



NATIONAL ADDRESS

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY LIONEL ROUWEN AINGIMEA MP  
PRESIDENT**

ON THE OCCASION OF THE

76<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE RETURN FROM CHUUK

54<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF NAURU'S INDEPENDENCE

**31 JANUARY 2022**

Honorable Marcus Stephen MP - Speaker of Parliament

Honorable Ministers

Honorable Members of Parliament

His Excellency Mr Dean Wang - Ambassador of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the Republic of Nauru

Her Excellency Ms Helen Cheney - High Commissioner of Australia to the Republic of Nauru

Mr Sean Oppenheimer - Honorary Consul of the State of Israel to the Republic of Nauru

Ms Peta Gadabu - Acting Chief Secretary

Members of the Clergy

Young at Hearts (National Treasures)

Distinguished Guests

Fellow Nauruans

Ekamawir omo ea kamie memak

I am honoured to address the nation on this auspicious occasion of Nauru's 54<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Nauruan survivors' return from Chuuk. A day of mixed emotions - melancholic and jubilant.

In December 1967, in his then role as Head Chief of Nauru, Sir Hammer DeRoburt addressed the United Nations' General Assembly advocating for Nauru's Independence, underscoring the sacrifices and the survival of the Nauruan race, nearly wiped out from the ravages of disease and war. He stressed that "those experiences had intensified the Nauruan's consciousness of their identity as a separate people and had increased their determination to be free and independent"<sup>1</sup>.

Today therefore is a day for all Nauruans - young and old - to reflect and reminisce. We commemorate the 76<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our compatriots' return from Chuuk and concomitantly conclude the seventy fifth chapter in Nauru's solemn history. We acknowledge and pay tribute to our family and friends impacted by World War II, those whom are still with us and those departed before us. We salute their strength, tenacity, and perseverance by honoring their memory as we celebrate our day of Independence.

As we venture into the new year, we must continue to be guided by the principles and ideologies of our forefathers who fought hard for Nauru's sovereignty and independence, who were "willing to suffer some inconveniences in order to retain and preserve our national and racial identity and entity"<sup>2</sup>. There is no doubt that the hardships experienced by our ancestors and sacrifices of past generations have been instrumental in molding modern Nauru and we its people, with resilience and resolution.

---

<sup>1</sup> Fourth Committee, 1739<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Wednesday, 6 December 1967, at 11:20am  
United Nations General Assembly Twenty-Second Session *Official Records*

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Visiting Mission to the Trust Territories of Nauru and New Guinea, 1965  
Report on Nauru  
Together with the Relevant Resolution of the Trusteeship Council  
Trustee Council Official Records: Thirty-Second Session (28 May - 30 June 1965)  
Supplement No.2  
United Nations

Today we embark on our fifty-fourth year of Independence in circumstances overwrought with challenges. Our island nation, although isolated and secluded, is part of the global economy and therefore vulnerable to global impacts. Our values and principles susceptible to influences of modern society, alien to our customs and traditions. By working together, we can address these challenges to minimise any detrimental impacts and ensure that our convictions and our way of life as we know it, not be compromised nor conceded.

### **COVID-19**

By God's grace, Nauru remains COVID free today. We are still in a state of disaster, one declared in March 2020 and extended as necessary, in assessment of the global pandemic situation.

Whilst Nauru has vaccinated ninety-seven percent of the eligible adult population, 18 years and older, this represents only 60 per cent of the total population. Forty percent of our population remain at risk. If coronavirus infiltrates Nauru at this time, our health services will be overwhelmed with uncertainty on the number of people dying.

There are however means available to minimize the risk to our population. Rolling out vaccines for those aged between 12 to 17 will result in a national coverage of above eighty per cent. We are hopeful that by the end of March 2022, the Nauru population will have effective immunity and protection.

For all of us, the past two years seem to have protracted into one very long year. A year spent in limbo, with no end in sight. It has been exhausting and tiresome, even more so for our courageous front-line workers who are constantly on alert and vigilant in their duties. While we have isolated our island using the vast ocean and air as barriers to the virus, our shipping and air services have continued to operate, ensuring that our food stocks and supplies are adequately met.

