



50th Independence Day Speech
His Excellency President Baron Divavesi Waqa
Wednesday 31st January 2018

His Excellency the Governor General of Australia, the Honourable General Sir Peter Gosgrove and Lady Gosgrove

His Excellency the Prime Minister of Samoa, the Honourable Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi

His Excellency the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Honourable Peter Christian

Her Excellency the President of the Marshall Islands, the Honourable Hilda Heine and First Gentleman Kijina

His Excellency the President of Fiji, the Honourable Major General Jioji Konrote and Madam Konrote

His Excellency the President of Vanuatu, the Honourable Tallis Moses Obed and Madam Obed

His Excellency the Prime Minister of Tuvalu, the Honourable Enele Sopoaga and Madam Sopoaga

His Excellency the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, the Honourable Henry Puna

The Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of Indonesia, General Dr. H. Wiranto

The Minister for Pacific Peoples of New Zealand, the Honourable Aupita William Sio

The Minister of State of Palau, the Honourable Faustina Rehuher

The Minister of Council of Indigenous Peoples of the Republic of China (Taiwan)

The Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of Japan, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Iwao Horii

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Abkhazia, the Honourable Daur Kove

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of South Ossetia, the Honourable Dmitriy Medoev

The Vice Minister, Coordinating Ministry for Political, Legal and Security Affairs of Indonesia, the Honourable Lutfi Rauf

The Honourable Speaker of Parliament, the Honourable Cyril Buraman

His Honour the Chief Justice, the Honourable Filimone Jitoko

Cabinet colleagues

Honourable Members of Parliament

Excellencies

The Chief Secretary

Members of the Clergy

Distinguished guests

My fellow Nauruans

Omo yoran ea kamie memak and a very good morning to you all! I bid you all welcome to today's event.

A ibibogin garamwimwin kamie ian bitune ibum, ñune dogit kor gaganedo dogin ata celebrateiy wora 50th Independence.

Bitune edae, eiy ata daen amaran, mungana edae nuwawen dogin an amebuna wora forefathers totow ura me eamongura ngea ang gonaen wora independence.

Bitune edae, eiy bet ata daen nim ta maiy amo dogin ijamwan, iat ebwebweda dogin ata nim abuida imin ngana nan gonan angabida gata me eben bwieta.

Eiy bwet edae ion an nim amaran amoun me an auwe Amea Etongita dogit ogoda ian weron ngea oija gata imin memak me ang nim eo dogin amaran Ngeiy, ngea wora amin ranga me katsimor.

Today, we have reached a momentous milestone in our nation's history. Today, we remember and celebrate the birth of our beloved nation, when half a century ago, our forefathers and our people stood on these very grounds, watery eyed and with a great sense of pride - raised the blue, white and gold - Nauru flag and sung the national anthem "Nauru bwiema" for the very first time in our nation's history. The event was witnessed by the representatives of the tripartite governments that governed Nauru - Mr D.J. Carter representing the NZ Government, Mr C.E. Barnes, the Australian Minister for Territories, and Sir Charles Johnston representing the United Kingdom.

It was the dawn of a new era for the Nauruan people - an era of nationhood charted through time and destiny under the providence and grace of God - to become a people as God intended, and to live in humility, respect and love for one another. Our motto '*Gods' Will First*' is an embodiment of our association with and love of God.

Our independence is always a time of reflection, a time to console with the wounds of the past and a time to look towards the future with excitement and anticipation, as we strive to develop our nation into a sustainable and flourishing society.

The last 50 years has been a colossal learning experience for us on a national and personal level. We have experienced great fortunes and happiness, and we have also endured misfortunes and hardship under very difficult circumstances.

The economic meltdown that besieged our nation at the turn of this century was a wakeup call. We went from boom to bust and it was unprecedented in our nation's history. The assistance provided through PRAN or the Pacific Regional Assistance to Nauru and through various bilateral assistance programmes, ensured that we got back on our feet, and we owe a deep sense of gratitude to those who assisted us.

Ladies and gentlemen, the end of the Second World War was the catalyst for the independent movement around the world. It was a time of political upheaval in all the colonies around the world and bold new leaders were taking steps into uncharted territories, seeking self-determination. In the Pacific region, the independence movement was led by Western Samoa with its independence in 1962. Given this inspiration, the Nauruan leadership led by the founding father and former President Hammer DeRoburt, initiated moves towards Nauru's independence. It culminated in our independence and with world recognition 50 years ago, and here we are today to relive and celebrate that date.

We are also here to relive and commemorate an event that occurred exactly 72 years ago. It was an event to commemorate the return of the Nauruan people from exile in Truk now Chuuk, in the Federated States of Micronesia, at the end of the Second World War. It was a most sad and heart breaking event as 1/3 of our people who were deported, did not return home. The world just witnessed the end of the most devastating conflict in human history and the tragedy and great loss of life was incalculable.

Today, Nauru is a different country from what it was 50 years ago. The landscape of the island has changed considerably. The population has more than doubled and most of the elderly with vivid memories of the pre-independence era, have passed on.

