

TASIMATE TOK STORI STATEMENT

MARAU (ALITE)

Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

November 16-18, 2005

Organized, Coordinated, and Facilitated

By

NATIONAL PEACE COUNCIL

In partnership with

Pacific Islands Development Program (PIDP)

East-West Center

CONTENTS:

- 1. Names, Status, and Wards**
- 2. Peace and Development**
- 3. Acknowledgement and Appreciation**
- 4. Land and Conflict**
- 5. Reconciliation and Resources**
- 6. Rehabilitation**
- 7. Good Governance and Leadership**
- 8. Central Neutral Facilitator and Special Trust Fund For Reconciliation**

TASI MATE TOK STORI

ALITE, MARAU

GUADALCANAL,

NOVEMBER 16-18, 2005

1.

<u>Names</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Village/Ward</u>
Henry Kalo	Chief	Aola
Waren Tome	Chief	Aola
David Tapalia	Chief	Aola
Vincent Kue	Chief	Ghaubata
Stephen Kukiti	Chief	Ghaubata
Samuel Bosawai	Chief	Ghaubata
Gabriel Bunia	Chief	Ghaubata
Hilda Bosa	Women's Rep.	Ghaubata
Eric Manesagata	Youth Rep.	Ghaubata
Batholomeu Vavanga	Chief	Ghaubata
Justu Rebesi	Chief	Kolo Karako
John Laerau	Chief	Kolo Karako
Shandrac Sasa	Chief	Longu
Malcam Ruki	Chief	Longu
Dickson Salua	Chief	Longu
Vincent Kaku	Chief/ Church Rep	Longu
Lydia Leta	Women's Rep	Longu
Paul Maeqela	Chief	Longu
Lila Daisy Jerry	Youth Rep	Malango
Paul Bale	Chief	Malango
Fred Pati	Chief	Malango
Ulsa Rex	Women's Rep	Malango

Dominic Tome	Youth Rep	Malango
Anisuiua Adrian	Chief	Marau
Joel Keniroa	Chief/ Church Rep	Marau
Resemary Tahi	Women's Rep	Marau
Victor Ninipua	Headmaster	Marau
Fr. Nathaniel Dae	Church Leader	Marau
Paul Mamara'ai	Chief	Marau
Joe Torikeni	Chief	Marau
Joseph Ikau	Chief	Marau
Jerry Futa	Chief	Marau
Wilson Boro	Chief	Paripao
Nelson Manengelea	Chief	Paripao
Prudence Kwairoi	Women Rep	Paripao
Stanley Toto	Chief	Tandai
Serapino Pero	Chief	Tandai
Michael Tohina	Chief	Tandai
Karalo Charles	Chief	Tandai
Claudette Liliau	Women's Rep.	Tandai
Caroline Reuben	Women's Rep.	Tandai
Raphaella Teteha	Youth Rep.	Tandai
Paul Saravagi	Chief	Savulei
Joseph Tausuli	Church's Rep.	Savulei
Basiliza Waitasi	Women's Rep.	Savulei
Sisto Perole	Youth's Rep.	Savulei
Jimmy Bea	Chief	Tasiboko
Leonard Kue	Chief	Tasiboko
Gabriel Leua	Chief	Tasiboko
Stephen Jr. Leua	Youth's Rep	Tasiboko
Cliford Ngelekulia	Chief	Tasiboko

Magret Laulae	Women's Rep.	Tasiboko
Benjamin Savino	Chief	Valasi
Benjamin Loriania	Chief	Valasi
Andrew Ravekibo	Chief	Valasi
Lawrence Ololaka	Chief	Valasi
Mosten Manele	Chief	Vulolo
Francis Lusiasi	Chief	Vulolo
Moffat Haila	Chief/ Elder	Vulolo
Anna Kelly	Women's Rep	Vulolo
Bere Moffat	Women's Rep	Vulolo
Robert Pepeo	Church leader	Vulolo
Jack Mele	Chief	Vulolo

2. Peace and Development

We the participants, as chiefs, church leaders, women leaders, youth leaders, and observers, from the following thirteen Wards of Tasimate namely, Aola Ward, Ghaubata Ward, Kolo Karako Ward, Longu Ward, Malango Ward, Sahalu Ward, Paripao Ward, Tandai Ward, Savulei Ward, Tasiboko Ward, Valasi Ward, Vulolo Ward and Birao ward, will continue to focus our tok stori on these questions: “who” and “what” prevent us from working together and “how” and “when” can we cooperate to achieve peace and development in our respective communities?

