MELANESIAN FRAMEWORK

5 AUGUST 2026

An agreed pathway forward

between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the Government of Papua New Guinea giving effect to the Melanesian Agreement (26 June 2025) subject to an affirmative decision by the National Parliament agreeing to the Referendum results.

This Melanesian Framework outlines self-government as the transitional pathway through which the aspirations of the people of Bougainville for Independence are given practical effect while respecting the constitutional role and responsibilities of the National Parliament.

It further delineates a Melanesian pathway that is peaceful, stable and consistent with the Constitution, and directed towards building an enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and an independent Bougainville.

Endorsed by the Joint Supervisory Body on 5 August 2026

For presentation to the National Parliament alongside the Referendum Results



Glossary

Agreed Instrument
A LEGAL, constitutional, administrative, executive, parliamentary, political or intergovernmental instrument used to give effect to part of the Framework.

Bougainville Peace Agreement / BPA
The 2001 agreement that established the agreed foundations for weapons disposal, autonomy, and a constitutionally guaranteed referendum on Bougainville's future political status.

Constitutional and Legal Integrity
The principle that all arrangements under the Framework must be grounded in the Constitution of Papua New Guinea, the Bougainville Peace Agreement, applicable laws, including international law, and any additional relevant legal or constitutional instruments.

Delegated Authority
An arrangement through which Bougainville exercises a power or function by agreement or authorisation, while the National Government may retain constitutional or legal responsibility during the transitional period.

Dispute Resolution and Problem-Solving
The procedures through which the Parties prevent, manage and resolve difficulties arising during implementation, with emphasis on dialogue, good faith and preservation of the relationship.

Drawdown
The process through which powers and functions available under the autonomy arrangements are transferred to Bougainville.

Enduring Melanesian Relationship
The future relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, intended to preserve peace, cooperation, mutual respect, family, cultural, economic and geographic ties, and practical cooperation in areas of common interest.

Financial and Economic Readiness
The existence of sufficiently clear, sustainable and predictable financial and economic arrangements to support a power, function or authority, against which the overall strength of the economy can also be measured.

Full Assumption or Transfer
The stage at which the Parties jointly determine that the relevant readiness considerations have been adequately fulfilled and that Bougainville may fully assume a power, function or authority in accordance with applicable law.

Good Faith
The commitment of the Parties to act honestly, constructively and consistently with the agreed purposes of the Framework, and to avoid unnecessary delay, unilateral action or conduct that undermines confidence.

Implementation Architecture
The agreed mechanisms established to guide, coordinate, monitor and review implementation of the Framework.

Independence Definition
An independent nation state with sovereign powers and laws, recognised under international law and by other sovereign states to be an independent state, separate from the state of Papua New Guinea.

Institutional Readiness
The existence of institutions sufficiently capable of exercising a power, function or authority responsibly.

Joint Supervisory Body
The Parties shall amend the Terms of Reference of the existing Joint Supervisory Body to establish the Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) which will provide overall political leadership, direction and oversight for the implementation of this Framework.

Joint Committee on the Melanesian Framework. The high-level joint mechanism responsible for political leadership, direction and oversight of implementation.

Joint Determination
Decision-making by the Parties through agreed mechanisms, rather than unilateral determination by either side.

Joint Sectoral Oversight Committees
Practical joint bodies or departmental arrangements established for specific powers, functions or sectors requiring shared management during the transition.

Legal and Legislative Readiness
The existence of the legislative basis required for a proposed arrangement.

Melanesian Values
Values including dialogue, mutual respect, consensus, relationship, partnership, good faith, peaceful cooperation, and enduring ties between the peoples of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

Monitoring Body
The mechanism responsible for impartial and credible reporting on implementation. It observes, reports, advises and supports confidence, but does not make decisions for the Parties.

National Constitution
The Constitution of Papua New Guinea.

Part XIV
The part of the Constitution of Papua New Guinea that gives constitutional effect to the Bougainville arrangements, including autonomy and the referendum.

Policy Readiness
The existence of a sufficiently clear policy basis for exercising a power, function or authority.

Readiness
A jointly determined and jointly supported assessment against considerations required for a power, function or authority to be exercised effectively, sustainably, lawfully and peacefully.

