



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL

STATEMENT ON THE DECLARATION OF THE STATE OF PUBLIC EMERGENCY

My Fellow Solomon Islanders,

As you have heard, His Excellency the Governor-General Sir David Vunagi, has now declared that State of Public Emergency now exist in Solomon Islands.

I believe His Excellency, the Governor-General has already outlined important background information and I will not repeat them.

However, I would like to take this opportunity to provide a clarification on what State of Public Emergency is and what it entails.

A state of emergency is a situation in which a government is empowered to perform actions or impose policies that it would normally not be permitted to undertake. A government can declare such a state during a natural disaster, medical pandemic/epidemic, civil unrest, or armed conflict.

Such declarations are designed to alert citizens to change their normal behavior and orders government agencies to implement emergency plans.

A State of Public Emergency

What does a State of Public Emergency mean in our context.

Under our Constitution, a State of Public Emergency is a declaration made by His Excellency, the Governor-General pursuant to Section 16(2) of the Constitution.

The declaration under the Constitution invokes the Emergency Powers Act [cap 11], which provides that the Governor-General may make regulations as appear to him to be reasonably justifiable for the purpose of dealing with the situation that exists in Solomon Islands.

The Regulations will empower the Prime Minister to make Orders that are necessary for the Government to perform certain actions during the Emergency Period. The

Regulations will be signed and gazette as soon as the necessary legal clearances has been made.

The emergency period in a State of Public Emergency is governed by the Constitution in particular, sections 16(3) and (5) of the Constitution.

Since, Parliament has been adjourned; Parliament must be convened not later than two weeks after the day on which the declaration is made, which is today. So, the Governor-General having made the declaration today, 25th March, 2020, Parliament must be called before 8th April, 2020.

The Constitution further provides that upon the approval of Parliament by resolution, the Emergency Period shall continue for a period of 4 months from the date of the Declaration.

As such you may have heard during last week's motion to adjourn Parliament, the Speaker will call Parliament so that it can pass a resolution to extend the period of public emergency as provided for under section 16 (5) of the Constitution. If the situation persists after the expiration of the 4 months, we will have to start the process again.

I wish to clarify that the Declaration does not mean a Lock down as is currently circulating in Social Media. A lockdown is a measure that is available under emergency powers. At the moment, the Government is considering all measures and will be implementing

certain measures as when necessary by Order made under the Emergency Powers Regulations.

I urge the public to listen to the Government for your source of correct and verified information. Do not listen to rumours. Make sure your source of information comes from the Solomon Islands Government.

I also urge and reiterate the Governor-General's call for us to remain calm and not to panic.

Further, I would also like to reiterate that there is no confirmed case in Solomon Islands and that this declaration is in no way associated with any confirmed case of COVID19. As we speak, Solomon Islands continues to be COVID19 free.

God Bless Solomon Islands from shore to shore.

Thank you.



John Muria (Jnr)
ATTORNEY-GENERAL
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