In answering these important questions, we have no choice but to continue to tell, listen to, and evaluate our stories about our memories of the armed conflict and instability in the past and our hopes of peace and stability for the future of our communities.

We recognize that we cannot hope to produce and reap the benefits of what we value as social and economic development before we are willing to cooperate and commit to building and nurturing peace and stability within and between our communities, and between our communities and government.

3. Acknowledgement and Appreciation

We express our thanks to the leaders and people of the Alite community for hosting us; and making it possible for us to stay together for several days to share and participate in a tok stori on how we can continue to talk and work together peacefully in our collective effort to build a brighter future for our communities and the Solomon Islands. We listen with respect to the welcome speech at the opening programme from Chief Paul Mamaraai, on behalf of the Marau community, who reminds us that their histories and genealogies are an integral part of Guadalcanal, and who sees our commitment to building peace and unity as nurturing the appropriate environment for social and economic development in our communities.

We appreciate the presence of the Permanent Secretary for the Department of National Unity, Reconciliation and Peace, Ethel F. Sigimanu, and her welcome speech encouraging us to make productive use of all the processes that the Government has put in place to promote peace, unity, and development; the presence of the Honorable Minister for Peace and Reconciliation, Hon Simon Tonavi from the Guadalcanal Provincial Government at our Tok Stori opening programme; and Mr.

Joseph Hasiau from the Guadalcanal Peace Coordinating Office and his participation in our tok stori.

We are grateful to the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI) for their continuing support and goodwill and especially Special Coordinator James Batley for officially opening our Tasimate Tok Stori and sharing his time, experience and wisdom with us in emphasizing the need to be mutually respectful, patient, realistic and supportive of law and order in our collective effort to build peace and harmony; to the RAMSI Development Coordinator and Head of AusAid Catherine Walker for reminding us that peace and stability are the pre-conditions for the activities of social and economic development, such as food security, improvement in transport, and education; to the Commander of the RAMSI Police Force, Mr Will Jameison , who urges us to work together in partnership with the police and to talk with and encourage our children in order to make peace last in our communities; and to RAMSI Assistant Special Coordinator Mr. Masi Lomaloma for his presence throughout the three days and for sharing with us his view on the traditional Fijian Chiefly system.

We convey our sincere gratitude to the National Peace Council, Chairman Paul Tovua, Peace Councillor Victor Ngele, and the Peace Monitors from Guadalcanal, Malaita, and the Western Province; and to the Pacific Islands Development Program of the East-West Center and Director Dr. Sitiveni Halapua, for the successful organization, coordination, and facilitation of our Tasi Mate Tok Stori.

4. Land and Conflict

We believe that the questions relating to our land are central to the persistence of conflict and broken relationships within and between our communities and between our communities and government. We recognize the urgent need to seriously address these questions in order to prevent any escalation of future conflict and breaking down of law and order, and to build a stable foundation for long-term peace, stability and development in our communities.

Our stories about the relationships between land and conflict vary from person to person, family to family, and community to community. We believe that land will continue to remain a principal source of conflict due to the lack of these important values: love, respect and trust, within and between our own communities. Since land is a curse if the way we use and deal with it is seen to show a lack of love, respect and trust in one another, these values must be included in the way we see and deal with our answers to land issues, in order to reduce conflict and nurture peace between persons, families, villages, communities, and between us and government. In the past some people were exiled owing to the absence of love, respect, and trust in their behaviour, action and attitudes towards the members of our communities.

We see that our land is fixed; this, combined with the growing numbers of our young population and other different people wanting to have access to and use of our land, will expand the potential for conflict within and between our communities. But we believe that the practice of love, trust, and respect with regard to the way we manage the ownership of, access to, use, and distribution of benefits from our tribal land will act to

reduce the potential sources of conflict within our communities. With respect to land ownership and access, we want to reduce conflict and build peace so that we can have a fair share of the benefits from the productive usage of our tribal land.