Readiness, Review and Sequencing Body
The mechanism responsible for supporting joint assessment of readiness, sequencing, milestones, implementation gaps and recommended support measures.

Readiness Indicators / Benchmarks
The agreed indicators used to assess progress, including institutional capacity, policy and legislative readiness, fiscal and economic sustainability, service continuity, and the effectiveness of cooperative or shared arrangements.

Reserved for Final Status Arrangements
Powers, functions or authorities that the Parties jointly agree should be addressed only as part of the final constitutional or political settlement.



Revenue Raising Regime
The legal, institutional and administrative arrangements that enable the generation, collection and management of public revenue from lawful sources, including taxation, fees, licences, royalties, dividends and other public revenues, in order to support the sustainable financing of government functions and public service delivery.

Section 289 Powers and Functions
Powers and functions associated with sovereignty under Section 289 of the Constitution.

Section 290 Powers and Functions
Powers and functions eligible for transfer to and assumption by Bougainville under the existing autonomy arrangements.

Self-Government
The beginning of a new transitional phase in Bougainville's constitutional and political development, enabling the progressive exercise, delegation, sharing and joint management of additional powers, functions and forms of authority associated with Section 289 of the Constitution, as well as the accelerated drawdown of residual S290 powers.

Service Continuity and Public Welfare
The principle that the transition should protect essential services, livelihoods, dignity, security and public welfare.

Shared or Jointly Exercised Authority
An arrangement through which the Parties jointly exercise or manage a power or function during the transition.

The Parties / The Two Governments
The Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

Transfer of Powers
The legal, constitutional, administrative or executive process through which a power or function moves from the National Government to Bougainville.

Transitional Arrangement
An arrangement used where a power or function is jointly exercised, shared or delegated by the National Government to the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

Transitional Period
The period during which Bougainville progressively assumes greater responsibility for governing its own affairs, while constitutional continuity, legal certainty, service delivery, peace and stability are maintained. This may be done through enabling the progressive exercise, delegation, sharing and joint management of additional powers, functions and forms of authority associated with Section 289 of the Constitution, as well as the accelerated drawdown of residual S290 powers.

Treaty of Friendship
A possible future agreement between Papua New Guinea and an independent Bougainville, intended to support an enduring Melanesian relationship and cooperation in areas of common interest.

Wokbung
A Melanesian expression of working together in a spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and shared responsibility.

Preamble

THIS Melanesian Framework is jointly crafted by the Government of Papua New Guinea (National Government) and the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG), to give effect to the Melanesian Agreement, co-signed on 26 June 2025.

Acknowledging the continuing role of the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives in considering, enabling and giving effect to the Melanesian Framework and the pathway it outlines;

Guided by the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (the National Constitution), the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the results of the Bougainville Referendum, and the Melanesian Agreement;

Recognising the referendum result, announced by the Bougainville Referendum Commission on 11 December 2019, in which 176,928 voters, representing 97.71 per cent of votes cast, chose Independence, while 3,043 voters, representing 1.68 per cent of votes cast, chose Greater Autonomy. There were 1096 invalid ballots representing 0.61% of the votes cast.

Acknowledging the 2019 Bougainville Referendum as a constitutionally mandated and democratic expression of the will of the people of Bougainville, undertaken pursuant to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the Organic Law on Peace-Building on Bougainville and Part XIV of the National Constitution, and recognising its outcome as a legitimate expression of the will of the people of Bougainville and a central reference point for the consultations;

Recognising that the Bougainville Peace Agreement and Part XIV of the National Constitution vested in the National Parliament, the final decision-making authority on the Referendum Results;

Acknowledging the consultations of the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government in accordance with Section 342(1) of the National Constitution, that have taken place thus far;

Further affirming continued commitment and adherence to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations (UN Charter) and to strengthening the constructive role of the United Nations (UN) and the international community in supporting peaceful political transitions;

Recalling, in this regard, the principles of 'self-determination of peoples' reflected under International Law, and noting that these principles will be advanced in the Bougainville context through peaceful, constitutional and mutually agreed arrangements that sustain an enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville;

Reaffirming their commitment to democratic principles and human rights and fundamental freedoms as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international human rights instruments as well as to the principles of integral human development, equality and participation, national soveriegnty and self-reliance, natural resources and environment and Melanesian ways.

