

BILLS AND LEGISLATION COMMITTEE
INQUIRY INTO THE
CONSTITUENCY DEVELOPMENT FUNDS BILL-2013

13 March 2013

FORUM SOLOMON ISLANDS INTERNATIONAL

Members

Hon Manasseh Sogavare	-	Chairman
Hon Douglas Ete	-	Member
Hon James Tora	-	“
Hon John Maneniaru	-	“
Hon Derek Sikua	-	“
Hon Matthew Wale	-	“
Hon Milner Tozaka	-	“

Witnesses

Mr Ishmael Nori	-	Deputy Vice Chair
Mr Ben Afuga	-	CEO
Mr John Kwaita	-	Member

Mr Chairman: I want to remind us again that you are protected the immunities and privileges extended to Members of Parliament and also extended to you so anything you say in here will not be taken up against you. Please feel free to talk on the bill so that we can advise Parliament and hopefully as well as the government in the process of taking this bill through. I don't think it is late yet for us to write back to the government to express some views to them in regards to this bill as the bill is yet to be noticed in Parliament for first reading. Thank you very much for appearing and you may need to introduce yourself for the purpose of Hansard records to take down all the things we are saying at this meeting. After that any questions that need to be raised, we will do that after you make your presentation.

Mr Ishmael Nori: Thank you very much for inviting the Forum Solomon Islands International to also contribute to this important bill that is now before you. First of all, I am the vice president of this organization and I am sitting in for my president who is out on study leave.

This bill was brought to the attention of our Forum just last week, but to receive formal invitations to come here was only on Monday, and it was a very short notice but I think we are very eager to be also part of the process of the development of our country and that is why we think that

even though with this short notice, we are able to come before the Committee.

Just to give you a little brief background of how we do things, the Forum Solomon Islands do things, we are a group of people that always discuss and debate national issues, and of course, the draft bill was also presented to our Forum and our members also contribute to it. Unfortunately, this bill in a form of thread on our page just came in and not yet many of our members contribute because of the short notice but whatever that we are going to present today, especially my CEO will be extracted from the very few that have contributed.

Very much what we are going to say today basically represents what our members are saying in the Forum, and maybe during the course of our discussions, some of the questions you may ask maybe we will not have direct answers for them right now because as I said this is a group that is discussing things, but I believe our capable CEO and our patron here and myself we will try our best to give answers and present whatever our members have contributed to the page.

First of all, this is a very important bill. I think this is a bill that people have been asking about and many times they write on papers and try to see something done about what we are calling the CDF or funds that Members of Parliament have in their custody. I think that has been the call by the people of this country. To see the initiative of having it in a form of bill is a step in the right direction. However, the timing and the content of

the bill is what is going to be subjective to question and subjective to scrutiny by our organization. It is sad in a way that this bill, if you look at it carefully, is more about funds that honourable members look after, and here is a bill that is trying to provide guidelines or is trying to task Members of Parliament and their CDOs on how to manage and supervise the funds. It is funny in a way because if we look carefully at it, why do MPs need a bill for themselves to guide them on how to administer the funds. Of course, the funds are administered although in a different form but still the same. What I meant is that, and let me put it in an illustration form. In the past we know that the honourable member and his/her CDO are cooking some nice food smelling very good from inside the room but people outside just smell the food but cannot see the food. This bill is only asking for those two to come out and cook the food in front of our eyes. That is what it is trying to do in the bill but does not necessarily describe whether what they are cooking is going to be shared with the people and whether people are going to participate in feasting on the food they are cooking. I fail to see it address that level.

But anyway for the sake of this bill, I think the general summary which you are going to also hear from my CEO here and I think the notion that is floating around between our members is that, first of all, this has been rushed to come in a form of a bill and to come before Parliament. As I said earlier it is a very important bill and it will be proper if we take it down to the people. There is also need for wider consultations because

whatever we are going to say here will be on certain perspectives. And this bill, as we can see is more on the perspective of the honourable member and his CDO on how they will approach the funds. I think it would be appropriate if we can also hear from people who are recipients of the fund how they have been receiving the fund.

The question here, especially when we want to talk about development is that when we want to talk about development we often mean the funds and this CDF fund in the hope or behind our mind we believe that that's the kind of fund that is there to address development. And, of course, our people who are listening in will be eager to know what that fund is for. It used to be under whatever you call as the RCDF or whatever, and now we are trying to regulate it.

