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Somare pledges ongoing PNG commitment to RAMSI

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The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Michael Somare, has pledged PNG's ongoing support for the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI).

Speaking in talks this week with RAMSI Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, Sir Michael said that Papua New Guinea would continue its substantial contribution to the Mission in Solomon Islands because PNG also wanted to see its neighbour restore and strengthen its State instrumentalities and processes that were compromised during the ethnic conflict.

"My country will be part of RAMSI for as long as the Mission is needed and as long as the government and people of Solomon Islands make us welcome," Sir Michael said.

Mr Wilson, who welcomed PNG's ongoing commitment to RAMSI, said his four-day visit to Papua New Guinea had given him the opportunity to thank Papua New Guinea for its outstanding contribution to RAMSI, particularly the excellent work of its military and police contingents.

"Papua New Guinea has been one of the leading Pacific Island contributors to RAMSI since its inception and has made a sustained and highly valued contribution to the Mission," Mr Wilson said.

"The recent decision by Pacific Islands Forum leaders in Cairns to invite Papua New Guinea to be a permanent member of the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee on RAMSI was recognition of this contribution as well as the constructive role PNG has played over the years in support of the Mission and the Solomon Islands Government," he added.

"RAMSI's regional nature is its underlying strength and PNG is a key player in the region. We look forward to working closely with PNG, and the other members of the Forum Ministerial Standing Committee, in taking forward the Partnership Framework which was recently finalised by the Solomon Islands Government and RAMSI, and endorsed by Forum leaders".

In addition to his call on Prime Minister Somare, Mr Wilson also met Papua New Guinea's Foreign Minister Sam Abal, Internal Security Minister, Sani Rambai, the head of the PNG Defence Force, Commodore Peter Ilau, Police Commissioner Gari Baki, and a range of senior officials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Defence, as well as Solomon Islands High Commissioner, Bernard Bata'anisia.

Mr Wilson was also able to use the occasion of the Pacific Chiefs of Police meeting, which was being hosted by PNG, to thank regional Police Commissioners or their representatives from RAMSI participating countries for their ongoing support for the Mission.

Mr Wilson said RAMSI had been pleased to host a number of high level visits from PNG in recent times, including by Defence Minister, Bob Dadae in May.

“I hope it might be possible to welcome back Prime Minister Somare to RAMSI headquarters in the not too distant future,” Mr Wilson added.

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