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‘I SE INOKE – YES FOR INOKE

MY MANIFESTO AND VISION FOR ROTUMA

INTRODUCTION

1. My manifesto advocates change. My challenge to you is ‘LET US CHANGE IT’.
2. My vision of CHANGE is based on one fundamental idea. That idea is that we must help ourselves and work together with government – a partnership between central government and the people. We must show that we can help ourselves before we can expect government to help us.
3. We must guard against the ‘handout’ mentality that many indigenous populations suffer nowadays. That is not the way of our ancestors. We must not create a generation of ‘handout’ merchants, but rather create a generation of commerce and professional merchants.
4. In this manifesto I will try to convince you that such a change is near impossible to achieve unless we change the **laws** that govern Rotuma and our **attitude**, put our **young generation** on the right path and look after our **environment**. I will fight for a change in the laws that govern Rotuma and I will convince you that that change alone is not enough unless we change our attitude as well.
5. As for our young people, I will set up a trust fund that will look after the children that cannot afford their basic school needs. The ones that do not get the government or private scholarships. Our children need physical education as well. I will revive the old sports of outrigger canoeing, ‘tika’ and ‘hula’ for our youth and the young at heart. I will work together with you to build a gymnasium in Rotuma.
6. We must look after the fragile environment in Rotuma. I will fight to have a recycling system established in Rotuma. I will also work together with the Council of Rotuma to create an environment policy and laws and regulations to protect the environment.

7. If you are expecting me to promise you that I will have the road in Rotuma sealed, then you will be disappointed. If you read on you will find out why I say that anyone who makes such a promise, like others before them, will not be able to honour it. They will raise your expectations only to disappoint you. So read on.

WHY DO WE NEED TO CHANGE THE LAWS THAT GOVERN ROTUMA?

8. Many developments and good ideas fail because the proper legal framework is not in place. Further, we cannot tap into funding from donor agencies if the law does not allow it or if we do not meet their legal requirements. Laws are there to help and protect us, not enslave us. We need to change the laws that will help the development of Rotuma.
9. There are two main laws that govern Rotuma: the **ROTUMA ACT** and the **ROTUMA LANDS ACT**.

LAND AND GOVERNANCE POLICY

THE “ROTUMA ACT” AND THE “COUNCIL OF ROTUMA”

10. The **ROTUMA ACT** established the **COUNCIL OF ROTUMA (section 12)**.
11. The Council was given the duty under **section 15** to ‘consider all such questions relating to the good government and well-being of the Rotuman community in the island **as may be directed by the Minister** or may seem to them to require their attention’. Put simply, the Council determines what is good for Rotuma as directed by the Prime Minister or as they see fit.
12. This Act came from the Rotuma Ordinance of 1927 and reviewed over the years, the last review was in 1970, but the main provision, section 15, has not changed.
13. My view is that section 15 does not give the Council and the people in Rotuma the power and the authority to more effectively develop Rotuma.
14. To understand why the Rotuma Act is the way it is one needs to understand the history of Rotuma. By Proclamation on 5 November 1880 Rotuma was proclaimed to be part of the colony of Fiji. On 13 May 1881 the 7 Chiefs of Rotuma signed a Deed of Cession of Rotuma to the United Kingdom.