The general question that used to float around is that before we start talking about fund or try to regulate a funding body or a fund law, I think we must also ask ourselves what that fund is for. What are those funds for? Is it for the people or is it for the honourable member to use for his development plans? Or is it to complement and supplement the national government's plans? From people's perspective, if it's for the people, how is the accessibility of the people towards the fund. Or if it's for development, then we also need to have regulations to guide those funds so that they actually get down and achieve development because for the past 10 years since the inception of that fund, people have always been complaining that there are no tangible developments, and I believe that is

so because there are no proper mechanisms as to how those funds should go down to the people and not only that but as to how people should use those fund too.

I think those are some important things we need to take note of. Because whilst we can regulate the fund, we must also know the context of development that we want to achieve by using that fund. This development, is it from the people? Is it from the people's context? Or is it in the context of the honourable member or in the context of the national government? If the honourable member is an independent body that is not part of the executive government, maybe his plans for his constituency are different. May be the people or the constituents have different plans or their needs or their context of development is quite different. We have to understand these key areas before we talk about these funds, because we can have a fund that is available but if we do not know what development is in those contexts, then we may end up with funds floating around and the probability of honourable members using it in different areas is very high.

In that regards, I also take note, like for example, forestry funds. If there is a fund for forestry there and a constituency would like to go into forestry, the other question we may ask is capacity, do our people have the capacity? Are the CDO and his honourable member have the capacity to support forestry projects in the constituencies?

The other thing that is also lacking many times is the people themselves. Do these people have the necessary skills to participate in any development? We are talking about funds here, we are trying to talk about a bill that regulates funds but, of course, we must also talk about the recipient, the people who are going to receive the funds and use the funds on the ground. We must also have a part of the bill that should also support them.

This reminds me of an honourable minister who used to be minister for fisheries and people were complaining as to why he gave approval to fisheries projects for people living in the bush. And his answer was that part of his job is to give approval and it is up to the people whether they use the funds on fisheries projects or not. It is this kind of mentality that we are trying to avoid and that is why I said, when we talk about funding made available for the people, we must also prepare the people, we must also be concerned ourselves with the people, the very recipients of the funds so that they can also participate in any developments when they receive or access the funds. Here I am talking about empowering people or equipping people with the necessary skills and knowledge so that when they receive the funds, the funds actually go down and generate something rather than just giving the funds to the people just for the sake of giving it to them but nothing has been happening. That has been past experiences.

I think if the government wants to seriously address development and that is why it came up with this bill to regulate the funds so that it can

be well managed and well supervised so that it goes down to the people, I still want to see the government also have something in place for the people.

I think the other area of concern that people are always talking about is the CDO or the office. Yes, again it is very important because the practice now, as we all know, of the way the CDO is recruited largely depends on the honourable member. If the honourable member makes the recommendations, he can choose who is to be his CDO. That has been the case. In the bill, although it says CDOs will be public officers, it lacks the process of how recruitment will be done. Also the CDOs, should they be people from the constituency or not? Because if they are public officers then it is not necessary that they have to come from the constituency, take for example, the nurses or field agriculture people; these are technical people, they are public servants but they do not necessary have to be people from that area but they are there to serve the purpose of the government. So we need to look into those things.

The other thing too as well, and this is in line with administering the funds and this is about the office. Do we have to have regulations that clearly shows how the office is going to be established and located. We have to be careful because if the office is located on customary land, for example, there is chance that dispute may arise and can affect the administration of the fund itself. Those are areas when we talk about the fund, establishing a bill to supervise and manage the fund, we must also

look deep down to where the funds are going to be administered. That is why I am talking about where the office is going to be located.

The other thing too is, where will the office be situated? Will it be central to the people or the office will always be where the honourable member comes from? In our case, I am from West Are Are so my Member of Parliament is honourable John Maneniaru, and does that mean the office and the CDO would be established in ward 25 or 24? Does the office have to be located close to his location or should it be established somewhere neutral as such? It would be best if those things are also included in this important bill so that it looks structured and more organized because we are talking about a law of disbursing and managing of funds here, and we also need a law to protect where the office is located, and as I have mentioned earlier that would also cover recipients.

Anyway, I am not going to talk much because most of the things our members have contributed on towards this important bill will be said very nicely by my CEO, and so I shall allow him to talk further on the contribution of the Forum Solomon Islands International. Thank you.

