PRIME MINISTER HON JEREMIAH MANELE, MP

KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE

AUSTRALIA - SOLOMON ISLANDS BUSINESS FORUM

Tuesday 18, November 2025

SALUTATION;

Hon Milton Dick MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives;

His Excellency, Rod Hilton, the High Commissioner of Australia to Solomon Islands;

Solomon Islands Cabinet Ministers;

Distinguished participants from Australia and Solomon Islands;

Leaders from the private sector;

Ladies and gentlemen.

A very good morning to you all!

I bring warm greetings on behalf of the people and Government of the Solomon Islands — and it is my honour, as Prime Minister, to address this 14th Australia–Solomon Islands Business Forum.

At the outset, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land we are gathered on and pay my respects to their leaders' (past, present and future).

I also acknowledge with deep appreciation the Government of Australia and the organisers of this forum for the excellent facilitations for my participation and that of my ministers, members of parliament and senior government officials.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Forum brings together two great partners: Australia and the Solomon Islands. It gives us an invaluable platform to discuss business, trade, investment, and development. We meet at a moment of opportunity. The global economy is shifting, new markets are opening, and in our region, we face both challenges and tremendous opportunities especially for trade and business between our two countries.

At home, our government — the Government for National Unity and Transformation (GNUT) — has set a clear roadmap grounded in four foundational pillars: **Economic Transformation**, **Infrastructure Development**, **Unity and Stability**, and **Human Capital Development**. We are committed to revitalising our economy, strengthening connectivity, ensuring peace and unity across our islands, and investing in our people

Message to the Private Sector

To our friends from the private sector — both local and Australian — I say this: you are central to unlocking our development agenda. We recognise that Government cannot achieve its transformation agenda alone. It is through partnerships with businesses that we will create jobs, build firms, and generate prosperity.

I encourage you to engage actively with government ministries and agencies. Let us break down silos. Let us build dialogues and this forum is one such opportunity for dialogue. Let us co-design projects and programmes that deliver real outcomes. Let us match the Government's four pillars with your entrepreneurial ambitions. When you invest, when you launch new ventures, when you scale up operations — you contribute to **Economic Transformation**. When you help build new facilities, when you partner in infrastructure, when you bring innovation — you contribute to **Infrastructure Development**. When you employ a diverse workforce, champion inclusive business practices, and affirm our national values — you advance **Unity and Stability**. And when you invest in training, apprenticeships, mentoring, education linkages — you strengthen our **Human Capital Development**.

The Government recognises the private sector as a key driver of growth. I strongly hold the conviction that the private sector is the "engine room" of the economy. Let your innovation be matched by government support and I commit to it; let your ambitions align with national priorities; let this Forum be the springboard for new partnerships and collaborations.

Commitment and Invitation

Our government is committed to creating an enabling environment. You may have noted in 2024, once we settled in, we held a national economic summit with huge private sector participation. At its core was the formulation of a strategic economic roadmap for a shared vision for sustainable and inclusive growth.

The roadmap is now guiding our development priorities, resource allocation, and policy direction, with a focus on infrastructure investment, industry development, and the productive and resource sectors. It informed the 2025 budget and it also underpins the 2026 budget, where development budget estimates for productive and resource sectors account for 75% of the total development budget estimate (SDB$1.421 billion). My point being, we are listening and taking action on what the private sector is saying to us.

In this connection, we will continue to pursue strategic reforms to regulatory frameworks, we will enhance infrastructure, we will facilitate ease of doing business, and we will ensure that the governance and stability underpinning investments remain strong. And already, we have enacted the Special Economic Zone and the National Building Code laws. There are several other key legislations to support the private sector that are in the pipeline for 2026 including the Value Added Tax bill and amendment of the Electricity Act.

Today I invite you to look for concrete opportunities. Talk to ministers, officials and colleagues from the respective private sector. Let us identify priority sectors where investments yield shared benefits. Let us forge joint ventures, public-private partnerships, and business linkages. Let us not merely talk about development — let us deliver it together.

Acknowledgement of SICCI

At this juncture, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI) for their genuine partnership and enduring commitment to the development of our beloved nation, the Solomon Islands. Your role in convening business, championing private enterprise, and advising the government is vital. Your willingness to collaborate, to bring the voice of business into policy discussions, and to lift standards of corporate practice is appreciated.

Thank you, SICCI, for standing with us as we drive forward the agenda of growth, inclusion and transformation.

Closing Remarks

In closing, let me reiterate the promise and opportunities that lie before us. With your support — government, business, and development partners — we will chart a path of progress and build a nation that reflects the hopes of our people.

To our Australian friends, to our local business community, to all stakeholders, let us seize this opportunity. Let us ensure that the outcomes of this Forum — the ideas, the partnerships, the investments — translate into enduring jobs, thriving industries, resilient communities and a brighter future for Solomon Islanders.

Thank you for your presence, your commitment and your belief in the potential of our two countries' business partnerships. I wish you a very productive Forum and look forward to the collaborations and new business ventures that will emerge from this forum.

Umi Tugeda, Tagio Tumas!