

## **Statement by Prime Minister on the Occasion of Official Opening of PNG Chancery Building**

Salutations

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Prime Minister Hon. O'Neil,

I want to firstly, acknowledge your government's invitation to me on behalf of my Government and People to join you and your Distinguished Guests to celebrate with you and your People and Government, the Official Opening of your Chancery here in Honiara.

I am also delighted to acknowledge the presence here of our Melanesian Governments Distinguished Leaders including senior Ministers, and Officials of the Governments of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and Fiji, and the FLNKS

This Chancery is a magnificent building indeed. I know the Government and People of Papua New Guinea invested so much time and effort into building it; and I know you are very pleased, indeed very proud, that this fine building is now ready to serve the purpose for which it was built.

Allow me therefore, to congratulate your Government and People on this fine achievement. You waited for some time; however the wait was not in vain, for this splendid building proves your Government does value having such an important territorial facility in Solomon Islands.

I also want to acknowledge Your Excellency Fred Yakasa PNG High Commissioner to Solomon Islands. He and the staff worked tirelessly hard to get the building completed. High Commissioners, who also served here before His Excellency, deserve to be applauded for sharing the same vision and commitment.

The Opening of this magnificent Chancery symbolises our commitment to strengthen relationships between our countries, across several important fronts.

From a political and diplomatic perspective, it reinforces the political partnership between our two Governments which is enshrined in the diplomatic agreements we established between our Countries.

Your Government allocated land and meet the cost for construction of Solomon Islands High Commission in Port Moresby. It reflects the strong bond of friendship between our Governments. Solomon Islands Government reciprocated your generosity by allocating this piece of land as site for this building, again as a gesture of thank you for your Government's generosity. We are seeing more and more interchange of assistance in different sectors and development assistance programs, for example in education, civil aviation and airline business; shipping, sports and cultural exchange of many forms and value.

Papua New Guinea private business investment in the private sector in Solomon Islands is significant by national standards. I am confident that the level of PNG business investment here will grow in the near future. Business creates employment, and injects much needed capital to the economy. It introduces new ideas and new technology, and these benefits get passed on to Solomon Island business over time.

This new High Commission will step up its role in identifying potential investment for PNG companies, with systematic and pro-active effort.

I see our trade relations benefitting too from the services offered through this new purpose-design and built building. Tourism and labour mobility are also on both our Government's agenda, as bi-lateral development initiatives which we can continue to discuss through our High Commission Offices.

There is a cultural and traditional perspective too, which this Opening Ceremony symbolises for our Peoples. I liken this event and this building to a scenario we are familiar with in our traditional villages – where a Chief of a Solomon Island Village offers land to a Chief of Papua New Guinea tribe, to come and build, not only a house, but a life with the host Village Chief. This act symbolises renewal of old friendships and creation of new ones – with new hope and aspirations.

Above all, it symbolises Melanesian culture of reciprocity and inclusiveness. We acknowledge each other and share our resources and hard work so that those in need of help can benefit from our generosity too.

This is the same theme which the Melanesian Spearhead Group Meetings have been conducted in, and the same spirit by which decisions were reached this past week.

This fundamental Melanesian custom of 'inclusiveness by consensus' and 'generosity by reciprocity' is symbolically realised yet again, through this splendid Chancery and the services it provide for our Peoples both in Solomon islands and Papua New Guinea.

Prime Minister O'Neil, I share your joy in opening this new Chancery; and I share your expectation and hope that the High Commission services will be able to achieve higher diplomatic and civilian services to your Government and People, and to Solomon Islands too. This splendid, purpose-design and built Chancery, sets a new milestone for conduct of diplomatic and civilian relations between our two Countries, at even higher levels in the years to come.

I therefore join the other Melanesian Countries leaders present, and my People, in extending to you and your Government our warmest congratulations, on the occasion of the official Opening of the PNG Chancery in Solomon Islands.

Thank you and may you all have a wonderful celebration