Mr Benjamin Afuga: The honourable Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee and your good members, my name is Benjamin Afuga, and I am the CEO of the Forum Solomon Islands International. I think you have read a lot about some of the things that we have been saying in the media. First of all, I am very happy to be here. My Vice

President has already expressed that we are proud to be invited to be part of this important parliamentary process. At last I think the Bills and Legislation Committee recognises the FSII. And that I would like to register our deepest thanks to the Chairman for recognising us.

I think we are placed in an awkward position because it is already 5 o'clock. But we have had a very comprehensive presentation by our first born son, ANSI. ANSI is very much part of the FSII that focuses very much on corruption so we are proud that FSII has created other movements within the movement itself.

As I have said, timing is not very much on our side and I know that you honourable members have been here since yesterday and I know that you must be tired by now, but we will try to be brief because many of the things we will be commenting on have been already expressed by ANSI – since our members as well that have contributed on that side and also on this side and therefore most of the things that we should be presenting were already elaborated on by Leslie and Alfred.

Before I begin I would like to express our general position on this bill before I make further comments on the comments on this Bill. We believe that this CDF Bill 2013 would never improve the livelihood of our rural people. There is a need to rethink and reconstruct the mechanisms of its administration. And I think most of these things have already been mentioned by other groups.

The current arrangement through which politicians use the CDF as hand outs does not work. We have seen and we have heard about this. Therefore, in our view this new CDF bill does not fare any better and does not allow this “hand out” mentality to stop but will still continue. Therefore, the FSII opposes this CDF Bill 2013. And the consensus notion as stated by the Vice President is that the bill should not be rushed because we are of the view that it is being rushed.

The Bills and Legislation Committee would do well if it provides ample time for wider consultation on the bill, especially in the provinces so that our people who are supposed to benefit from this bill should it become an act, are given the opportunity to make their views. I say this because many of us, even myself I have not even benefitted from any CDF in my whole lifetime as a voter. And so I even don't know the processes and procedures of accessing this fund. I have no experience about getting any funding. This is why I think that people who benefit and those who do not benefit from this CDF that are supposed to be given more opportunity to share their experiences as to what they know about it, what are the good things about it and what are the bad things about it, what is easy about it and what is difficult about it. Like I said, this is to ensure that many more stakeholders, not only voters or people who are supposed to receive it, but other stakeholders within our communities to share their part.

I am going to be very brief on the comments, and I will start with section 3, which is the object and that is 'to ensure the management and

disbursement of the CDF is carried out with integrity and in a prudent manner with the view to safeguarding the interest of potential recipients of the funds. I think Leslie has clarified that. The irony with this objective is that too much power is vested on a few individuals, and this includes the Member of Parliament and the CDO in managing the funds.

Section 7 says that signatories to constituency accounts are the MP and CDO. Section 9 says that application endorsement is the MP and section 10 says the CDO will pay the supplies of goods and services. In our view, this is too much power invested on a few individuals.

The other section we would like to comment on is Section 4(1) which states 'there shall be constituency development offices established in all 50 constituencies for the management and administration of the CDF'. Our only concern there is no clear prescription of criteria for the location of the constituency office, as my President has already given an example of.

The other important thing is the ownership of the assets of the office building and the equipments. This is a likely opening for abuse by MPs to locate offices in their own villages and later put a claim on the properties as and when they lost their seats. I think that is one of the comments we would like to make.

The other one about section 4(3) a constituency development officer shall be a public officer. It would be good to be included in the bill that the appointment must be made by the Public Service Commission through legitimate and transparent selection processes, such as public

advertisement and proper selection criteria to be in place. This is to prevent nepotism, wantok business and political interference, influence and interference by the Member of Parliament.

The other is section 5, which is 'allocating funds pursuant to subsection 1, the constituency development offices shall have regard to providing gender equity and combating gender discrimination'. There are other equity criteria that need to be included, for example, families with low income to combat poverty and education access.

The other one I want to highlight here is section 7(2) – 'the signatories of the constituency account shall be the member of parliament for the respective constituency and the constituency development officer'. Again this allows too much room for abuse with only two signatories. We are of the view that it has to expand to include the Permanent Secretary/Finance, the Permanent of Secretary of the Ministry of Rural Development and the chairman of the constituency technical committee or board or something like that - three or four signatories to sign at any one time. Again this will avoid political interference and conflict of interest. This is about creating opportunity to achieve integrity.

