



OFFICE OF THE LEADER OF OPPOSITION

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THE LEADER OF OPPOSITION'S STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSED CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY MEETING ON 30TH DECEMBER 2024

My fellow Solomon Islanders,

I address you on an urgent matter. The Prime Minister has decided to convene the Constituent Assembly. This meeting is scheduled for 30th December 2024.

The Constituent Assembly is tasked by law with a serious responsibility. It must debate, amend, and vote on the future of our Draft Federal Constitution. However, holding this meeting on the eve of its constitutional deadline, 31st December 2024, is deeply concerning. It leaves no room for meaningful and proper deliberation.

The Prime Minister has the power to call this Assembly. But that power must be exercised responsibly and within limits. The timing of this meeting undermines the Assembly's ability to fulfil its constitutional mandate. This move threatens both our democratic process and our legislative intent. Ultimately, it makes a mockery of our Constitution.

Furthermore, the current Constitution (Amendment) (Constituent Assembly) Act 2023 is fraught with deficiencies. These issues arise, you may remember, because Government rushed the Bill through Parliament last year. For instance, the lack of transitional provisions means that neither the Speaker nor the Prime Minister currently possess the legal authority to introduce, for the Assembly's consideration and adoption, the procedural framework necessary to fulfil its statutory mandate.

Another significant shortfall is the absence of basic guidelines in the Act, as seen in the omission of a quorum requirement. Other problems also exist. Most notably, the failure to conduct a cost analysis of the federal system. This is a step that should precede the Assembly's meeting.

These issues were entirely avoidable. A genuinely committed Government would never have brought such an ill-prepared Bill. Yet now, the Government seems intent on rushing this process again.

Nonetheless, we can still fix this, together. I urge Government to take responsibility. The Constitution (Amendment) (Constituent Assembly) Act 2023, riddled with flaws, must be repealed. In its place, Government must bring a new general Constitutional amendment empowering Parliament to make laws on the matter of the federal Government. Parliament must then enact new legislation to establish the Assembly properly. Government must give priority to these two legislative matters in early 2025.

Our decisions today will affect future generations. We must uphold the integrity of our Constitution and democracy. I call on the Government to act with wisdom and care. I also call upon members of the Constituent Assembly to stand on their principles. The future of our Nation is too important to be handled recklessly.

God bless Solomon Islands.

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