This year, most countries have declared their intention to open their borders and resume international travel, necessitating your government to reassess its current COVID-19 strategy of capture and contain. We as a nation, must be realistic in

addressing the inevitability of the virus in Nauru and establish strategies to ensure that our island, our people, are prepared and history is not repeated. I strongly believe that awareness and sharing of accurate information will fortify and safeguard our island, our communities.

To all Nauruan citizens abroad, we pray for your continued health and safety during this unprecedented health crisis. We look forward to a time when we can unite families and friends without fear nor apprehension.

On behalf of the government, I take this opportunity to reiterate heartfelt thanks to all our frontline workers the health department, the taskforce, Nauru Police Force, Nauru Airlines and its crew, Nauru Ports Authority, and all others whom I may have missed, for their tireless efforts in maintaining the safety and security of Nauru and its population.

I also take this opportunity to thank our development partners who have, and continue to, offer crucial and vital assistance and support towards our efforts in keeping Nauru COVID-19 free.

## **PUBLIC SERVICE**

Public service plays an important role in state building by creating a tangible link between government and its citizens, and public servants the lifeblood of our democracy.

In addressing absenteeism, attitude, work culture and advance performance, the Chief Secretary Department introduced the use of Biometric Clocks in 2021 rolling out implementation across all government departments. The outcome of this initiative is to improve service delivery for the public at large through better attendance at work. Further to this initiative had been the work towards making sure that the wage for public employees reflects the “real time” as produced by the Biometric Clocks.

The department’s Human Resources Division recently completed the final phase of the exercise, registering all employees on the Biometric Clocks. Implementation and

success of the clocks will require on going coordination with all Departments and will continue in the ensuing months with Human Resource taking the lead.

To address capacity gaps exacerbated by COVID-19 and border restrictions, the Human Resources Division spearheaded the facilitation of urgent staff recruitment on behalf of the Department of Health and Education to ensure that both Departments can effectively deliver their mandated services to the Republic. The division is working against a tight deadline to not only ensure the urgent recruitment of health and education employees, but proper checks and balances are conducted to protect our population at large.

Over the past twelve months, Human Resources initiated leadership training virtually to ensure continuation of capacity building for senior officers of key Government Departments. The training concluded on the 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2021 and certification presentation issued remotely. Given the challenges posed by Covid-19, adapting modality for capacity building is a favorable option amidst all the travel restrictions.

The basis of good governance in any country is financial transactions with accountability and transparency. Over the past year, the Department of Audit examined the government's annual financials 2018-19 and issued guidelines for transparency and highlighting shortcomings. The department also examined accounts of some State Owned Enterprises for transparency purposes as well as providing advice to rectify deficiencies. The Treasury and the Audit Departments will update the accounts for the remaining years including their audit and subsequent submission to Parliament. The Department of Audit's efforts have superseded the past years and remains committed to effecting more success in the coming years.

## **EDUCATION**

School attendance rate during 2021 continues to increase, an achievement of 17% compounded over the past two years. Strengthened collaboration with other sectors has supported the Department of Education and Training (DET) operations and objectives and, has been instrumental in improving attendance rates. With these numbers, the department is on track to achieve its Key Performance Indicators.

The department has proactively reviewed its teacher terms and conditions to further attract and retain teachers. Professional development opportunities were doubled for teachers at entry training of early childhood education. Development of teachers will continue until Key Performance Indicators are met. Additionally, the department has initiated the upskilling of office staff.

Internet connectivity for all schools is up to 80% and extra classrooms added where needed to achieve the desired teacher: student ratio and to promote a safe and conducive environment.

Going forward, the department is in the planning and preparation stages of its new five-year strategic plan. Future initiatives include exploring alternate modalities for flexible and online teaching delivery in a COVID-19 situation, and early years of learning in collaboration with donors and regional partners. This new initiative allows for the Department to focus on the foundation years crucial to subsequent learning. The department remains committed to targeted intervention and support for students in Literacy and Numeracy.