We have respected, trusted and supported our tribal leaders in the past. Today the absence of love, trust, and respect with regard to our tribal leaders results in the misuse and abuse of knowledge relating to our tribal land. History of the ownership of and access to our tribal land, based on our tribal values, is not passed on to others.

We accept that the communal ownership of our tribal land is passed down from generation to generation. In some cases land ownership was acquired through tribal wars and inter-marriage between our communities. We believe that knowledge about our genealogies is important and can help us to reduce, if not avoid, conflict over tribal land.

Therefore we see a need to set up a “Council of Chiefs” in each Ward to oversee and manage questions and conflicting claims relating to our tribal land. The absence of such a “Council of Chiefs” holds us back from working together to prevent conflict from getting out of our control and from fostering social and economic development in our own communities.

To show respect to the members of our tribe and to show trust in our chiefs there is a need for transparency and accountability in all land dealings within our communities. Tribal chiefs, through our proposed “Council of Chiefs”, should witness all land transactions on behalf of our Tribal landowners. In addition all land dealings and forms of agreement

should be translated into our pidgin language so that we can all understand the meanings of what is happening in relation to our tribal land, as any misunderstanding regarding the use and distribution of benefits from our land will create all sorts of bad stories and feelings, and prevent us from working together to maintain peace and achieve development over time. All land dealings must be transparent, avoid “bribery of chiefs”, and have the consent of everyone including the women and children.

We see a need to amend the current Mining Act with a view to addressing aspects of mineral ownership, in order to minimize the potential conflict over the distribution of benefits from mining activity. In addition we recognize the need for the recording of all our tribal land in order to minimize uncertainty and prevent any escalation of conflict based on what may be seen as the sale of customary land by the non-primary owners, as well as what may be seen as illegal use, including human settlement, without respect for our ownership rights regarding the boundaries of our land. Alienated land should be returned to the original owners or the “Council of Chiefs” as part of the recording of our tribal land.

The kind of economic development that is taking place without proper consultation, and without our better understanding of “who respects and trusts whom” in relation to “who benefits from what” regarding the commercial use of our land, is an ongoing source of conflict that prevents us from working together to build peace and long-term stability. This is complicated by what we see as the unfair and uneven distribution of benefits from the use of our tribal land. We must be selective and realistic about the kind of development we choose, and ensure proper consultation

and better understanding of the kind of real benefits we expect to get for our communities over time. The “Council of Chiefs” must be involved in determining the kind of development needed in their respective areas. Too often serious conflicts arise within and between our communities because our chiefs do not cooperate. Therefore the establishment of our “Council of Chiefs” will help us address these issues and to find the resolution to settle disputes between conflicting parties for the benefit of our communities as a whole.

We call on the national and provincial government to (i) support the establishment of, and recognize the power of, a “Council of Chiefs” to oversee and manage customary land questions and conflicting land claims in each Ward and (ii) work closely with the “Council of Chiefs” to settle outstanding and future conflict over land, to address the problems arising from illegal squatters who show no respect for the rights of land-owners, and to promote law and order within our respective areas.

5. Reconciliation and Resources

We believe that law and order is restored but that tension remains due mainly to the lack of proper reconciliation within and between our communities and between our communities and government.

Reconciliation cannot be forced upon us as the need for reconciliation must come from our hearts and minds, within and between our families, villages and communities. This is demonstrated by our willingness to reconcile with one another and to come together to participate in this tok stori.

However we recognize that our willingness to move forward towards reconciliation in a timely and right way is constrained by our lack of appropriate resources to provide for, and our lack of capability to facilitate, the flows of monetary and traditional wealth, such as feasts and exchanges of gifts, needed by the conflicting and aggrieved parties to fulfil traditional obligations and compensation. That our traditional price of reconciliation becomes the constraint on peace building within and between our communities needs to be recognized, appreciated and supported by our government and our regional and international development partners.

This traditional constraint on our peace building has become a significant constraint on our social and economic development within and between our communities. In this connection we begin to see ourselves as moving around what we may call a “vicious cycle of lack of reconciliation and development”, in which a lack of appropriate resources and capability to provide for our traditional reconciliation and peace building leads us to a lack of social and economic development, which in turn returns us to a lack of appropriate resources, preventing us from working together to facilitate our traditional reconciliation and peace building within and between our communities over time. We do not want to keep moving around this “vicious cycle of lack of reconciliation and development” and therefore need some form of external assistance to enable us to break away.