The other section is section 9 – application for funds shall be in the form as set out in the schedule and bear the endorsement of the Member of Parliament of the particular constituency. Again this is opening up opportunities for abuse and nepotism in selecting applications by the Member of Parliament. If the endorsement and screening role is given to a

constituency committee, such as a constituency technical or development committee or board, it will give clear credibility to the process and outcome. Again, this will avoid political interference and conflict of interest.

The last one I would like to comment on are sections 13 and section 14(c) combined. We feel that there should be an insertion of authority for audit officers to pass on evidence of abuse and mismanagement of funds to the Director of Public Prosecution and the Police for investigation and possible prosecution. The Constituency Development Funds shall be audited, as stated in section 13, and the Auditor General shall submit a report to the Speaker to be tabled in Parliament. Another new process of auditing is how we see it so there is a possibility of political interference of such audited report as has happened with past audit reports; an example is the Tsunami Audit Fund report.

With those few summaries of our comments, I would like to quickly go through the recommendations.

- (1) This bill should be further consulted widely throughout Solomon Islands for the rural people's views and inputs.
- (2) A clear set of criteria for the location of Constituency Development Offices to be developed to prevent MPs setting up constituency offices in their own communities.

- (3) A constituency development board or committee must be established and the composition of the said board or committee must include wider representation of all sectors of the rural communities. Gender equality must be given special consideration, including the inclusion of young people.
- (4) The Constituency Development Officer must be appointed by the Public Commission to avoid political influence by MPs.
- (5) Signatories of the constituency accounts must be expanded to include the Permanent Secretary (Finance) or his representative, the PS (MRD) or his representative and the chairman of the constituency board or committee with three to four signatories to sign at any one time.
- (6) The three actors in the administration and disbursement of the CDF are:-
 - (a) the Minister
 - (b) the Member of Parliament; and
 - (c) the CDO.

Whether these actors will remain neutral when performing their roles, is debateable. Therefore, expand it to include other considerations as in section 7(2).

- (7) Establish a project monitoring and evaluation committee to monitor and evaluate projects and make reports to the constituency development board or CDO and Member of Parliament.
- (8) A survey must be conducted in all 50 constituencies to ascertain types of projects viable in each constituency, depending on the geographical location, population and other considerations. This is to avoid giving the same projects to all constituencies.
- (9) Transparent reporting and procedures must be put in place for the implementation of projects supported by the constituency development fund.

The fundamental aim of this fund is for our rural people. Why doesn't the bill make way for empowerment of rural community institutions through a trust board to receive, distribute and be accountable for the funds direct from the hands of the bureaucratic middle man? The problem all along with this fund is that it does not reach the rural areas for its intended purpose. We must cut off the middle man, MPs and CDOs or even any new established institution we may think to create to take the place of the MPs because at the end of the day the responsible MP will still be accountable for it. Another created board to oversee the fund in Honiara runs the risk of also dipping their hands and taking a cart which will further disadvantage the fund from reaching its targeted recipients.

The FSII feels that the objective of the Bill should shift from safeguarding the interest of potential recipients of the fund to something that centers on actual development of constituencies. Our concern is further heightened by the fact that the list of recipients includes individuals. With these, Mr Chairman, thank you very much.

Mr Chairman: Thank you very much for that elaborate presentation. We probably will need the hard copy of that presentation. We are trying to take note but it is quite difficult. Thank you very much we already have a copy of that presentation and we will incorporate that in our report. I think this submission is clear.

We take it that you want this bill to be deferred so that there is wider consultation. I think that is the message coming out from the first group as well. There is need for more consultations so that we can properly do this draft. I think the main point is to defer it first so that it is done properly taking up the issues that are raised here. I think that is a view shared by this Committee as well. All we can do, of course, is to recommend that to the Parliament really as we are answerable to Parliament but we hope there is still room at this point in time before the bill is noticed for first reading, there has to be some serious discussions with the government. I think there is a green light from the SSPM yesterday that that is possible. We will, of course, make some very serious recommendations in line with the presentations that we have heard already. Members of the Committee

may have questions they may want to ask so you can ask them to further clarify some more areas that need to be raised. You are free to do now.

Hon John Maneniaru: I would like to join you in acknowledging the representative of the FSII for coming before the committee. Thank you for making the presentation as well as taking us through your submission.

