

**EULOGY BY THE SAMOA HIGH COMMISSIONER & DEAN OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS  
(H.E. LEASI PAPALI'I SCANLAN) FOR THE LATE HIGH COMMISSIONER OF VANUATU TO NZ  
H.E. JOHNSON MARAKIPULE NAVITI - 10 AUGUST 2020**

Reverend Ministers

Mrs Timaima Naviti & Children

Mrs Sanianna Trief First Secretary of the Vanuatu High Commission and Members of the Vanuatu Community

Your Excellencies: Ambassadors, High Commissioners and your Spouses

Dame Luamanuvao Winnie Laban and Dr Peter Swain

Mr Jonathan Kings (Deputy Secretary) the Chief of Protocol, and Staff of the NZ Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade

Other Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

It is always an honour and privilege for me to speak on behalf of the Diplomatic Corps. The number of Diplomatic Embassies and High Commissions here in New Zealand is 50. This number is relatively small when compared to other developed countries where there are usually more than 100 Missions in residence.

But the best thing about being 'small' is that we all know each other well, and we call one another by our first names. In other words, our Diplomatic Corps here in Wellington is **ONE BIG FAMILY!**

We celebrate each other's successes and we share in one another's sorrows and grief! Sadly, today is the first time that we have lost a member of our Family. Tima & Children; **"Your Loss is our Loss". "Your Grief is our Grief".**

Johnson and Timaima joined our Diplomatic Corps Family in February 2018. In the more than two years that they were members of our Dip Corps Family, Johnson was a very active participant in our Activities. He attended most of our National Day Receptions as well as our other official Dip Corps Functions.

His Excellency was also a very strong supporter and an active member of our Pacific Islands Heads of Mission (PIHOM) Group. He was well known for his **humility, soft spoken nature, as well as his warm & friendly smile**. Johnson was usually fairly quiet, but when he spoke there was a lot of sense and wisdom in what he had to say.

Prior to being appointed Vanuatu's High Commissioner to New Zealand, Johnson was the Director General of the Office of Vanuatu's Prime Minister for four (4) years from 2014.

He was the Head of Vanuatu's Aid Co-ordination and Negotiation Unit in the Prime Minister's Office from 2008 to 2014. This was after he spent 6 years in Fiji working for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat as a Programme Implementation Officer.

Johnson held several Senior Positions in the Vanuatu Government since joining his country's Public Service in the mid-1990s. There is no doubt that Johnson's wealth of experience and knowledge will be greatly missed by the Government and People of Vanuatu.

Last Monday (3<sup>rd</sup> of August) in the afternoon, I received a call from our colleague the High Commissioner of Tuvalu (HE Paulson Panapa) whose office is on the same floor as the Vanuatu High Commission. It was my birthday on that day and I thought my Tuvalu colleague was calling to wish me 'happy birthday'!

Instead, I got a big shock when he told me the sad news about Johnson's sudden Passing. It took me a while to digest what Paulson was telling me. At the same time, I was thinking and hoping that what I had just heard was a mistake, especially since I had received a 'happy birthday' message from Johnson around 10 o'clock that same morning.

I went to see Johnson at the Vanuatu High Commission around 4 pm that same afternoon. And, I must say that seeing His Excellency just lying there outside his office (while the police were going through their usual interviewing process) this sight was quite overwhelming! It is an image that will stay with me for some time!

It was heart-breaking and emotional to greet Tima, who was in tears and holding her two young boys who just looked very confused! I mean what can you say at a time like that? I am usually quite capable of saying something to suit the occasion. But on that day, and at that time, I just could not find the words to speak. So, we just hugged. No words were necessary as tears flowed freely!

When I left that day, with the image of our brother Johnson lying there on the floor, one thing that stood out in my mind was **how simple, how vulnerable, and how temporary** our lives are!

Tima and children, on behalf of your Diplomatic Corps Family, I would like to say again how sorry we all are on the sudden Passing of Johnson. He was a good man, a great friend and a valuable servant of his beloved Vanuatu. Johnson was a great Ambassador for his Country.

We wish you, Tima and your children all the very best as you journey through the rest of life without your beloved husband and father. We will all miss him!

Over the past three years (and on behalf of our Diplomatic Corps Family) I have had the privilege (as Dean) to deliver a speech to farewell our Diplomatic Corps Colleagues whose terms in NZ have ended and they have to return home. I usually end our farewell speech by wishing our departing colleagues all the very best in the next stages of their lives and with the hope that we will meet up again soon.

Johnson, we wish you all the very best on your journey to the next life. But, in this instance and despite our love for you, I do not think your Diplomatic Corps Colleagues will be as keen to meet up with you again any time soon!!

Thank you for the opportunity to say something on behalf of our Diplomatic Corps Family.

**TANGKYU TUMAS - SOIFUA**