## **HEALTH**

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services has endured another year mitigating the pandemic and undertaking its primary role as the major provider of health services. Ongoing efforts with partners have seen the completion of several infrastructure and systems improvement projects, creating an environment that is suited to containing and managing the virus should it hit our shores. Workforce strengthening, facility upgrades and the stock up of essential resources remains the priority of the Ministry, to adequately address the health needs of our population. A good health outcome can be achieved and maintained if we make the right choices in life.

## **SOCIAL SECTOR**

Since its establishment in 2020, the Department of People Living with Disabilities has continued to make strides in their work. The department, in collaboration with the communities, health, social welfare and the private sector is in the process of

developing national policies and legislation to ensure that government meets its obligations as a member of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with disability. The government is committed through the department, to remove barriers to enable persons with disabilities to participate fully in public and civil life as well as the wider society. Acknowledging and embracing the contributions of people with disability to our island nation bodes an inclusive society, an equitable society where no-one is marginalised nor left without the ability to contribute to society.

Last year, the Directorate of Civil Aviation managed to complete the preliminary scoping work for the Airport Runway Resurfacing Project and is now in preparation to procure services from international contractors to assess the scoping analysis and preliminary logistical needs. However, the circumstance of the pandemic makes it difficult to put a definite timeline as to when actual implementation will commence. Nauru remains grateful for the support provided under the *Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific*.

Throughout 2021, the services rendered by Land Transport focused primarily on providing efficient and improved coordination for school bus routes. Personnel and vehicle assets formerly managed by the Education Department have since been absorbed by the Land Transport division thereby significantly increasing the capacity of its existing fleet. This year, Land Transport will be reintroducing after hours bus services for the public, an initiative to encourage the use of public transportation to minimize and improve traffic congestion.

The Vehicle Registration and Insurance Division (VRID) of the Transport Department will be targeting several areas of focus this year including robust measures to ensure that imported vehicles are road worthy and meets recent vehicle standards, improved policy changes to ensure that imported vehicles are equipped with up-to-date safety features with minimal impact on the environment. A consultative approach with relevant sectors will also be undertaken to address the issue of removing derelict vehicles and have the waste exported out of Nauru. A feasibility study on establishing a Land Transport Authority is also targeted for progress this year.

Nauru's National Emergency Services has been steadily growing in manpower building its staffs capacity and specialized skills focusing on ITech technology and emergency communication. NES is in the final phase of introducing and establishing an emergency communication system which will improve the efficiency of emergency communication infrastructure system amongst the Rescue & Fire Services, Ambulance & Emergency Services, Hospital Emergency Room, Disaster Risk Management the Nauru Police Force and other frontline agencies. In collaboration with the World Food Program, NES is building the capacity of its staff in Emergency Preparedness & Response.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENT**

It cannot be said enough, climate change represents the single greatest threat to our livelihood, security, and well-being. The outcome of COP26 was disappointing, further highlighting the discrepancies of large and small nations and disregarding our plight in the face of sea level rise and future displacement.

Notwithstanding the global outcome, Nauru continues to uphold its national obligations and has updated its Nationally Determined Contribution setting a renewable energy generation target of 50% with further commitments to pursue energy savings across the economy. Your government has also taken bold steps to transform Nauru's energy system, to guarantee affordable energy, clean water and sanitation, basic healthcare, a good education, and safe, affordable housing<sup>3</sup>. Government has endorsed an ambitious national energy compact which includes action in areas such as grid stability, assessment of wind generation, energy efficiency measures and electrifying transport.

Addressing our climate vulnerability is undertaken by the Department of Climate Change and National Resilience. The department's involvement in several national committees including the Higher Ground Initiative ensures that key cross-cutting climate change issues are always at the forefront of discussions. This includes coordination and alignment of the ADB funded Sustainable Urban Development Project. Empowering Nauru's young professionals and building capacity to negotiate internationally at climate change meetings continues to be a priority and the

---

<sup>3</sup> High Level Statement \_ Nauru COP26



department has initiated an internship program at Nauru's Permanent Mission to the United Nation in New York for such purposes.