I cannot agree more with what you have put here because that is what we want. The bill is good and it is in line with our thinking. I for one see that a lot of improvement needs to be done to the bill; wider consultations as you have mentioned, we are not aware of. Even us as members of parliament representing our constituencies here are not aware of any wider consultations in the constituencies we represent.

This is just a comment. Our people during voting time, many members of parliament only represent 30 percent of voters or those that only cast their votes, and so very minority and only a few have the majority mandate to represent people in the constituencies. That is the situation we have now.

Politicking in our constituencies is a hindrance to the advancement of development in the constituencies itself. If you look at the number of candidates contesting the elections, it means there is split of the votes and unfortunately, it has to be the MP and his team that will try to implement whatever plans they have in mind in the constituency during the term of the MP. That is the real situation, so we need a structure, a governance

structure to guide us so that it is the development plan - medium or long term plan of the constituency that should not be changed because it is the same people, the same resources, the same locations and whatever. At the moment, may be the ministry would help the constituency to achieve that.

As acknowledged to the Committee in our two days deliberations so far, even the profiles of all the constituencies are yet to be done, which the development plans be derived from. Whatever each constituency has depends on the MP and his team.

I just want to make a comment on the point that was highlighted that this bill should also include people who are recipients of the fund because it is their interest that this bill is trying to address. But if the people are going to be there, how many are going to be taken onboard and how fast? As an MP, the people out there, through the many years of experience, they are no longer interested in what we are talking about here. They say it is ours and say they are only interested in what they are receiving. Because for the many years gone passed they never received anything. So even if they get something small that is even not development, that is important to them. That is the real situation there, and this bill does not address how the people are going to be taken onboard that quick or within a short time. That is one area you pointed out and I would also like to endorse that we need the people to come and see that this bill is theirs, it belongs to them, and their acknowledgement of this bill would be important.

My second comment is with regards to the 50 constituency offices, and I endorse the concern raised about locating offices in customary lands in the constituencies. If that is so, where will the office be located? If there is provision for that in the bill so that the land is acquire then that would be really good. At the moment, some of us are struggling with our constituency offices because how can we administer from our own houses and people coming to us. Because of that we have taken the initiative to start an office where it is easy for us to administer. And some constituencies have plans that go in line with the thinking of the ministry to establish offices in the constituency where MPs can administer from. So that is an initiative taken, for which some people have made negative comments about and are not happy about it. But I for one have taken that initiative and although people said that it was in my home, but because right from the start I was alone; people were not really supportive. From day one, I had the opposition right through as the member for West Are Are and it is actually building up. And so, how do I carry the interest of my people? I put my office where people can have access to it and my plan is to negotiate with the people. But we have to ensure that the office of the constituency is located in the constituency to be provided by the government because that is customary land. I endorse those comments because they are real issues.

Lastly, is in regards to a committee, some of our constituencies cannot even trust any committees to this very day. In my constituency of

West Are Are I have been having problems because I would like to empower the people down there. If it belongs to them then it has to be passed on to them, but yet they refuse. They even rejected a taskforce. They think very negatively of people involve in the distribution of funds at the moment. That is a problem I can see there that maybe other constituencies are also facing. So we need some kind of awareness, we need to legislate for the kind of people that people in the rural areas will trust.

For so many years now - even leaders in the rural villages were being questioned and not trusted by the people. Whether they be chiefs, church leaders, youth leaders, women leaders, when you talk about them others would say, "Can you come up with another name and another" and so forth so much so that in the end there are no names on the list. That is the real situation and I want to encourage your organisation since you have the medium to reach out to our people. I encourage you to help out in that regards because even the integrity and trustworthiness of our leaders in the rural areas, the villages and even at the national level is almost non-existent. It even reaches a stage in which no one ever trusts anyone at all; you only trust yourself. That is the real situation we have in our country right now and it is very unfortunate to say that.

Mr Chairman, those are my comments of what they have presented and submitted.

Mr Chairman: Thank you very much. In fact I may be doing injustice to another colleague there, do you have something to express here? Okay my apologies.