We see the question concerning the “vicious cycle of lack of reconciliation and development” in terms of ‘who is willing to do what form of reconciliation with whom’ and ‘who has the appropriate resources to do what form of reconciliation with whom’ within and

between our families, villages and communities. In other words our willingness to pursue reconciliation, for lasting peace and development over time, must be matched by our ability to provide the appropriate resources such as feasts, traditional and monetary gifts necessary to facilitate compensation and reconciliation in our traditional way. Therefore to facilitate the effective pursuit of our traditional reconciliation we respectfully request the understanding and meaningful support of our government and our regional and international development partners in providing some of the monetary resources needed to supplement our own limited resources and capability. This will help us build a stable foundation for lasting peace and social and economic development in our respective communities.

In addition we want to emphasize the need for a proper reconciliation between our government and our communities; and proper payment of compensations due, largely for the loss of properties and homes caused by the unlawful use of patrol boats and the Royal Solomon Islands Police etc. during the tension.

This is the way to true reconciliation, and will instil a memory of lasting peace which will be passed on through our stories from generation to generation as a pre-condition for our development as a nation of peaceful communities.

6. Rehabilitation

We recognize that reconciliation and rehabilitation constitute the two sides of the same process of peace building within and between our communities. We acknowledge the need for additional resources to

finance the rehabilitation of not only infrastructure such as schools, health clinics, shipping services, airports etc. but also the private property, homes, and business projects that were fully or partly closed or destroyed during the tension. In addition to the rehabilitation projects identified under the Townsville Peace Agreement, we see an urgent need to promote the small-scale income creating activities that will improve sources of livelihood at village level within the areas that were most affected by the tension.

The rehabilitation of ex-combatants, with the provision of appropriate services and meaningful opportunities, is crucial for the promotion of law and order within our fast growing young population. Additionally this is important for long-term peace building, creating the relationships of respect and trust, and the reduction of intergenerational conflict between our traditional leaders and the young people of our various communities.

The communities that were most affected by the tension face the uphill struggle of coping with the lack of reliable communication and transportation services. We ask the government and foreign development partners to take our need for reliable transport such as shipping services into consideration when conceiving and developing rehabilitation programmes.

7. Good Governance and Leadership

We recognize that government systems, national or provincial, are not effectively and consistently present in our communities. In this connection we reiterate the need to establish and empower our “Council of Chiefs” in each Ward. Within this Council, our traditional men and

women leaders can become the primary voices of peace, good governance and leadership at the local levels. Therefore the role of our traditional chiefs with regards to good governance and leadership at the community levels should be strengthened and supported by our government.

Our “Council of Chiefs” will provide primary institutions of cooperation for our traditional leaders who have the power and authority to **(i)** speak on behalf of our respective communities; **(ii)** carry out our local practices for mediating and resolving conflicts, and promoting peace between persons within and between groups; **(iii)** foster basic qualities of transparency, accountability and honesty of leadership; **(iv)** promote open discussion and consultation and law and order; and **(v)** determine customary rights to ownership and access to land and customary rules for the management of our tribal land and marine resources.

In addition the “Council of Chiefs” can become the primary vehicles of cooperation and coordination, and narrow what we see as the growing disconnection and “communication gap” that exists between our local communities and government.

8. Central Neutral Facilitator and Special Trust Fund For Reconciliation

We acknowledge the effective and productive work that the independent, neutral National Peace Council is doing with regard to organizing and conducting training workshops on dispute management and conflict resolution at our village levels, mediating conflicts and promoting harmony within and between groups, and building peace and stability

within and between our respective communities. Therefore we recommend and request that (i) the NPC become the independent, neutral facilitator and coordinator of our Tok Stori Statement and (ii) the NPC establish within the ambit of its present range of activities a “Special Trust Fund for Reconciliation (STFR)” to assist with our own traditional reconciliation efforts and address the question concerning the “vicious cycle of lack of reconciliation and development” at family, village, and community levels.

END OF STATEMENT