



**NATIONAL ADDRESS**

**BY**

**HIS EXCELLENCY HON. RUSS JOSEPH KUN, M.P  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAURU**

**ON THE OCCASION OF  
NAURU'S 55<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF INDEPENDENCE AND  
77<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE PEOPLE'S RETURN FROM CHUUK**

**TUESDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2023**

Honourable Lionel Aingimea MP – Deputy Speaker of Parliament

His Honour Acting Chief Justice Mohammed Khan

Honourable Ministers and Deputy Ministers

Honourable Members of Parliament

Distinguished Excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps (Australia, Taiwan, Israel, Ireland,  
Switzerland, Netherlands, and Germany)

Acting Chief Secretary Ipia Gadabu

Members of the Clergy

Nauru's Young at Hearts

Ladies and Gentlemen

Deinaoero memak,

Ekamawir Omo.

Today, we gather to celebrate Nauru's 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence and at the same time commemorate the 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our peoples return from Chuuk. Even as Nauru celebrates, our hearts lament in remembrance of our ancestors, uprooted from

their homes to live in a country not their own. Their stories passed down through generations, forever embedded in Nauru's history are a part of our essence as a nation. Their courage, patriotism, tenacity, and unwavering faith in God are an inspiration. We acknowledge and rejoice with those here with us today, who returned from Chuuk 77 years ago.

I also take this opportunity to acknowledge and pay tribute to Sir Hammer DeRoburt - Nauru's founding father who is eternally memorialised in our country's history. This year marks his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. I am privileged to have the opportunity to uphold his vision and ensure that Nauru remains "free and independent".

### **COVID-19**

As of 10 July 2020, a total of 24,143 vaccine doses have been administered. From January 2020 to the present, there have been 4,621 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 1 death.

On behalf of the government and on my personal behalf, I wish to thank all the frontliners for your dedication and efforts. Moreover, I thank all our development partners for their continued assistance and support.

## **SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY SECTOR**

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 will require government to further strengthen the quality and delivery of health, education, and social protection systems.

### **Education and Training**

The Department of Education and Training have taken the necessary steps to meet its goal of improving the quality and broadening the scope and reach of education. In July 2022 when COVID-19 was detected in Nauru's community compelling a national lockdown, the Department successfully deployed the COVID-19 learning package, ensuring that children were not disadvantaged.

Notable undertakings of the department in achieving its goals include Nauru TVET negotiations on an enhanced agreement with TAFE Queensland to improve program delivery efficiency; proactively increased teacher certification and training; and Nauru Secondary School's top students' attainment of Australian Tertiary Admission Rankings of up to 14 percentile.

Going forward, the focus for the 2023 academic year is on learning recovery as well as enhanced and stronger literacy and numeracy across the system. The department remains committed to improving service delivery, focusing on early childhood education, and introducing new learning pathways for the secondary years. Future initiatives will also entail expanding the number of professionally trained teachers.

## **Health**

To meet its objective of a healthy and productive population, the Department of Health has reformed its Overseas Medical Referral scheme to align to the priorities of the Department and provide health services for all the people in Nauru. Initial activities undertaken by the department to achieve this priority includes the re-commencement of the Visiting Medical Specialists Teams program which enables maximum patient access to specialized services and complementing on-island services with telemedicine. Capacity building including on the job training for health officials with visiting medical specialists' teams will also support achieve the department's vision.

Additionally improving health service delivery remains a priority for the department. Renovated and operational theatres are ready to support the visiting medical teams. The departments transition from a manual data system to an electronic system, allows monitoring of people's health and the availability of data will also improve the Department's planning and targeting the delivery of services to communities, households, and individuals.

## **WASDA**

The Department of Women's and Social Development Affairs represents the historical and cultural significance society, irrespective of gender, places on women and children.

Activities undertaken by the department to meet its mandate include the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Nauru Police Force for training and continuous education, community, and district engagement on the rights of children and women including gender sensitization in communities and the completion of relevant policies.

Plans going forward include reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A major project to be undertaken by the department this year is the desk review of the Domestic Violence and Family Protection Act.

### **PWD**

The Department of People Living with Disabilities has registered 306 persons with disabilities. This year the Department for People Living with Disability will undertake modification of homes for persons living with disability to accommodate their special needs.

### **Sports**

The Department of Sports will host the Micronesian Games 2026. Plans are currently still at its preliminary stage with the department actively seeking assistance and support from partners.

## **ECONOMIC SECTOR**

Diversification of Nauru economy to limit its dependence on a current narrow range of products remains a key priority for the government. Plans for diversification are progressing with focus on trade, tourism, and investment.

### **Department of Finance**

Nauru's economy continues to perform well despite the highly uncertain global environment and volatile revenue streams.

