

## **SELF-DETERMINATION OF OUR HOMELAND (BANABA) AND SEPARATION FROM KIRIBATI.**

### **1. PREAMBLE**

Repeated political upheavals in Fiji have compelled us to carefully re-assess our future on Rabi with the realization of the reality that our ownership of the island is not anymore secure as we once thought it was. It is even more sad to come to terms with the fact that despite all the well intended guarantees and assurances by everyone involved in our somewhat coerced relocation to Rabi, we are only to be confronted now with the hard fact that we could possibly be dispossessed of Rabi. Persistence in staking our claim over the island would not be conducive to good future relations with our host ethnic Fijians.

It is imperative therefore that discussions are initiated immediately on the options available at our disposal in order that negotiations and arrangements could be put into effect if and where need be.

### **2. STRATEGIES.**

In view of our current predicament, the following strategies must be persistent with whatever action plans developed for any options in consideration;

- 2.1 that we should not have a laid back attitude in sitting back taking for granted that all is well only to be told “our term is up – we are no longer wanted around” at the point of a gun,
- 2.2 that these words be always at the back of our minds from now on – **“Look forward for the best but be prepared for the worst”**,
- 2.3 in the ‘most unlikely’ event where the need to return Rabi to its indigenous owners occurs, we need to have in place contingency plans at our immediate disposal,
- 2.4 our future now on Rabi will always subject us to the mercy (whim) of the ethnic Fijians - very much really a matter of *principle* which we just can not accept whilst at the same time claim to be an ethnic race (Banabans) ourselves.

Evident from the above is our need to have a contingency plan(s) that would be available to us immediately whenever we need it. It is also obvious that all of the options we do have, somehow or another, will involve Banaba - our homeland. The need therefore to have Banaba in a status conducive to our needs, whatever and whenever they may be, is absolutely necessary. This include its physical, social and political circumstances which should be geared to take us aboard (the whole Banaban community) any time we need it.

It must be clear also that this is not in anyway a readiness to compromise our ownership of Rabi. We must maintain legal ownership of Rabi as our legally acquired

property and any intimation to reverse that agreement must be done so under proper legal terms and conditions.

### **3. THE NEED FOR OUR SELF DETERMINATION OF BANABA**

Emanating from our needs for alternatives due to our current predicament, the necessity to separate Banaba from Kiribati has never been more opportune than now in view of the following;

- 3.1 The achievement of such is only a fulfillment of our forefathers wishes to withdraw our ancestral heritage and homeland from political governance by the Republic of Kiribati - a colonial cession we have and will never agree to,
- 3.2 Our self determination of Banaba would allow us to do as we want with our own island without the hassle of having to consult foreigners to decide for us what we could better do for ourselves,
- 3.3 The secession of Banaba from Kiribati is absolutely necessary to guarantee us autonomy and self determination of our identity as an indigenous Banabans from that which has been forced upon us – that we are part of the Republic of Kiribati,
- 3.4 In our current predicament, our best and immediately available options evolve around Banaba therefore it would be only ridiculous to return to what we have never agreed to – being part of Kiribati,
- 3.5 Separation of Banaba from Kiribati provides for us stronger bargaining power for our own self-determination of whatever future we choose.

### **4. REVIVING OUR RESOLVE FOR SEPARATION FROM KIRIBATI**

The last time that we raised our intention to be separate from Kiribati was over twenty years ago therefore it is high time we sound the same chords again lest we are thought of having given up the fight.

The fact that this year is the year for indigenous people could be to our advantage in bringing up our case again before the international communities particularly international courts where our case could be reheard.

In the same token we request that Council endorse our case that we would like registered with the Suva based *Pacific Concerns Resources Centre* - an organisation specialising in such cases. We have been given that upon registration this organisation would take up our case with the European Union Court having our former colonist being Britain who is a member of the Union as well as that it (Britain) would have most of (if not all) the necessary records regarding our case. This gives us the extra option to appeal to the other authorities should this be not to our satisfaction.

The European Union Court has heard several similar cases of decolonisation from the African continent which were satisfactorily resolved. Costs to such undertakings

would be based on a small percentage of the compensation given with the settlement of a case.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

In essence, the crux of the matter is for the reversal of our current overall administrative system which is of this perspective.

Banaba, as it is now, is an extra property of ours that comes under the Republic of Kiribati administration whilst we are based on Rabi with our governing Council (RCL) somehow exerting authority now and again over Banaba.

We would like to see a reversal of the situation where the RCL is based on Banaba and Rabi, a property that was legally acquired, to be maintained as an economical as well as developmental base. Independence for Banaba is essentially necessary for all of these to be possible.

## **6. REQUIRED ACTIONS BY RCL**

Council is requested following;

- 6.1 Discuss this paper and see things in the light of our current predicament now on Rabi,
- 6.2 Initiate discussions with PCRC for the registration of our case for the Secession of our homeland Banaba from Kiribati,
- 6.3 Provide a synopsis - brief detail of our case to PCRC,
- 6.4 Assist PCRC nominated counsel wherever relevant,
- 6.5 Monitor progress and provide requirements for court hearings where needed,
- 6.6 Make other necessary arrangements where necessary.

For discussion and urgent action.

