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## Parliamentary Sound System Launch

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From now on, the people of Solomon Islands, and their elected representatives, will be better able to hear parliamentary debate – leading to improved government accountability.

At the launch of the new RAMSI-SIG funded Parliament Sound System, the Speaker of Parliament, the Right Hon Sir Peter Kenilorea expressed his profound gratitude for the SBD 1.25 million committed by RAMSI towards the installation of the new system.

The project was developed by the UNDP-managed Parliamentary Strengthening Project in partnership with the Solomon Islands Government - which funded the remaining SBD 700,000 - the National Parliament and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

“This project is a strong indicator of the support that the parliament has received and the benefits to the people of Solomon Islands that flow from it,” Sir Peter said.

Sir Peter said the new sound system marks a milestone in the history of the National Parliament.

“Today represents another step forward in parliament’s capacity to undertake its crucial role as the supreme legislative, oversight and representative body of Solomon Islands as well as its capacity to engage with the communities in every province and every village in the country,” Sir Peter said.

RAMSI Special Coordinator, Graeme Wilson, said an effective working parliament, and public access to it, are cornerstones of a healthy democratic system.

“They are also important tools in the ongoing work of building a nation. I am confident that this new sound system, which RAMSI has been happy to support, will bring benefits not just to the representatives elected to this House but to all Solomon Islanders interested in hearing their leaders debate the issues that will shape the nation’s future,” Mr Wilson said.

The deterioration of the original sound system, installed in 1994 when the parliament building first opened, often made it very hard to hear what was being said.

Mr Wilson said that from the simple idea of assisting the Government to provide a clear

broadcast system to the people of Solomon Islands, RAMSI has worked with the National Parliament Office to support the installation of a high-quality sound system which will last for many years to come.

“The launch of the sound system is testament to the hard work of many and to the partnership that RAMSI’s Machinery of Government program and the National Parliament Office have built since 2004,” Mr Wilson said.

The Prime Minister, Dr Derek Sikua, remarked that the project was a credit to everyone involved.

“This project was implemented on time, on budget and is a good example of what the government can do in partnership with other stakeholders,” Dr Sikua said.

Also speaking at the event, Leader of the Opposition, Hon Manasseh Sogavare, said it was his sincere hope that the new sound system would improve the professionalism and standards required of Members of Parliament. The newly appointed Leader of the Independent Group, the Hon Isaac Inoke, concurred and noted that the new sound system would allow constituents “to decide whether or not their elected representatives were performing their functions and duties.”

The Speaker said he sincerely hoped that the new system would assist the people of Solomon Islands to participate in the system of democratic government that sustains and protects the nation.

Mr Wilson added that access to information was central to people having a voice, central to accountable government and central to the challenge of nation-building.

“At the end of the day, the decisions being made, the laws being debated and voted on, the money being allocated and spent are all accountable to the people of Solomon Islands,” Mr Wilson said.

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