THE HISTORY BEHIND THE ROTUMA ACT

15. In 1882, the Governor of the Colony of Fiji enacted the **Rotumah Ordinance 1882** to make special provision for the government of Rotumah. This Ordinance appointed “The **Rotumah Regulation Board** consisting of the Resident Commissioner for Rotumah and ‘any number of native inhabitants of Rotumah not exceeding ten and not less than five who may be appointed by the Governor’: (Ord. XXIII). It was the duty of the Board **‘to consider all such questions relating to the good government of and well-being of the inhabitants of Rotumah as may be directed by the Governor or may seem to them to require their attention’**: (Ord. XXVII).
16. The next change in the law came in 1927 when **The Rotuma Ordinance 1927** was passed repealing the Rotuma Ordinance 1882 ‘to make special provision for the government of Rotuma’. The Rotuma Ordinance 1927 re-established **“The Rotuma Regulation Board”** which consisted of the Resident Commissioner for Rotuma and ‘any number of native Rotumans not exceeding ten and not less than five who may be appointed by the Governor’: (Ord. 12). As with the 1882 law, the Rotuma Regulation Board was given the duty **‘to consider all such questions relating to the good government and well-being of the natives as may be directed by the Governor or may seem to them to require their attention’**: (Ord. 16). Exactly the same wording was used in both ordinances.
17. The next change to this main provision came when the **Rotuma Act** was passed, the same law that applies today. The changes made by this Act were: the Rotuma Regulation Board was changed to the ‘Council of Rotuma’, the Resident Commissioner became the ‘District Officer’ and the Governor became the ‘Minister’.

NO CHANGE IN THE POLICY OF THE ROTUMA ACT SINCE 1882

18. As you can see the **main policy behind this law has not changed since 1882** and that policy was that Rotuma was governed as ‘directed’ by the central government.
19. The law worked well when we were a colony and the central government decided what was good for us. We have grown up as a people and as a nation and we don’t need to be spoon-fed any more.
20. Times have changed but the law hasn’t. We need to review and change the law to fit in with modern time.

21. I believe that unless there is such a change, we will not progress very far if at all. We need to negotiate this change with the central government. We need to support and advise our chiefs. If elected I will fight for it.

THE ROTUMAN DEVELOPMENT FUND

22. The second duty that the Council has is to administer the **Rotuman Development Fund** established under the Rotuma Act.
23. This Fund is made up of the old pre-1959, **cess** on primary produce and other **income** from investment of the Fund.
24. The **object** of the Fund is to **promote the development, welfare and advancement of Rotumans**. The Fund is to be used exclusively for this object and may be spent within or outside of Rotuma. It is to be managed and controlled by the Council, subject to the directions of the Prime Minister.
25. It is obvious that we need to review the Act in this respect if we are to enter into modern and large scale investment. We need to decide whether the Council should carry this huge responsibility on its own or should it be shared and with whom. We need to put in place by law the necessary structures that will enable us to make it happen once we have decided what it should be.

ROTUMA AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL LOAN FUND

26. The third thing that the Rotuma Act did was to give the Council the power to establish a fund called the **ROTUMA AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL LOAN FUND**.
27. The Council is authorised to pay into this fund money from the **Rotuman Development Fund**. The Council may loan from the Agricultural and Industrial Fund to any Rotuman for agricultural and industrial purposes and on conditions as the Council decides.
28. Again, a review of the Act is necessary. The idea is good but it needs to be updated to modern time.
29. I will start the **CHANGE** process.

MY VISION

30. I put this forward for your consideration. I must stress that this is but one way of doing it. There might be a better way. That will only be known after wide consultation with the community and professional advisers.
31. I believe the better way is to pass a new Act of Parliament to set up a **ROTUMA ISLAND AUTHORITY (RIA)**.
32. This is to be a corporate body, similar to the local government authorities. The RIA will operate in accordance with the provisions of the new Act and its Regulations.
33. The RIA will be responsible for developing the infrastructure, schools, hospitals, water, electricity and other public services in Rotuma.
34. The RIA will have power to enter into contracts with and invest in public and private organizations in carrying out its responsibilities.
35. The RIA is to be funded partly by government and partly by the Rotumans themselves and from income from the Authority's own investments.
36. The Board of the RIA is to be made up of representatives of the Council of Rotuma, Rotumans in Rotuma, Rotumans in Fiji, Government and professionals.
37. The Council remains but its main responsibility is to be the custodian of Rotuman customs and traditions. I believe we need to separate this very important and necessary side of governance from the commercial side of governance. It is quite unfair to leave the whole of governance to be carried by the Council. I hear many complaints about the Council not performing but I think to expect them to be well versed in modern commerce and government affairs is to expect too much. It is like the Fijian people expecting the Great Council of Chiefs to be wholly responsible for the governance of Fiji
38. The idea of the Council being the custodian of Rotuman customs and traditions is not new. The Council itself has asked for this in the past. In a memorandum from the late Chairman, Aisea Aitu, on behalf of the Council to the late Right Honourable Prime Minister, Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, dated 18 February 1988, containing the Rotuman people's submissions after the 1987 coup, the Chairman asked that the Council of Rotuma be recognised in the new Constitution as the 'custodian of Rotuman Custom and Culture'. That position will not change in any of the reforms that I am suggesting.
39. I believe this structure will achieve the following objectives:

1. Rotumans will have an opportunity to participate directly in the development of Rotuma.
 2. Rotumans will have more effective control over the type and pace of development in Rotuma.
 3. Rotumans will have some ownership of this development.
 4. Ownership and control of development by Rotumans will mean that we will look after our investment and improve on it.
 5. We can create employment, investment and improve the quality of life in Rotuma.

40. However, we must guard against excessive administration costs and inefficient management consuming the bulk of the funding pool.

41. I believe this is the better way to govern ourselves than the way we are doing it now. I challenge you to come with me on this journey of CHANGE.

THE ROTUMA LANDS ACT

REVIEW THE ROTUMA LANDS ACT

42. The **ROTUMA LANDS ACT** was passed in 1959. It is the law today that deals with Rotuma lands. However, nothing has happened since to put this law into effect.

ROTUMA LANDS ACT DISCRIMINATES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

43. I believe one of the reasons for this is that most Rotumans do no agree with **section 4(2)**. This is the law that Rotumans refer to as “*fa' hap'esea ta*”. This section says that, as from 1959, no Rotumans shall be registered as a member of more than one kainaga or as a member of any kainga other than his father's.
 44. There are two exceptions however.
 45. The first is that if you were born before 1959 then you may register on both your mother's and your father's kainaga. You can choose to be

registered in one *kainaga* only but once you have made that choice you cannot change your mind. If you are a child then your father makes this choice for you.

46. The second exception is that if you are an illegitimate child, then only if your father acknowledges you as your child that you can be registered in your father's *kainaga*. Otherwise you will have to be registered in your mother's *kainaga*.
47. Effectively, the law says that you can only be registered as a member of your father's *kainaga* except in those two very limited circumstances.
48. This law discriminates against Rotumans born after 1959.
49. This law discriminates against Rotuman women and their children.
50. This law goes against Rotuman traditional land rights.
51. This law can make some Rotumans landless now and in the future.
52. There is no good reason why this law should not be changed. It not only goes against Rotuman custom and tradition but it goes against the Constitution.
53. I will fight to have this law changed. **LET'S CHANGE IT** so that we can move forward.

UNRESOLVED LAND DISPUTES PREVENT DEVELOPMENT

54. To develop Rotuma effectively, one of the first things that we must do is to resolve our land disputes and register who owns this land and that.
55. We cannot move forward with any certainty unless we have land disputes resolved in an orderly manner and with finality so that the true and rightful owners are registered.
56. I'll give you an example why I say this is essential. Suppose the PWD says: 'We want to tar seal the roads in Rotuma.' One of the first things that needs to be done is to survey the lands on which the roads pass through. Secondly, the owners of the lands must be identified so that compensation can be paid to the rightful owners. If the boundaries or the true owners cannot be agreed, and there is no procedure to resolve the disagreement, the roads cannot be sealed.
57. I am sure that you can think of other examples where development and jobs will be lost because our land ownership and disputes are not determined in an orderly and fair and transparent manner.