A key achievement for the Government was to develop and implement a comprehensive set of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) that helps monitor progress of Nauru's National Sustainable Development (NSDS) goals. This will not only strengthen national reporting processes but ensure that Departments spending is realistic, value for money and linked to NSDS deliverables and outputs.

The Department of Finance will continue its work with partners to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation of State-Owned Enterprises with a dedicated unit to ensure that SOE's are compliant with the Public Enterprise Act, particularly in areas of financial reporting and best practices.

The past years have seen a focus on investments towards Nauru's critical infrastructure in Transport, ICT and Energy sectors. Although we have experienced challenges and setbacks in the delivery of some of these key projects such as Port redevelopment and the EMC Fibre Optic project, the Government will continue to prioritise availability of resources and support to ensure the timely completion of these critical projects.

The Nauru Trust Fund value as of 31 December 2022 was AUD\$267 million. With the generous assistance of our partners, Australia, Republic of China (Taiwan), New Zealand and ADB, the fund is achieving its investment objectives and will be able to provide ongoing and secure source of revenue for the people of Nauru by 2033.

## **Audit**

The primary objective of the Audit Department is to update the pending accounts of the Government and state-owned enterprises, streamlining accountability and transparency and shed light on the updated economic status of the republic. Last year, the Department audited the 2018-19 annual financials of the Government and submitted its report to the Parliament on 26/05/2022. It also audited the annual accounts of certain SOEs and NGOs. In all audits, the Auditors issued guidelines for transparency, pointing out shortcomings. Currently, the 2019-20 Annual Financials of the Government is under audit and expected to submit the Auditors' report to the Parliament within the next couple of months. Nauru's Treasury and the Audit

Department are continuing their efforts to update and audit the accounts for the remaining two years of the Government.

### **NPRT**

The Nauru Phosphate Royalties Trust continues to diligently progress its consolidation activities both internationally and locally. The consolidation process has been very long and onerous, for both NPRT and its beneficiaries. Nevertheless, internationally NPRT is moving closer to resolving some of its long-standing liquidation activities. While locally, NPRT's main liability of \$115 million in Ronwan capital debt has been reduced substantially. Since the last 5% payment to beneficiaries in September 2022, this debt now stands at \$11.6 million. Your government will continue to work closely with NPRT during its consolidation activities, and especially in planning further redistribution of the remaining RONWAN capital balance to all beneficiaries

### **NTC**

Since the opening of borders, Nauru's tourism sector has received several tourists from around the globe who have provided valuable insights and recommendations on improving service delivery.

The corporation has been actively pursuing potential international and regional partnerships and is developing more tour packages to accommodate the high number of visitors expected when Nauru hosts the Micronesia Games in 2026. Nauru Tourism has initiated plans to develop a process for Health and Safety-compliant accommodation for visitors.

To date, Nauru Tourism is working with the Immigration department to develop a process to expedite tourist visa applications without compromising existing procedures. In broadening its perspectives, a delegation from Nauru Tourism will attend the Miss South Pacific Pageant in Samoa to meet with representatives from the Samoan tourism industry to discuss business and partnership opportunities.

## **NAOERO POSTAL**

The vision of Nauru Post is to provide vital post and freight services for the people and businesses in Nauru while at the same time provide employment to Nauruan's. Nauru Post has recently expanded its operations into logistics service, encompassing the sourcing, purchase, and delivery of goods on Nauru utilizing existing air and sea freight services.

To ensure that families still had access to essential items during lockdown, Nauru post established a delivery service for food and necessary medical items. Plans for the corporation include the forthcoming Executive Council meeting of the Asian Pacific Postal Union which Nauru will host this year.

## **NORI**

2023 will see fruition in government's partnership with NORI (Nauru Ocean Resources Inc.). NORI has been diligent in its research including collaborations with top engineering and scientific institutions from North America, Europe and from our region, CSIRO from Australia and NIWA from New Zealand, to ensure that its activities are not contrary to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Mining trials last November proved the engineering designs and capabilities of the harvesting vehicles, and all of these were done within the environmental parameters set by the International Seabed Authority. We are highly confident therefore that by July, NORI will receive its license. When that happens, mining is expected to commence in late 2024, and the huge benefits this project will generate will secure Nauru's future.

## **INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR**

Under the infrastructure sector, the government remains committed to providing reliable, affordable, secure, and sustainable energy, water, and transport facilities. At the onset of the pandemic, our islands reliance on international freight for food and health products was amplified propelling government to modify and explore options to improve national land and marine infrastructure as a conduit to connect our island to the region and internationally.

## **Nauru Shipping Line (NSL)**

During the last 12 months, Nauru Shipping Line has continued to provide high levels of sea freight services to the people of Nauru. The shipping line has stabilized its cargo operations to Nauru and is very proud to advise that the sea freight prices established in January 2022 are being maintained into 2023.

