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**Presentation by the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Honourable Gordon Darcy Lilo MP, at the High Level Panel on Possible Futures of post 2015 Development Agenda, Dili, Timor Leste, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

### **Introduction**

Distinguished Head of States and Governments,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Senior Government Officials and Civil Society Representatives  
Ladies and Gentlemen

At the outset let me sincerely thank the Prime Minister of Timor Leste for inviting me to attend this conference and to participate at this High Level Panel. The theme of this international conference on the post 2015 Development Agenda: '*Development for all: Stop conflict, build states and eradicate poverty*', is very relevant for Solomon Islands as a post- conflict country. It is relevant in that it corresponds to our efforts to rebuild our country with the support of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands, as well as, that of our development partners, following the ethnic conflict. It is also relevant and timely as we need to have our voices heard in the current consultations and dialogue on the post 2015 development agenda.

In this presentation, I wish to first of all reflect on our efforts and challenges in achieving the current MDGs; and secondly to share some views on the post 2015 development agenda.

## **Background and Context:**

First, it is important to understand the development context of any country or region in terms of its endeavours to achieve the MDGS. *In this regard, Solomon Islands is an LDC, a small island developing state and a post conflict country, all at once.* The challenges of a narrow economic base, vulnerability to external economic shocks, and to climate change and natural disasters, and heavy dependence on imported fossil fuels are all very familiar to us.

It should also be noted that development in Solomon Islands takes place in a geographical setting of dispersed islands amidst a vast ocean space. The total land area is 28, 370 square kilometres relative to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of 1.34 million square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>). It is endowed with rich natural resources and despite the expansive EEZ, the country is still largely dependent on its land based resources. The gold ridge mine for example, is currently producing 80,000 ounces of gold per year. While this is small compared to other operations elsewhere, it does provide development funding especially for the expansion of our fish processing plants. There remains though the need to expand on initiatives that give us a fair and best value for our marine and ocean resources including our tuna stocks.

## **2. The MDGs – Progress and Challenges:**

In September 2000, when UN member states adopted and committed themselves to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Solomon Islands was still engulfed in an ethnic conflict.

We are therefore a late starter in terms of implementing the MDGs. Furthermore, the common set of principles and targets of the MDG's were aimed at bringing a large number of the world's poorest people to at least a minimum level of human development. They did not respond directly to the problem of violent conflict and peace and security, even though violent conflict or the absence of it is related to the achievement of all of the goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in 2011 the Solomon Islands Government adopted a National Development Strategy 2011-2020. This is the blueprint for sustainable development in Solomon

Islands. It sets out the country's vision and priorities to advance both human, as well as, economic development. It is anchored on the four pillars of building better lives, taking better care, improving the livelihoods of the people and creating and maintaining an enabling environment. The National Development Strategy has eight priority objectives. Undoubtedly, the MDG's are fully integrated into national development priorities and planning processes. In essence, the National Development Strategy sets the targets and benchmarks of achieving the MDG's at the national level.

In terms of tracking progress in achieving the MDG's, and following the traffic light coded scoring, Solomon Islands scores a yellow/mixed progress in MDG 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. However, while SI is not on target to meet MDG 1, data relating to health, education and employment shows that SI does not have large proportions of the population living in extreme poverty. People are generally "Cash Poor" and poverty which exists is "poverty of opportunity" rather than abject poverty. There is good progress in meeting MDG 2- Achieving Universal primary Education and SI is likely to meet this goal by 2015. In MDG 3- Promote gender equality and empower women, there are good improvements to advancing female representation in primary education, though numbers are less impressive in secondary education and female representation in leadership roles. Solomon Islands is making good progress in MDG's 4 and 5, reducing child and maternal mortality and is likely to achieve these targets by 2015. About 80% of births are now attended to by health professionals. In MDG 6- Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases, there is mixed progress. While there is good progress in reducing Malaria, increased cure rate of TB and a successful measles campaign, official levels of HIV is likely to be underestimated. Ensuring environmental sustainability, MDG 7 has mixed progress. In 2009 we adopted a 'State of the Environment Report' which maps out the policies we need for sustainable environment and biodiversity conservation. Solomon Islands also scores mixed progress in MDG 8-Develop a Global partnership for development, but there is hope that the principles and focus of the New Deal and the initiatives of the recent Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation will contribute to progress.

Furthermore, the Coral Triangle Initiative on coral reefs, fisheries, and food security (which consists of six countries including Solomon Islands), is a critical platform for international and

regional partnership. It is critical because the Coral Triangle is home to more than 70% of the world's marine life and ecosystem, and a vital source of food security. International support towards community based partnerships in the Coral Triangle countries and communities is required to sustainably manage this important part of our planet.