The once dominant phosphate industry is no longer the backbone of the economy and we have a more diversified and robust economic base today.

The re-establishment of the Regional Processing Centre has been the driving economic force of development on Nauru. The level of economic activity on the island since the Centre was re-established in 2012, has been enormous. The demand on services, infrastructure and labour was overwhelming.

Nauru Airlines benefited greatly and from being a one aeroplane airline, it became a five plane operation with one dedicated freighter. The airline capitalised on the processing centres to spread its wings and it has been very successful in opening new markets especially in the Northern Pacific. The current financial standing of the Airline shows a welcome turnaround to profitable operations compared to the turbulent years of the past. The Airline continues to expand its services with the addition of Guam forecast to commence in late March 2018. The freighter services are also steadily expanding with regular flights into Tarawa to assist the export of tuna and Australian domestic charters for Qantas. 2018 will see the commencement of joint freight services with Air Niugini.

Closer ties with other neighbouring Pacific airlines including Solomon Airlines and Air Vanuatu will result in more and regular flying for the airline in 2018. Other work expected in 2018 are related to charter activities related to Offshore Processing work as well as domestic Australia flights for mining and other work.

The acquisition of a Brisbane hangar is well underway, and it shall provide the airline with timely maintenance and turnaround of aircrafts.

Improvement in transportation services is not only limited to the skies, but also to the oceans as well. A good and efficient port is the catalyst for development. The Nauru Port project which is anticipated to commence in the 3rd quarter of 2018, is expected to significantly improve port services and reduce time and costs of ship turnaround time. The Government is working with the Asian Development Bank, the Green Climate Fund, the Government of Australia, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency to realize the AU\$100 million project.

Ladies and gentlemen, the availability of capital for development projects in small island states is an on-going dilemma in all places around the world. Nauru's recent membership in financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF can greatly increase the flow and availability of capital and know-how for development projects. However, countries must do their part and secure their future through their own savings.

The establishment in 2015 of our Intergenerational Sovereign Wealth Trust Fund has now generated savings of more than Australian \$60 million and set to grow at a steady \$15 to \$20 million per year. The Fund is projected to reach \$400 million dollars within 20 years. My Government is most grateful to Australia, Taiwan and most recently New Zealand, for their generous contributions to the Fund. I also thanked the Asian Development Bank for its technical assistance in setting up the Fund.

The re-establishment of a banking system two years ago is much welcomed and my Government is very grateful to Bendigo Bank Australia for opening an Agency on island. My Government will continue to strive to improve the financial and monetary services available to the people. This year, we will look at the feasibility of re-establishing the Nauru Superannuation Scheme for all Nauruan employees with a planned start date later in the year. This defined contribution scheme will assist all Nauruans in taking control and planning for their retirements in the future.

An efficient telecommunication system is essential to doing business in any country. The services that Digicel brought 8 years ago has greatly improved telecommunication services on Nauru and my Government is extremely happy and proud to have worked together with Digicel over the past years. The proposed installation of a submarine cable by early 2019 is expected to greatly improve connectivity with

the outside world, and it will open many new possibilities in areas such as health, education, telecommunications, and investments among others.

Good and efficient telecommunication systems are good for everyone. However, we must be careful with the loads of information that are flowing through to our people and especially to our children. Certain information and images that flows through social media such as Facebook have a very destabilizing effect on our society. That is why nearly 3 years ago, my Government banned the use of Facebook. Since then, the implementation of new laws and regulations means that we now have the means to trace and persecute offenders. I am pleased to advise that as of last week Thursday, my Government lifted the ban on Facebook use on Nauru. I urged all Nauruans using Facebook to act responsibly and for parents to teach their children accordingly.

Ladies and gentlemen, the setup of the few foreign companies operating in Nauru such as Digicel, Vital Energy and Bendigo Bank have only happened in the last few years. This is a testament of the growing confidence in the Nauru economy by these companies. These companies provide vital services to the people of Nauru and in return, they have benefitted tremendously. It's a win-win situation and it's a situation where I would like to echo my Government's invitation to potential investors to come to Nauru and discuss opportunities for investment.

New projects and new industries that are beneficial to Nauru and the region require the presence of a skilled workforce. The development of a robust capacity building programme, and the training and upskilling of our work force is a priority undertaking for my Government.

The skills required to manage future programmes will be far and wide. Programmes related to important projects such as land rehabilitation and the development of new industries will require new skills and new technology for application nationwide.

Land rehabilitation is crucial to our future development and we hope to begin earnest work in the fiscal year 2018/2019. Land will be developed for a range of purposes including housing, agriculture, sports, education, and for the sowing of trees to green the rehabilitated areas and provide new habitats for wildlife. The Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation is receiving assistance from the Asian Development Bank and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to provide advice on improving the services and efficiency of the Company, and how and where to access much needed development assistance.

The residual from the rehabilitation works includes huge stockpiles of limestone rock boulders of various sizes and shapes. These boulders are available for construction projects such as coastal protection works and for crushing into aggregates. Nauru is able to meet its own demand for these materials, and because there is abundant supply, they are also available for exports to neighbouring countries as well.