The degradation of our environment from the impacts of climate change has compelled the government to establish a legislative framework to better protect our natural resources and manage our environment and waste. Government has enacted the Environmental Management and Climate Change Act inclusive of subsidiary regulations banning single use plastic bags, addressing pollution and impacts of major infrastructure developments. This legislation and its regulations underscores the political will of your government in convergence of the Nauruan people's desire for a nation that is resilient and sustainable for our future generations. The commitment of a GEF7 \$3.5m project for ecosystem restoration and sustainable land management to improve livelihoods and protect biodiversity in Nauru complements this aspiration.

## **FOOD SECURITY**

Equally important are government's actions to build resilience in the areas of food and water security and public health in the course of mitigating and adapting to the global health crises and climate change.

The devastating impacts of COVID-19 on the world's economies has exposed the fragility of the global supply chain and these challenges have been particularly magnified in Nauru due to our reliance on imports. Government remains committed to restructure its agriculture sector to increase domestic food production for food security and improved nutrition. The Department of Commerce, Industry and Environment has secured land to establish a new staple food farm in Meneñ. Reconfiguration of Nauru's food systems will further be addressed through the implementation of a National Agriculture Strategy that will serve as the central pillar for systemic reform of the food sector. Nauru participated in the United Nations Food Systems Summit and a number of national dialogues were conducted reaching a consensus to launch bold new solutions to transform food systems by 2030. Achieving these transformational pathways require that no one, no country is left behind, and realizing these goals will require international financial and technical support.

During the past year, the department of Climate Change and National Resilience facilitated the installation of 80 water tanks, and anticipate a further 70 water tanks to be distributed this year. This national initiative is in addition to a project funding of a further 98 water tanks by the end of this year.

## **ECONOMY**

Nauru is one of few economies to perform well amid the COVID pandemic and downturn in global economic performance. Whilst other Pacific countries in the region have experienced a sharp rise in debt levels, Nauru has managed to keep a positive fiscal balance, reflecting governments' continuous improvement in public financial management and our strong partnership with donors. The IMF projects positive economic growth with nominal GDP at \$184.5 million for the FY 2022-2023.

The Intergenerational Trust Fund for the People of the Republic of Nauru (NTF) continues its strong performance, with returns above targets and a value currently above \$ 240 million. The Nauru Superannuation Scheme's continued growth gives Nauruan control over their future retirement funding, with an overall fund value of over \$ 10 million.

Government will continue strengthening Nauru's Financial sector, particularly in areas of Financial Debt Management, Revenue Collection, Social Protection Strategy and State-Owned Entity Governance. Furthermore, Finance has undertaken the long process of consulting Nauru's key sectoral experts and stakeholders and established the NSDS Key Performance Indicators and Monitoring Framework, enabling a more robust planning and monitoring system. The 2021 census will also provide crucial data for planning, budgeting and tracking performance against metrics such as the Sustainable Development Goals.

With the recent easing of international borders, national processes and mechanisms must be initiated to ensure that Nauru capitalises on the “bounce back” from the

pandemic. Recovery from COVID-19 and achieving sustainable and resilient development is a major undertaking for a small country like Nauru with limited resources. Recovery efforts requires strengthening the quality and delivery of health, education, and social protection systems, improving land and marine infrastructure and connectivity within the region, and closing the digital divide through significant investment in ICT.

The Government has implemented a budget based on building national resilience – to effectively respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and uncertainties of the future of the Regional Processing Centre as well resourcing programs that build on our resilience against the adverse impacts of climate change. The Government has continuously made significant investments towards critical transport infrastructure, which will bolster economic growth and provide a better quality of life for all Nauruans.

Employment and sustainable income-generating activities extant a priority for government. Increased labour mobility and access to employment opportunities in higher income economies like Australia and New Zealand represents an opportunity to improve living standards and productivity of the Nauruan population. The labour mobility unit under the Department of Foreign Affairs has been tasked to formalize and develop a labour mobility policy and strategy to provide leadership, coordinate stakeholders and act as the regulatory body for labour mobility schemes. The unit is proactively exploring labour mobility access beyond Australia and New Zealand and has been working tirelessly with the Nauru communities to identify workers as well as prepare these workers for eventual employment overseas.

Since its opening back in 2020, Nauru Tourism has worked in collaboration with local and international companies to achieve a specific goal, Sustainable Eco-Tourism. Some of the smaller projects already undertaken include local touring, mini tours with infant schools, supporting local craftsmen, getting involved with the community, and working with landowners through a survey to create a sustainable tour package.