Meanwhile, the key challenges and bottlenecks we face in achieving the MDGs are insufficient government revenue and public expenditure squeeze.

### **Reflections on the Post 2015 Development Agenda:**

Solomon Islands is among the 50 countries in which national consultations on the post 2015 development agenda will take place. Our national consultation is yet to be completed. It will be interesting to know the views and voices of our rural people on the post 2015 development agenda or on what sort of future they want. Without pre-empting the outcomes of this consultation let me make the following observations on the post 2015 development agenda:

*Firstly*, the post 2015 development agenda need to build on the MDGs and SDGs or Rio + 20 outcomes. As I have alluded to earlier Solomon Islands National Development Strategy 2011-2020 is closely aligned to the MDGs. Thus we believe we need to build on the gains made on the MDGs and add on other targets that address emerging development challenges such as, peace and security, environment and climate change, and food security.

*Secondly*, while education and health will remain priorities for Solomon Islands, this has to be supported by sustainable economic growth. Which means inter alia the removal of barriers to trade, and support for LDCs and post conflict country's efforts to address the supply side constraints of their economies to ensure long term development and reduce dependence on aid flows. The Solomon Islands Government last year concluded an agreement with the ADB and the private sector to develop a fibre optic/submarine cable that will improve telecommunication services and has the potential to promote private sector development and also improve the delivery of education and health services in our rural areas. In addition, human resources development is a vital prerequisite for sustainable development. In this connection, my

Government has just established a National University, the Solomon Islands National University, to provide more tertiary education opportunities for our people and contribute to meeting the manpower needs of our country.

**Thirdly**, in terms of the environment, I believe it is important that we seriously pursue green growth and sustainable oceans initiatives that could underpin the sustainable development of our countries and ensure the protection of our fragile biodiversity and ecosystems. One of the fundamental questions here is how can small ocean states get the best value for their oceanic and fisheries resources which in turn could finance their development goals, especially in view of declining international funding resources. It is also imperative that the capacity of SIDS is enhanced to enable us to advance our development goals and aspirations.

*Next week my Government in partnership with the International Union on Conservation for Nature (IUCN), will co-host a Roundtable Meeting on Environment, Development and Society. One of the main strategic rationales of this roundtable meeting is the recognition that the current development path that Solomon Islands is engaged in is not a sustainable one. In this current trajectory, we would have exhausted all our natural resources without much to demonstrate in terms of our livelihoods and the overall quality of life in Solomon Islands. One of the expected results of the meeting will be the integration of Green Growth Principles into Macro-economic planning, as well as a clear development path with greater emphasis on important contributions of the extractive industries and nature capital.* Furthermore we are working with the World Bank to develop a Hydro Power station that could help to reduce costs on imported fuel but also advance renewable energy initiatives.

**Fourthly**, there is a need for effective governance systems to be in place to support efforts to achieve the MDGs or post 2015 development agenda, not only at the international level but also at the national level. At the national level, as part of our economic and financial reforms we established a Core Economic Working Group during 2008 and 2009. We have found it to be a useful mechanism for dialogue with our development partners to progress and achieve certain agreed targets. Such mechanisms could be effective in implementing any post 2015 development agenda at the national level.

*Fifth*, as a post conflict country, I believe the post 2015 development agenda must also recognize the interdependence of peace and development which has been acknowledged and accommodated in the ‘New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States under the 2010 Dili Declaration, and endorsed in Busan during the 2011 Fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness. Solomon Islands is grateful that major donor and development partners including the EU, ADB, World Bank, the UN Development Group, Australia, and New Zealand have endorsed the New Deal. It is our hope that elements of the New Deal will be featured in the post 2015 development agenda.

**Above all**, what matters most is the service delivery modality. The national level service delivery modality for whatever post 2015 development goals we eventually agree on must be cost effective and sustainable. This means the cost of service delivery should not be higher than the quality of service being delivered. In our case, it would also include the establishment of appropriate infrastructure to facilitate the implementation of the development targets in our rural and remote communities. It would also mean that we improve our current structures and strengthen state institutions and provide them with the necessary capacity to effectively deliver services to our people.

Finally, distinguished participants, while I acknowledge that the post 2015 UN development agenda be based on a vision for a future that rests on the core values of human rights, equality and sustainability, the principles of ownership and leadership at the national level are equally critical to the successful realization of the post 2015 development agenda and in making a difference in the lives of our people.

Thank you.

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