the only time you realize love towards your neighbor and you are being honest with yourselves, you will create peaceful co-existence. If you need to take home with you anything this is the only formula I would like you to take back home with you. Thank you.

The question is this. You know already that the work of RAMSI under the Notices that we are here to review, most of them have already been fulfilled, like the 'public purpose' that I talked about earlier on.

In your thinking teachers, how long do you want RAMSI to stay? If RAMSI is to remain for another 15 years then this means now that they have been here five years already and the next 15 years, which is 20 years and that would almost be equivalent to the period we gained independence from our colonial fathers. About 30 years ago we gained independence. Now it's five years and if we add on another 15 years, it means it

will create a feeling of dependency where we depend and being productive will be missing in our societies and communities and we will still have the same aspirations and difficulties.

What do you think of an exit strategy apart from the five years RAMSI has been here already? What are your experiences of RAMSI when it came into the country?

**Witness:** Good evening, my name is George Asitewa and I am the Geography and Social Science teacher here at Selwyn College.

According to my point of view, what RAMSI is doing in regards to law and order has been achieved. However, I strongly believe that the assistance should be extended out a bit to rehabilitation. The problem is rehabilitating those who were affected, especially, those from Guadalcanal and Malaita. And as you can hear from the communities interviewed, I think only some communities were reached, like people of Visale are feeling the work of RAMSI but not the people in Wanderer Bay and other parts. I think there should be some fairness and work must be carried out throughout the affected communities. By that we must also give a time frame to RAMSI. We cannot just say maybe 10 or 15 year's time, but we must give them some time frame. Say we give them five years and that should be treated as a transition period where we can learn to hand over all these kinds of things rather than just waiting. Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, my name is Fr Patterson Tako, and I am the school Chaplain and I also teach NT studies here at Selwyn College.

First of all, I thank the government of the past for seeing it fit by inviting RAMSI to come to assist us. I believe that from the prayers of every Church throughout Solomon Islands, RAMSI is the answer to those prayers and they come to bring back peace to this nation, Solomon Islands. Also on the same note, whether we like it or not RAMSI has to leave. They would have to leave us.

On the issue of the Facilitation Act that brought RAMSI here, should they fulfill the Facilitation Act as the parliament of the day you are the people to monitor that, and should they fulfill that then we thank them for their good work and then we can tell them that we can now stand on our own. I strongly believe that if we continue to depend on RAMSI, we will never grow in this nation, Solomon Islands. We should allow them to go and thank them for the good work then we start to pick up from there in building our nation in all the ministries. By doing that, we can be able to move on.

It is high time that we trust our policemen and women through the work of the Churches, through the work of chiefs. If we cannot trust ourselves but trust somebody outside there we would not be able to move. We must trust ourselves. It is a sad thing to say RAMSI must continue to stay.

I, for one want RAMSI to move away from Solomon Islands so that Solomon Islands can prove itself as a Christian country and proves itself as a nation that it can

stand on its own. Otherwise they will say Solomon Islands is a failed state and so they will come in and continue to do this that. No, we have qualified people who can help us move on too. I believe very much that it is high time to do things on our own. But we thank them for their good work of saving us because Solomon Islands does not have enough weapons, like when the militants have plenty of weapons we don't. But we need to seek assistance from other parts of the world because we are part of the global world. I believe very much that we need to stand on our own, and it is high time now. Thank you very much.

**Witness:** Thank you very much Mr Chairman and Members of Parliament for coming to share with us on this very important hearing of the Foreign Relations Committee on the Facilitation Act.

My name is Raymond Vakurepe and I am one of the staff here at Selwyn College. The question raised is one very important question in the sense that how long we want RAMSI to remain in our country. Is it 10 years, 50 years, 100 or 200 years? How long?

I think the important thing is to put a time frame. As my other two colleague teachers have already mentioned we must make a time frame so that from that time frame RAMSI can work on important areas it has not yet achieved? The first important thing that should be considered, I think, is reconciliation and peace. If we want to achieve peace, the warring parties must be at peace first before this country can go smoothly.

The second issue is the bona fide demands of the Guadalcanal people? I think that is the root cause of the ethnic tension. If we want RAMSI to move out then the government must really look into that issue so that there is a time frame set to address those problems. That is all.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, my name is Alex Takola and I'm a Form 6 student of Selwyn College. As a future leader of this nation, Solomon Islands, RAMSI, I must first of all thank you for coming to save the lives of people in Solomon Islands.

As a future leader, I can say that Solomon Islands has gained 30 years of Independence and this is an independent country. If we want to review so that RAMSI stays on then we are not independent. If we want to be independent then we have to review RAMSI's stay in our country.