ROTUMA LANDS COMMISSION DOES NOT EXIST

58. The second reason why the Rotuma Lands Act has been ineffective is there is **no Rotuma Lands Commission** appointed as provided by the Act. **Section 4(1)** says that the Minister shall appoint a Rotuma Lands Commission. The Commission is charged with several duties including the duty to ascertain ownership, the duty to decide all disputes, the duty to set the boundaries and the duty to set up a Register.
 59. Because of this law, the High Court has said that only the Rotuma Lands Commission has the power to decide any disputes over land not registered prior to 1959.
 60. We are therefore left with no procedure or process for resolving disputes, except by agreement between the parties, because the Commission does not exist.
 61. Setting up a Commission is a costly and time consuming exercise but we must start now before it is too late.
 62. Unresolved disputation will lock up our lands and stop effective development.
 63. There are other parts of the Act which need to be reviewed in light of modern times. For example, we need to determine what types of land uses are to be allowed in Rotuma, both short and long term.
 64. We must go through a process of wide community consultation to determine such issues.
 65. We just cannot sit and wait for things to happen and I will fight to have the establishment of the Rotuma Lands Commission and the consultation process started. Let's start the process of **CHANGE**.
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YOUTH POLICY

66. We need to change our attitude of waiting for the government to do things for us. We must guard against this "handout" mentality. We must not allow our future generations to go down this road. We are already on our way down this dangerous journey. We need to keep our youth occupied and heading in the right direction. The changes which I now suggest and for which I will fight will I believe achieve this aim.

- 67. Education of our youth is one of the key issues for our development. I will set up a trust fund to cater for the needs of the underprivileged Rotuman kids both in Rotuma and in Fiji. I will need your support in this that the 'haves' in our community will help the 'have nots' by financially contributing to the fund.
- 68. Sport is as important as schooling. It keeps our community healthy and bonds us together. I will re-introduce the traditional sports of "sua'ak vaka" (outrigger canoeing), "tika" and "hula".
- 69. The sport of "outrigger canoeing" is becoming a very popular sport. Young and old, men and women can participate. It is a traditional sport for us. I would like to revive it both as a sport and as a tradition. We can use this sport to revive our canoe building skills and sea navigation skills. Unless we teach our young now these skills will be lost. I will lobby the Department of Youth and Sport to help us provide canoes for each of the 7 districts. I would like to see a "Round Rotuma Annual Outrigger Canoe Race" where men and women, young and old of different age groups race against each other around the island in open ocean.
- 70. I would like to re-introduce the "tika" and the "hula" that I remember participating in and seeing as a young boy in Rotuma. These skills will be lost unless we encourage these sports. It will also unite us and make us work together as a people.
- 71. I would also like to build a Gymnasium in Rotuma. Again I will lobby the government for help. But you must be willing to play your part by helping financially and in other ways.

ENVIRONMENT POLICY

- 72. We must look after the environment in Rotuma. My policy is to clean up the damage already done and to set up a long term policy that will prevent more damage that will enable us to use our sea and land resources at a sustainable level.
- 73. Firstly, I will fight for a rubbish recycling system for Rotuma.
- 74. Secondly, I will ask the Council to re-introduce and enforce the Regulations that made people clean up their lands.
- 75. Thirdly, I will put in place a strategy that will get rid of the flies and fruit flies that plague Rotuma now.
- 76. Fourthly, I will put in place a policy that controls the development and extraction of our marine and land resources at a sustainable level.

77. A policy that encourages the use of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind and wave. In ***Itu'muta*** I believe there is a waterfall that could be used to drive a turbine to generate electricity and I will look into it to see if it is viable. I believe also that we can use biogas from animal and other waste for cooking and drying copra and I will look into this as well.
78. I believe small scale cottage industries such as spices farming and coconut byproduct industries that do not destroy the environment and are environment friendly are the way to go. I will help you through government and NGO funding to establish such industries and help you find markets for your produce.
79. I strongly believe that with these policies and changes we can steer ourselves into a future where we are in control of our destiny. Vote for me if you want change and progress.

SUMMARY

1. **We have to change.**
2. **Real and effective change will only happen if we have a solid foundation.**
3. **Changing the LAW and our ATTITUDE are the cornerstones for that foundation.**
4. **We must participate and work in partnership with government to improve the lives of our people.**
5. **If we work together to educate our youth and look after our environment then we can build a safe and secure community where we have control over our destiny.**

These are the changes that I will fight for our people and with your help and participation together we can make them happen.

Faiaksea

Sosefo Inoke