



Joint media release

Australia and Solomon Islands working together as family

24 March 2022

Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare met with High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan on 23 March 2022 to discuss the ongoing partnership between Solomon Islands and Australia.

High Commissioner Strahan presented a letter from Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison confirming Australia had agreed to extend the Solomon International Assistance Force (SIAF) under the Bilateral Security Treaty until December 2023. This followed a formal request from the Solomon Islands Government and will enable an enduring Australian and Pacific family security presence until after the Pacific Games.

“Australia will continue to work with Solomon Islands and Pacific family partners to adjust the shape of the SIAF deployment to the situation on the ground and the priorities of the Solomon Islands Government”, said Dr Strahan.

High Commissioner Strahan confirmed to Prime Minister Sogavare that Australia is responding to calls for budget assistance and will provide AUD22 million (SBD130 million) this week to help mitigate the damaging fiscal impact of the November 2021 civil unrest and COVID-19 outbreak.

Dr Strahan said, ‘This budget support will help the Government meet critical service delivery functions, including salaries for essential workers in the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) and Royal Solomon Islands Police Force (RSIPF).’

Dr Strahan also confirmed that Australia had agreed to build an Eastern Border Outpost in Temotu Province in response to a request from the Solomon Islands Government. This will complement Australia’s existing commitments to support Solomon Islands national security, including through construction of the Western Border and Patrol Boat Outpost in the Shortland Islands and redevelopment of the Hells Point Explosive Ordnance Disposal facility.

Following an Australian led assessment at the request of the Solomon Islands Government in late 2020, Australia has agreed to build an integrated and interoperable radio communications network across the entire country, linking RSIPF, health and disaster management offices. This major project will replace the entire Royal Solomon Islands Police Force radio network as well as provide communications equipment to health clinics and hospital in Solomon Islands. This network will also be central Solomon Islands disaster response and coordination and built withstand extreme weather event.

Dr Strahan said, 'Work will be prioritised to support communications in Honiara in advance of the 2023 Pacific Games. Not only will this ensure the safe delivery of the Games, it will provide lifesaving emergency communications across the country over the long term. In response to a request, Australia has also agreed to build an integrated and interoperable radio communications network across the entire country, linking RSIPF, health and disaster management offices.'

Dr Strahan said, 'Work will be prioritised to support communications in Honiara in advance of the 2023 Pacific Games.'

High Commissioner Strahan advised the Prime Minister of a proposal to deploy an Australia Home Affairs officer for three months to help support a safe and efficient reopening of Solomon Islands international border. It is hoped to commence this deployment in early April 2022.

Dr Strahan said, 'Australia is committed to working with Solomon Islands as such a close neighbour and old friend. We look forward to addressing requests from the Solomon Islands Government to strengthen border security through outposts in the west and east of the country and enhance radio communications across all nine provinces. Australia, in lock-step with our Pacific family, will continue to support the Solomon Islands Government in maintaining a secure, stable and resilient Solomon Islands and region'.

Prime Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare acknowledged Prime Minister Scott Morrison's confirmation of the extension of the Solomon International Assistance Force (SIAF) under the existing Bilateral Security Treaty and other forms of contribution towards national efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 community outbreak and address the effects of the November 2021 riots.

Prime Minister Sogavare said, 'Australia's invaluable assistance towards national COVID-19 response, along with much-needed development and technical assistance now and in the past have strengthened our resilience, deepened our

engagements and toughen our resolve to emerge stronger and better from the pandemic.'

Ends///.

For any further media enquiries please contact:

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High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan and Prime Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare



First Secretary Laura Wilson; Deputy High Commissioner Sally-Anne Vincent; High Commissioner Dr Lachlan Strahan; Prime Minister Hon. Manasseh Sogavare; Special Secretary to the Prime Minister Albert Kabui; Deputy Secretary to Cabinet Florence Joel.