It is unfortunate that ocean logistics around the world are still impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and causing delays. NSL is constantly working to remove these service bottlenecks and is looking forward to expanding the NSL service during 2023. Micronesian Pride has just this January completed a major dry dock service in Indonesia and is now returning to the Central Pacific to continue its cargo service from Suva to Nauru.

## **Nauru Maritime and Port Authority (NMPA)**

The Nauru Maritime and Port Authority (NMPA) has been steadily progressing with the construction of the new port and although the construction progress is challenged the Port Authority was able to open the new port to accept the berthing of the Micronesian Pride in late 2022. This was accomplished to enable the discharge of cargo during the bad weather season.

The access to the new berth by cargo vessels will be a significant step forward in efficiency for both the Port Authority and Nauru Shipping Line. The opening of the wharf for NSL operations will reduce the port time in Nauru to 3 to 4 days.

The Port Authority is working hard to open the port for the delivery of fuel tankers, and this will be another milestone for the Republic. The Port Authority is also looking forward to progressively opening additional new wharf and terminal facilities during the year 2023.

## **Airlines**

Nauru Airlines brought the Star Back with VH-INU and re-opened the North Pacific Connector, connecting Nauru with our Micronesian neighbours, as well as regular Nadi flights. The airline now connects Nauru with Australia three times a week. Nauru



airlines has emerged out of Covid-19 in a strong position to take advantage of opportunities in 2023 and beyond.

## **Transport**

The Runway Project will commence within the current financial year. Initially intended to commence sooner, the Covid pandemic had slightly set back the pace of progress, however, there is a brighter outlook moving forward.

Nauru will host the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regional Aviation Ministers Meeting (or RAMM3) during the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of November this year. Since its inaugural meeting in 2020, the Aviation Ministers have held the RAMM1 and RAMM2 meetings online. The meeting in Nauru will be the first time for all regional Aviation Ministers to meet in person under the RAMM3 gathering.

With an increasing population, the demand for school bus transportation is immediate. The Land Transport division has locally procured another coaster bus to add to the existing bus fleet. Meanwhile, the interdepartmental cooperation between Transport and DCCNR nears the introduction of an electric bus which will be the first of its kind in Nauru under the SMARTEN initiative.

Since the development of the online-based registration program and its mobile app, the Vehicle Registration, and Insurance Division (VRID) of the Transport Department continues to work towards a more efficient and modernized system. The division is currently working on building a more interactive process with registration applicants via an SMS notification system.

## **Nauru Fibre Cable Corporation**

The Nauru Fibre Cable Corporation was established in 2017 mandated to improve internet connectivity through submarine cables. 2023 will be a busy year for the Corporation with plans in progress to connect Nauru to the cable system through Pohnpei. The operation is expected to complete by December 2025.

## **CROSS-CUTTING SECTOR**

### **Climate Change and National Resilience**

Climate Change is an existential threat and Nauru will continue to show leadership in the effort to address climate change. Nauru through our updated national determined contribution plans to pursue a range of sustainable development actions. The centre piece of government's climate action is the Higher Ground Initiative, which will dramatically increase the resilience of the country by migrating vulnerable homes and critical infrastructure to higher elevation, it will also alleviate overcrowding in residential housing and develop a more diversified economy.

In the energy sector we continue to build our energy security through the construction of an additional 6MW solar facility in partnership with ADB. This will increase our grid penetration of solar energy from 10 percent to 50 percent. The Energy Division has successfully launched nine donor-funded projects that will boost the use of renewable energy applications, reform energy efficiency, fortify the energy policy & regulatory framework, and promote awareness and capacity building.

Improved access to water by augmenting household water storage capacity through the dissemination of 10,000 litre water tanks is underway. The department has further launched the underground dredging service distributed to the community to combat the drought. The government is also working with partners to improve water supply, sanitation, and solid waste management services to Nauru.

### **National Emergency**

Evidence has shown that the impact of climate change is changing Nauru's weather patterns. To address and mitigate the impact of disasters the National Emergency Services Department has established a national radio communication system to improve and strengthen the response and communication from our emergency services. The radio system was utilized as a communications conduit for the national covid-19 Task Force, front-liners and the emergency services, such as the Police, Fire, Ambulance, Emergency Room Hospital, Fisheries, Airport DCA, and Marine Authority.

To undertake its mandate of ensuring safety and resilience to Nauru against natural disasters the National Emergency Services Department will continue to build the capacity of its personnel in order to respond efficiently to emergency services.

## **CONCLUSION**

As I conclude, let me stress that today, 31<sup>st</sup> January, we must not only celebrate our independence but also reaffirm to continue to promote our traditional values and principles entrusted as custodians of our island. We must work hard to foster sustainable development that will propel our country to prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen, my government will continue to strive to improve the quality of life for all Nauruans. We promise to accelerate Nauru's engagement internationally, regionally, and sub-regionally to achieve national sustainability and prosperity.

God's Will First. God bless Nauru.