As my fellow teachers have mentioned there must be a time frame set for them so that they can properly train our police in terms of their rearmament. It is true that we do not want our police to be rearmed as yet, but we cannot be like that for a long time. We have to rearm our police and we also must trust them. If we do not trust them then we will have problem. I want RAMSI to stay but for the future of the country it is good too that they leave so that we can show other countries that we are independent. Thank you.

**Witness:** Mr Chairman, my name is Joyce Bana and I am the Deputy Head Girl of Selwyn College. Regarding RAMSI, it is through them that we gained peace in Solomon Islands. My concern is that I want our police to be properly trained with RAMSI so that when RAMSI leaves they will be able to lead this country, Solomon Islands. Thank you.

**Witness:** Thank you very much Chairman of this Committee for the time we have here to, at least, voice out what we think about the subject.

First of all, maybe we don't see it, but I would like to acknowledge the presence of RAMSI since 2003 that has brought a lot of improvements in Solomon Islands as a country. There are a lot of economic activities that were brought down by the ethnic tension starting to improve and growing at this present time because of the presence of RAMSI. Not because they go into do the specific work but their presence has provided a sense of security for foreign investors who are trying to come into the country to invest. Therefore, to answer the question, how long do we want RAMSI to be present in Solomon Islands after these five years they have already been here, my answer is as long as the government of Solomon Islands sorts out the reconciliation ceremonies in the provincial level which should make the tense situation become much lighter.

Secondly, as long as the government and RAMSI look at some ways to resolve the bona fide demands of the Guadalcanal people then I see no reason why RAMSI cannot leave.

To add on, it's all about our attitude and behavioral problem too. If we, people, want RAMSI to leave then we have to change our character and change our attitude because attitude problems can lead to problems that we cause in our communities or even in our urban centres, in and around Honiara or even in Honiara.

To answer that question, I would just like to say as long as the majority of the people of Solomon Islands change their characters at all levels of discipline, then that can justify RAMSI to leave. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** This is going to be the last question and this will be directly at the two students.

**Hon. Boyers:** This question is specifically for the two students. I believe you've been selected because of your standing in the school. I believe the ethnic tension of seven years ago, you would have been a lot younger then, maybe in your early teens and you would have had a good memory. The process of RAMSI coming to Solomon Islands in 2003, I'm sure you would remember, and the opportunity that RAMSI has brought to the environment so that people are able to move around safely, go back to school, public servants are getting paid and there is service delivery.

The question I would like to ask you is that looking at you, I remember when I was a student I was an average student, I wasn't a prefect or a school captain or anything but I didn't have any vision for my future. I just drifted through school, decided to get a job and then I learned the hard way.

Now that you are representing your school, a young woman and a young man because of your character and maybe your capacity and your abilities, can you tell me what would you like to become when you graduate and you enter into the work force? Now that you have this opportunity with an environment like this, do you have a vision of what you want to be when you finish your tertiary education, whether it's through university or just from standard seven, what are your dreams, what are your hopes, what is your vision of what you want to be in the workforce whether it is professional, skilled or whatever?

**Alex Takola:** Thank you honorable for that question. For me, what I want to be in the future in terms of helping the country, to be honest I want to become a member like you too. That is my last dream because to be up there at your level, you must show who you are first, and it's not from you becoming a student and then straight to work. For me, to be honest, if I happen to become a member of parliament, I will become the member of Kia/Havulei Constituency because I come from there. My main dream as a future leader of this nation, after pursuing my studies and I graduate in whatsoever work, I will try my best to reach the level you are at now. Thank you.

**Joyce Bana:** For me, in future I want to become a big woman in Parliament just like you. There is need for gender balance in Parliament so that our country can run smoothly. I want to become a big woman in Parliament so that whatever women need can be channeled through a woman before I can pass it to our big men. Thank you.

**Mr Chairman:** A woman Prime Minister? That will be a change and a good change too. This is it. I'd like on behalf of my Committee to first of all thank the Principal of Selwyn College for availing this venue for us, perhaps at a very short notice, but thank you very much, we very much appreciate that and of course the school Chaplain as well. Thank you Teachers and staff of Selwyn College, you've done a marvelous job. I also thank students who served us and your head boy and head girl whose views are very strong. It looks like it puts a very good state for our future. This meeting would not have been possible if it was not for the West Guadalcanal people who came here a pretty long way in their boats and I thank you as your Member for your presence here and your views will be taken into account. Also the North-West Guadalcanal people who are here, your views are important as well and we will take those onboard. Apart from that, this is all we've got, thank you very much, it has been a very long day but we've really learned something and please, get home safely. Thank you.

~~~~~*End of the interview*~~~~~