Like all nations, we rely on foreign trade and foreign imports to sustain our economy and our people. We trade mainly with Australia and we also trade with other countries in the Asia Pacific region. The new port when completed in 2019, is expected to boost trade and open new opportunities for exports in a much more efficient and safer environment.

Exports of Nauru's foremost commodity, phosphate, will be entering a second phase in terms of mining. The residual deposits in some areas are large enough to warrant feasibility studies and surveys to determine the viability of the industry. Drillings are being undertaken to ascertain these deeper deposits and secondary mining hopefully will commence in the 2018-2019 period, once all plans are in place.

The overall improvement in the governance of our society over the last few years has been reflected by great improvements in all our systems of government including law enforcement, the judiciary, financial

management, health and education, power and water supply, and so on. We owe it to our future generations to give as much as we can to ensure a sustainable future in a sustainable economy. Our on-going review of the National Sustainable Development Strategy will help to put us on target of what we aim to achieve for our children and their children.

The improvements in our capacity and our means to deliver services has enabled us to host regional conferences this year such as the USP Council Meeting, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, the Commissioner of Police Meeting, the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Union, and the Forum Meeting in September. We will also be hosting the Regional Powerlifting Competition towards the end of this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, before I conclude, I would like to acknowledge and thank most sincerely to those countries and their representatives present today. You have come far to be with us on our most special day. Your presence graced us significantly and we are so deeply humbled and honoured. To the entertainers of various nationalities that are here today, I also thank you most sincerely for honouring us with your presence on Nauru.

Looking back at the last 50 years, I would like to acknowledge those who came to Nauru to help us develop our country.

In particular, I would like to express a very big gratitude to our brothers and sisters from Kiribati and Tuvalu who have been here in large numbers since the early days of the phosphate industry. They have lived among us for generations and many have become naturalised Nauruan citizens. Many intermarried with our people and become Nauruan citizens themselves. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your contribution to the development of Nauru.

To our good and hard working friends the Chinese, your presence on Nauru dated back to the beginning of the phosphate industry. You have been with us the longest and I admire your will-power to stay, establish commerce and prosper. You have provided many services to the Nauruan people and I thank you for the development that you have brought to Nauru.

To all the other communities on Nauru - the Filipinos, the Fijians, the Indians, the Solomon Islanders, and the various other nationalities, I thank you for your contribution towards the development of Nauru. You are a hard working people who have contributed to the diversity of Nauru and brought new skills and new ideas to the people. You have also intermarried with our people and we welcomed you into our families. To the other Pacific islanders that were involved with the early mining of phosphate in Nauru, especially to the Caroline Islanders (and Banabans), the interaction of our peoples left behind a strong bond and kinship of our peoples to this day.

To the Australians and New Zealanders - you have engaged with the Nauruans at all levels of society since the beginning of phosphate mining, to the days of independence and well after, to today. Your impact on Nauru was felt the greatest due to the skills and leadership many of your people provided. I thank you also for your role in the development of Nauru.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the refugees who have been living with us in our communities for the last 5 years. You came from your lands seeking a better way of life. You are a transient people and over the years, we have become close friends, like brothers and sisters. As long as you and your families live among our people, you will also be welcomed on Nauru.

Before I close my statement, I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by the various Governments and institutions around the Asia-Pacific and the world. I would like to thank the Governments of Australia, Republic of China (Taiwan), Japan, New Zealand, the

European Union, India, South Korea, Italy, the United States, Israel, Russia, Cuba, Singapore, Fiji, and most recently Indonesia, for your support towards sustainable development and capacity building on Nauru. I also thank the regional institutions especially the Forum Secretariat, the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, the Forum Fisheries Agency, the Parties to the Nauru Agreement, SPREP, The University of the South Pacific, and the various UN agencies such as UNDP, FAO and WHO who have provided advice, support and capacity building to Nauru. Also to the Asian Development Bank who has provided a huge number of assistance programmes to Nauru in recent times, thank you also. Without your help and support, life would have been much more difficult for us.

I wish to thank and acknowledge the people who made today's event and all the programme throughout the week a success. I thank the various Government state owned enterprises such as RONPHOS, Nauru Rehabilitation Corporation, Eigigu Holdings, Nauru Air Corporation, Nauru Utilities Corporation, Nauru Fisheries & Marine Resources Authority, and Port Authority of Nauru for contributing equipment, man power and materials. To the various Government Departments who avail their resources and workforce, thank you very much. To the protocol officers, liaison officers, the tradesmen, cleaners, police drivers and all police officers, security officers, the media, and the private sector, ma tubwa kor. To all the volunteers, a special acknowledgement and thanks to you.

To the various independence day organising committees thank you so much for your untiring work and effort. Lastly, to my Cabinet colleagues who have supported the preparation for these events, and to all our families who gave us their unwavering support, a big thank you and tubwa kor.

To the people of Nauru, may God bless you all and may He bring you happiness, good health and prosperity.

Ma Tubwa kor, thank you and a happy 50th Independence Day.