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I would like to announce that I have resigned from being the Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands by giving written notice to the Acting Clerk of Parliament as required by the Constitution of the Cook Islands, effective from Friday 12th of February 2021.

It has always been my intention to not seek re-election as Speaker beyond the current term of Parliament.

Niki Rattle

FORMER SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT

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I have been Speaker since June 2012 and while I am honoured to have served the Parliament as the Speaker for this period of time, I believe that in a healthy democracy, office holders will be refreshed from time to time.

I have decided to resign at this point of the electoral cycle to allow time for others to build experience of the role and to ensure a transition prior to the end of the Parliamentary term.

I wish to extend my gratitude and thankfulness to the former Prime Minister Henry Puna who nominated me for the role in 2012 following an enlightening experience when I, as the first Pacific Islander, chaired the International Conference of the Red Cross Crescent in Geneva (of over 2000 people) as the Secretary General of the Cook Islands Red Cross for 18 years.

I thank all the Members of Parliament, the staff who came and went during the past 9 years, plus the current Members and staff for being part of the change and upgrade of Parliament to meet the international standards of Parliamentary procedures.

During my tenure as the Speaker, the Parliament was able to initiate 2 major projects which are both still in progress: the consolidation of the laws of the Cook Islands that have not been done since 1994, in partnership with the Crown Law Office and MFEM; and the review of the Standing Orders that have not been updated since 2004. Parliament was able to join and be part of the MFAT-UNDP Pacific Parliamentary Effective Efficient Initiative Project that has brought great measures of development for Members and staff.

A first is a 5 year Strategic Plan to guide the direction of the jurisdiction into the future, an updated website and the beginning of the live stream of the sittings to the outer islands and beyond.

The advocacy for an increase of young people and women in Parliament resulted in a Youth Practic Parliament and for women twice and there is a programme in the pipeline for the senior students of the Colleges to celebrate the International Women's day this year as they come of age to vote in the 2022 general election.

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Another first was the Inauguration of the Women Parliamentarians Caucus during the grand visit of the Rt Honourable Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern of New Zealand and her entourage where the Speaker hosted the women of the Cook Islands on International Women's Day 2018.

Another first was the Speaker's Debate on the topics of Poverty and Mental Health taken to the Auditorium with the public consultation and there is no denying that both these issues have received heightened attention and support.

At the Commonwealth Parliamentarian Association Conference in Kampala 2019, the Small Branches elected me as the Chairperson of the Network, a position that has kept me busy with virtual meetings since COVID 19 began.

This position has placed me as one of five Members of the Coordinating Committee that is the caretaker of the business of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, as well as a Member of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

I will miss my colleagues in the various organizations that I have been an active member of and the work that has built my confidence in my role as the Speaker of the Parliament of the Cook Islands.

I wish each and every Member of Parliament a successful career in politics.

I will mostly miss the staff of Parliament who have become my extended family and friends and I wish you a brighter future in your specialised fields as you serve our people.

I especially thank my husband Collin, our children and grandchildren for their patience, understanding and love during my very active life and many missed family evening meals.

Finally to the people of the Cook Islands, thank you for the opportunity to serve you in such an honourable role.

Kia Orana e Kia Manuia.