The “pick it up and bin it” project is an ongoing strategy that was introduced to encourage locals to keep our nation clean while promoting its beauty. Nauru Tourism teamed up with Fisheries and Eigigu and conducted a bigger campaign to bring more awareness around the subject. Nauru Tourism also worked with South Pacific Tourism Organisation for their plastic recycling workshop, leaving locals with a trait that can turn trash into treasure which can come in handy for small businesses once borders re-open.

Moving forward, Nauru Tourism plans on working with more people and more departments in the development and regulating of tour sites and tour packages and is also looking to host a yearly multicultural event on world tourism day that allows everyone, locals, and visitors to showcase culinary skills, traditions, and handicrafts in its continual efforts to promote Nauru as a pleasant surprise.

Your government is committed to diversifying our economic base, which will necessitate strengthening our trade, tourism, and investment links, including potential trading arrangements and support for regional and sub-regional trade and investment mechanisms. Government’s Guiding Vision 2020 - Desperate Imagination continues to serve as the principal policy for economic diversification and attracting direct foreign investment. While COVID-19 has delayed the process, rest assured that the government remains focused on achieving its commitment.

## NORI

Last year, your government requested the International Seabed Authority complete the adoption of a holistic regulatory framework to advance the responsible sourcing of seafloor polymetallic nodules and for the protection of the marine environment. Recovering polymetallic nodules, found on the ocean floor, offers an abundant, low-cost supply of critical raw materials for EV batteries with a less impact than conventional mining – helping to lower the impact of climate change.

Nauru has always relied on the ocean for resources and we are strongly committed to the stewardship of these waters and protecting our shores from sea level rise. We now have the opportunity to play a part in fighting climate change and protecting our oceans

and lands while assisting with our future economic viability by responsibly participating in the new deep-sea minerals industry. Collecting minerals from the seafloor presents an exciting opportunity to diversify and pursue a self-determined development path.

## **FOREIGN RELATIONS**

Pre-independence, our forefathers resolved that Nauru's role in the affairs of the world would be very limited because of the narrow range of interests and existing capabilities at that time, foretelling that "the voice of Nauru would not be heard on many of the great issues of world politics"<sup>4</sup>. Those sentiments served the time of the day; today however, Nauru has on occasion raised its voice on many issues which impact detrimentally on our lives, our livelihood, and our future as a sovereign and independent nation.

No nation can operate in isolation. Accelerating Nauru's engagement internationally, regionally, and sub-regionally provides government an opportunity to achieve national sustainability and prosperity.

Nauru is represented across the globe by its offices in New York, Republic of China (Taiwan), Geneva, Suva, Canberra and New Delhi and through its Consulate General Offices in Brisbane and Thailand; and Honorary Consulate representation in the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

At the multilateral level, our offices in New York and Geneva are actively engaged to ensure that the Nauruan context is not discounted nor disregarded on pertinent issues, and which may impact negatively on our island. Keeping abreast of the numerous challenges including the global health crises, climate change, international terrorism, and other significant and unrelenting global issues remains an important function of Nauru's foreign affairs engagement. That is why, despite our limited capacity, Nauru continues to champion strong multilateral systems that leave no country behind as we are often the first to bear the brunt of the impact when multilateralism falters.

---

<sup>4</sup> Fourth Committee, 1739<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Wednesday, 6 December 1967, at 11:20am  
United Nations General Assembly Twenty-Second Session *Official Records*

The saturation of Nauru's representation within the Asia Pacific/Indo-Pacific region is attributed to the continuous economic transformation of the region which is reshaping the global distribution of power and changing the way the world trades and engages. It is within this dynamic environment that Nauru's offices must capitalise the advantage of being strategically situated in an innovative, transformative, and developing region to amplify and broaden engagement with partners to reap maximum benefits for our island.

