

# INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVERS' MISSION

## Solomon Islands, December 2001

HE Sir Fr John Ini Lapli  
Governor-General  
SOLOMON ISLANDS

18 December 2001

Your Excellency,

Thank you for your kind invitation to observe the constitutional processes following the national election and culminating in the election of the Prime Minister on Monday 17 December 2001. We five international observers feel privileged and grateful to have had this opportunity.

We hope our presence has contributed to enhancing public confidence in the integrity of that process. Since you invited us we have met twice a day, rotating the location among the various key meeting places for the elected Members. We have made ourselves available for discussion of the procedures with Members of Parliament and the public.

It is our view that the procedures we observed were conducted according to the Constitution of Solomon Islands.

In our discussions a number of issues were raised with us. In a desire to facilitate the further strengthening of the election process, we offer the following observations and recommendations for your consideration.

Some members of the public expressed to observers their view that there was a need for greater financial transparency with regard to government accounts and the state of the national economy, to facilitate more open and credible discussions of economic issues during the election campaign. We recommend that consideration be given to adopting this practice.

Claims were made directly to us by some defeated candidates and other representatives concerning irregularities in the election process in their respective constituencies. These included allegations that financial inducements were offered to voters to vote for certain candidates. We recommend that the Government ensure that candidates are fully aware of the legal process available to them for seeking redress of complaints.

Concern was also expressed to observers by some candidates about the common practice of Members of Parliament switching party allegiance subsequent to their election. Some Members told observers that they believed this led to instability in Government and undermined the will of the voters as expressed in their election of that candidate. It is our view that this issue could usefully be raised for discussion and consideration at the national level.

Most importantly, we recognise that coalition-building requires bargaining and negotiation among parties and groups of M.P.s as a natural part of the democratic process. However, our understanding is that there is widespread public concern that the process of forming coalitions was neither transparent nor financially neutral. We therefore recommend that, in the interests of transparency, some mechanisms be created in order to make public the disclosure of all sources and amounts of funding and financial support given to parties and individual Members.

On the morning of the election of the Prime Minister, we were impressed by the welcome we received at Parliament House, the police presence in and around the House, and the orderly behaviour of the public in the grounds. We hope that with the legal and successful election of a Prime Minister, the Solomon Islands can move forward peacefully and that the new Government can achieve reconciliation and rehabilitation in accordance with democratic practice and the rule of law.

Yours sincerely

[SIGNED]

Ambassador Lucy Bogari  
representing the Commonwealth

[SIGNED]

Mr Rhys Richards  
representing New Zealand

[SIGNED]

Mr David Hegarty  
representing Australia

[SIGNED]

Rev Fr John Craddock SM  
representing New Zealand

[SIGNED]

Ms Shennia Spillane  
representing Australia