Mr John Kwaita: Thank you Mr Chairman of the Bills and Legislation Committee and committee members. I am a member of the management of the Forum. This Forum Group has almost about 3,000 members ranging in education from Grade 6 up to our academics at universities and others. As one of the patrons of this group, it is quite a big task trying to coordinate discussions and so forth. The two who have already spoken manage the office, so I am somewhat the guy who brings peace back into the Forum whenever there are arguments. It is a big family and there are a lot of positive things coming out from that family. Our concern here is, since it covers the whole spectrum of age groups, we encourage our young academics especially to contribute in the discussions. Some of us are running private lives; before the FSII we have lived private lives, but since this group has started, the interest just because of the passion we have for our country, especially the future generations of this nation. We have high regard for our leaders; current leaders. In looking back we noted the generation that is coming up now and we realized that we need to set our paths right so that they do not cause problems to us when they grow up.

When our leaders and our fathers are gone, we would have a whole new generation ahead of us.

That is what drives some of us to come out of our hiding places and be part of this group.

Most of the things have been said; including the two who have made their presentations earlier on are also members of the FSII, but because we have covered a whole range of groups from young to old and mature, we agree and gave them the blessing to step out and start a page for the Anti-Corruption Movement where only responsible people can contribute. That is why you can see a few groups starting to emerge from the FSII, and that is being responsible, trying not to allow Grade 6, Forms 1 and 2 getting too involved on sensitive issues. Being responsible is what we are trying to drive home to every member.

Much has been covered. It has been a privilege indeed to sit down two times with the other two doing the presentations. A lot of the things they have presented pretty much cover the concern of the FSII, and them being members of the FSII themselves with the bit that those two have presented, for me, the last plea by Leslie is what I want to reiterate; prayer, it is our prayer that you make the right decision for the next generation, the upcoming generation because if we do not lay proper foundations for them, we will be in trouble with them later on. That is our plea.

This bill is named after people in the constituencies so the least we could do is to give them the chance to discuss and give their feedbacks.

After all, it is called the constituency development funds. A lot of our people from the constituencies when giving that name to them is treated as a swearing word. When you say 'How is the CDF' they will say, 'hey, that is you'. We don't want that to be like that but we want them to appreciate what the CDF really is, what it means and what it will actually do for them. It is with that passion that we come here and thank you for accepting us to come and present a simple and straightforward presentation. Thank you for taking up your time. Our plea and our prayer is, and we will continue to pray to help the decisions made in this honourable House is guided by the Spirit of God.

Mr Chairman: Thank you very much. Certainly those pleas do not fall on deaf ear. You need to be assured of that from this Committee. We are going to take those issues seriously on the report that we will put to Parliament. As I have said earlier on, we will still hold communications with the government because it is the one that is responsible of putting this bill to Parliament. So you are assured that it does not fall on deaf ears. You certainly represent the wider cross section of the people of this country and we would be fools to disregard the views expressed by our people. You talk about democracy, this is it - the voice of the people. And we can basically stand up in Parliament and express that that we have heard from representatives of the people. And I think we would be right to say that

you represent our people and these are their views. You are assured of that. It does not fall on deaf ears, we will certainly take up those issues that are expressed. Any other colleagues have any last thing to say?

Hon. Milner Tozaka: I just want to join the Chairman to thank the vice president and chief executive officer and your team and member of the group for your presentation, it is very clear.

I also join the Chairman and all of us here to assure you that we have listened very carefully to you to improve this CDF. We ourselves too have high hope when we heard this proposal will come to us and were hoping that it would come not in the way it is presented now but rather will come with the constituency bill. This is because some of us have worked on this bill, we have contributed to this bill with the ministry and have suggested ways that we think should be improved. But when it is presented this way, for me personally I was involved with the Provincial Government System, although I am not specialized in it, but it is an area I have been working on during my time as officer of the government and we came up with a report that also touched on this fund but its governing body is what is missing. If I could remember we presented that report in 1999 and we called it the constituency governing council and I was very pleased to hear other presenters suggested that that committee should represent chiefs, youths, women, disable people and other groups. That is part of our recommendations, and it should be a corporate body.

The ownership issue that you mentioned Chief Executive Officer is also my concern that when funds are sent down to the province, to the CDO or to the community some people helped themselves to those things. What they would say is that those things come from their Member of Parliament and they voted him so those things belong to them. They have conflict over those things. The question of ownership of things that MPs send to the constituency is an issue, and I am very pleased you mentioned that. The other thing you also mentioned which we ourselves here also share is the establishment of constituency offices; where are these offices going to be established, it is not specified in the bill. Maybe by regulation as it says there, but we need to know how we are going to establish those offices. But as you are aware when you a Member of Parliament those things will be channelled through you and that again is not transparent, there is no consistency in all the constituencies.

