



**MINISTER FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE PACIFIC
SENATOR THE HON CONCETTA FIERRAVANTI – WELLS**

**Intervention at the United Nations Peace Building Commission
Conference Room 7 United Nations New York
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(as delivered)

Thank you, Prime Minister Sogavare, for your presentation today. It is encouraging to hear some of the steps that your Government is taking.

The Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands – known as RAMSI – is a leading example of how a region came together and successfully assisted a neighbour to address widespread ethnic tensions, lawlessness and disorder.

Over the past 14 years, RAMSI has helped to bring about long-term peace and stability in Solomon Islands, and create the necessary conditions for sustainable economic growth.

The most obvious and celebrated achievement of RAMSI was its ability to quickly restore law and order.

In RAMSI's first week, more than 3,700 guns were collected and destroyed.

In its third week, RAMSI, with the help of mediators, negotiated the surrender of renegade militants.

By the end of its third year, RAMSI had made 6,300 arrests for militant and criminal activity.

Today, Solomon Islands has a very low crime rate by global standards and one of the lowest rates of gun crime in the world.

And the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force is now one of the most effective police forces in the Pacific region.

This is reflected, for example, in the recent deployment of some of its officers to the UN Mission in South Sudan, and the training the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force has carried out for other police forces in the Pacific.

Over the longer-term, RAMSI helped the Solomon Islands Government re-establish basic state functions.

This support focussed on enabling the Government:

- to maintain law and order, through more effective courts, police and prisons;
- to revive the economy, by stabilising the country's finances, reducing debt and restoring investor confidence; and
- to help a struggling public service to re-launch critical services such as hospitals and schools.

As RAMSI prepares to leave, with the Mission concluding at the end of this month, most Solomon Islanders and the Solomon Islands Government can rest assured that Australia will continue to support the police after RAMSI departs.

Through our aid program, for example, Australia will continue to support the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force with a police capacity building program.

This program will be complemented by continued support to help the Solomon Islands Government improve delivery of public services and the functioning of the courts.

As a young nation, Solomon Islands has come a long way in a short time.

But there are many challenges ahead.

Australia, near neighbours and international bodies, like the Peacebuilding Commission, can help conflict-affected countries secure a long and lasting peace by giving them the space they need, as with Solomon Islands, to promote reconciliation.

Invariably, however, it is those countries themselves which are best placed to address the causes and consequences of conflict within their borders.

I particularly commend the Solomon Islands Government on the development of its Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan, launched in May this year. This is the first national plan in the Pacific – and recognises the important contribution women make to building and sustaining peace.

We will continue to work with your Government, Prime Minister, in forging ahead on that long and sometimes rocky road to peace and prosperity. We also welcome the investment to date by the UN Peacebuilding Fund and would encourage the UN to actively look for additional ways to support the peacebuilding efforts of Solomon Islands.

Today's event also shows the Peacebuilding Commission developing in a very helpful direction, and I want to particularly welcome the work of the Korean and previous Kenyan chairs of the PBC.

First, because the PBC is working here as a platform, bringing together a willing UN Member State with a wide range of partners, to recognise peacebuilding achievements, opportunities and challenges.

Second, because the PBC is broadening the conversation, involving a Member State outside its traditional geographic focus, recognising that sustaining peace is UN core business, everywhere.

Finally, because it is helping the UN to ensure its reforms – on development, management, peace and security – can come together to contribute to sustaining peace in a real country situation.