Within our own Pacific region, Nauru's position, and responsibility as current Chair of the Micronesian President's Summit (MPS) offers an opportunity to be directly involved in shaping the region and sub-region. I truly believe that Micronesia is leading a Pacific renaissance through finding pathways that are designed to be transformative by rejecting orthodox hegemonic worldviews. We, as part of Micronesia, are at the cusp of a new dawn where our voices are calling for critical dialogue rather than passive acquiescence. Concurrently, Nauru will continue to strengthen and enhance its relationships with our neighbors in the Pacific to address common issues and mutual concerns as relates to the peace and security of the region.

## **STATE-OWNED ENTERPRISES**

Before concluding, it would be remiss not to mention the work of our state-owned enterprises and acknowledge their contribution to Nauru's national development.

In the past year Nauru Post has succeeded in achieving its plans to become the pre-eminent supplier of logistics services to our nation. The newly created division Nauru Post Logistics Services which incorporates frigate freight, offers full logistical services via air and sea into Nauru for the people, businesses, and government. Internationally, Nauru attended the 27<sup>th</sup> UPU World Postal Congress remotely and, working with our partners, was successful in securing a reserved seat for the Pacific Island nations on each of the UPU's organs - postal strategies, policies and operations, the Council of Administration, and the Postal Operations Council. This is the first time ever for the Pacific to be accorded a seat on these organs. Initiated by Nauru, these seats will be available in 2025.

Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust continues to progress its liquidation plans with its remaining investments in the U.S. and the Philippines. Last year, NPRT successfully negotiated and resolved legal matters in Australia ongoing since 2014, bringing it to closure. Your government increased funding for the RONWAN Capital Redistribution Payout last year in 2021, distributing 10% of the remaining RONWAN capital with a total funding provision of \$12 million. Since entering office, your government have now paid out just over 50% of the total RONWAN capital debt in 2019, from a starting balance of around \$35.2 million down to \$17.4 million today. Rest assured that government remains committed to completing the full redistribution of Ronwan Capital to all beneficiaries in the immediate future.

Your government acknowledges the importance of connectivity and transportation, shipping and air services including movement of goods through air freighters, as a conduit to successfully trade and harness economic benefits. Last year, Nauru Shipping Line took delivery and ownership of the vessel MV Micronesia Pride on behalf of the Government. Having our own vessel assures stability to Nauru's cargo operations and has ensured sea freight prices established in early 2020 have been maintained up to January 2022 despite world sea freight rates increasing by almost 300%. Unfortunately, the pandemic has impacted on ocean logistics around the world causing delays to the movement of cargo. NSL is working constantly to remove these service bottlenecks and is looking forward to expanding its services during 2022.

The Nauru Maritime and Port Authority (NMPA) has been steadily progressing with the construction of the new port and despite the many challenges posed by the pandemic, plans to open the wharf for limited cargo operations in late April this year. The access to the new berth by the MV Micronesia Pride will be a significant step forward in efficiency for both the Port Authority and Nauru Shipping Line. The wharf will improve NSL operations by circumventing weather delays traditionally experienced during the November to March period. It is anticipated that progressive operationalization of additional new wharf facilities will be undertaken during 2022.

The Port Authority also took delivery of a new harbour tug in November 2021 - the E-KOUUEDO affords the Port Authority an independent operation, reducing reliance on tug services from outside Nauru.

Eigigu Procurement as the authorised provider of goods to Nauru's state-owned enterprises, government departments and private companies has established a viable and transparent system for the procurement of goods. At the onset of the pandemic, Eigigu Procurement mobilized resources to source medical equipment to safeguard our country. Eigigu Procurement is committed to provide value-for-money products while maintaining a strong financial position helps the Nauru government to maintain sustainable government services.

## **CONCLUSION**

My fellow Nauruans, as President, your government and I are duty-bound to navigate and guide our island nations towards a path of resilience and sustainability for future generations. This mandate has been made more challenging by the onset of COVID-19, an indiscriminate virus that has destabilized countries around the globe.

The road ahead of us will not be easy and the myriad of challenges continue to be complex, however we as a nation have exhibited fortitude and resilience in the past when faced with adversity. The journey towards prosperity, peace, and security can only be achieved in unity and through solidarity and your government remain committed in advancing our island nation towards that paradigm.

May God continue to guide and Bless the Republic of Nauru and all its people.

God's Will First