What you said is important, and we take those very important concerns you have expressed. I think we all join together in sharing those concerns with you, assuring you we will work together collectively to put them to the government to see how we can work with them. Maybe we should defer this bill for further consultation. I think that's all I want to comment on this bill.

Hon Derek Sikua: I would also like to thank the CEO, the Vice President and members of the FSII for their patience. I think they been with us

almost the whole day so thank you very much indeed for your patience, which shows your interest and how important this bill is for our people, our country and our future.

I have seen your submission, and again I am convinced of what you've put forward. I think the issue of coming up with a trust board or a trust, I think some of our colleagues have gone down that road already and so it is something for us to look at. But what I would really like to say here is, I know the FSII and its objectives and John has just mentioned its membership, it has around 3,000 members.

As a pressure group on issues we are confronted with like this, I would like to ask, we are not hiding the fact, I mean this Committee, everyone of us except for one that is always not seem present belongs to the government side but all of us here are from the Opposition side and our numbers are clear that it is not enough for us to convince the government to do what we want with this bill.

On your part, I know your discussions are basically on line, but I hope you can take some practical steps to convince your own members of parliament if they are on the other side. Those of us on this side there is no problem, but if your own Members of Parliament are on the other side, what practical steps can you take, is my question, to tell you MP to look carefully at this bill and not to support it. They might get sacked because this is government bill but I think it is something important for us and I want to plead with you to look at how you can help us achieve what we

want, and that is to delay this bill so that there is wider consultations and then we bring it back.

I am just sort of leaving that to you or you might have some suggestions on what you might want to do as a lobby as a pressure group on things that matter to our people and our country. It is just a request or a plea from our side for you to help us because you have the influence, you have the power in your hands to convince our colleague MPs who are on the other side of the House, the government side to see things the way we see them.

Mr John Kwaita: I do not have any straight forward answer for honourable Leader of Opposition's question. But we have our options and we pray that we are taking the right options. Thank you for that suggestion, we will take that on board and see if some of our leaders of the group can take the approach to approach our MPs. The other options, we have put them aside for the time being. Thank you very much.

Mr Ishmael Nori: Yes, thank you very much John and thank you Leader for posing that question. I laughed because it comes from you the Opposition Group and the FSII tried to be as neutral as much as possible.

I think the assurance that we can give to all members of Parliament now is that what we presented here is the general thing that we pulled out

from our members' contribution, so that is more or less like our stand and position right now. It's up to each individual member to pursue their honourable member on which side of the house they are to see that our position here, at the end of the day is achieved.

As a group we cannot pursue individual members but as individual member within the group we will take upon ourselves based on the general view of the group to be pursued along the road. That is how we work and it applies to every other different issues. We come up together as a group and put our position and we challenge ourselves to achieve them. It is our personal obligation and responsibility to find whatever way and means we can achieve that common goal. I believe our members are listening and I believe to continue with the thread, is a challenge that each of our member can take upon themselves. Thank you.

Mr Ben Afuga: I just want to add on to what the leader raised and he was just asking for practical steps. Our moto is voice for action and we normally challenge ourselves with that moto '*you say it do it*' (*man talem duim*). Everyone around the world already see this, we have posted the discussions and photos so they will be following our discussions very closely. What we will do is that we will tell our members after this we will inform them and then we can do the practical step I believe is to challenge ourselves, whoever represents which constituency to talk with his own MP. I think that is the most practical step that can be taken. And again it is up to

whoever; but we have a lot of credible people in our group, where I believe they can talk to their own MPs and see what they can do from that. But I think they might be afraid of being sacked.

Mr Chairman: I think on that note, we thank you very much. We have got you written submissions and we will certainly take that up in the report. On behalf of the committee, thank you very much, as the Leader said, we are really sorry that you came in since this morning and waited until this time. It shows that you are very serious about the issues that we discuss here and you wanted to express your views. So, we really thank you for coming before the committee. As I have said and I emphasise it again, the cries and the pleas will not fall on deaf ears. We assure you of that and we will them onboard and they will be reflected in the report that will come up. I think with that, we come to end of our meeting. Since we started with prayer in the morning, we will also close with a prayer and I will ask the Leader of the Independent Group to pray for us.