Upholding Melanesian solidarity by drawing on Melanesian values of dialogue, mutual respect, consensus, relationship, partnership and good faith;

Recognising that the pathway ahead must be phased, orderly, predictable and jointly developed and managed, including through the progressive delegation and sharing of agreed Section 289 functions and powers, and the transfer and accelerated assumption of agreed Section 290 functions and powers;

Recognising further that the future relationship between the Parties shall evolve progressively through peaceful negotiation, mutual agreement, institutional development, and cooperative implementation consistent with constitutional processes, international law, and Melanesian values;

Affirming their shared intention to work constructively, collaboratively, and in good faith toward achieving an agreed and enduring political and constitutional settlement concerning Bougainville's future political status;

The Parties agree to this Melanesian Framework as a practical and forward-looking basis for the implementation of the Melanesian Agreement which will guide the transition of Bougainville from autonomy through a transitional period of self-government towards an end state that ensures political independence for Bougainville while retaining a close, peaceful and enduring relationship between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.





1. Purpose and Objectives

THE purpose of this Melanesian Framework is to provide a clear, practical, realistic and forward-looking pathway that guides both governments, and informs the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives, as the two governments work in partnership through the next phase of Bougainville's pursuit of political independence, following the decision of the National Parliament made pursuant to Section 342(2) of the National Constitution.

The Melanesian Framework outlines agreed arrangements that will provide a shared and predictable pathway for the next phase of Bougainville's transition. The Framework will clarify the shared responsibilities of both governments; and set out an accelerated, phased and sequenced approach to the final full transfer and assumption of agreed powers, alongside agreed cooperative arrangements, with regards to Sections 289 and 290 powers, as detailed in Part XIV of the National Constitution.

It will also identify interim, transitional and shared arrangements, indicate the legal and constitutional implications of the proposed pathway, and establish monitoring and review mechanisms to accompany both governments through implementation. This pathway will align with guiding principles that shape and inform the interactions between the National Government and ABG throughout the development and implementation of the Melanesian Framework. The Melanesian Framework respects the role and responsibilities of the National Parliament throughout the process.

The Melanesian Framework forms part of the Joint Consultation Report which will be submitted to the National Parliament in fulfilment of Section 342(1), subject to which the National Parliament will take a decision when the referendum results are tabled in accordance with Section 342(2) of Part XIV of the National Constitution.

2. Guiding Principles

The Parties therefore agree to the following Guiding Principles to govern and inform the progressive shaping of their future relationship:

2.1 Recognition of the Referendum Results

The Parties recognise the results of the Bougainville Referendum as a legitimate expression of the democratic will of the people of Bougainville, forming a foundational reference point for the Parties' ongoing consultations.

2.2 Shared Commitment to Facilitate a Pathway Forwards

The Parties commit to their shared responsibility to give practical and meaningful effect to the Referendum outcome, in accordance with the decisions of the National Parliament, through a peaceful and agreed processes.

2.3 Shared Responsibilities in building a sovereign Melanesian relationship

The Parties commit to working in partnership to build a sovereign Melanesian relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville that reflects an agreed spirit of ongoing collaboration (wokbung), mutual respect and enduring peace.

2.4 Constitutional and Legal Integrity

All arrangements, decisions and transitional arrangements shall be grounded in the National Constitution, the Bougainville Peace Agreement, and other documents and agreements where applicable.

2.5 Relational approach to exercise of authority

The Parties recognise that S289 powers and functions shall, during the transitional self- government phase, involve flexible, cooperative, or shared arrangements designed to support stability, continuity, and confidence-building based on agreement, while strengthening capacity that builds on practical experience.

2.6 Phased and Sequenced Transition

The Parties acknowledge that the assumption of functions and powers shall take place through lawful, orderly, and mutually agreed processes consistent with constitutional integrity, legal continuity, the National Constitution, the Bougainville Peace Agreement, including the Melanesian Agreement and related aspirational instruments.

2.7 Capacity and Institutional strengthening

The Parties shall cooperate in identifying and mobilising technical, financial, institutional, and development support necessary to enable the effective and sustainable implementation of agreed arrangements.

2.8 Joint Assessment, Monitoring, Review and Adaptation

The Parties shall, through approved mechanisms and bodies, jointly assess and review progress towards an enabling environment for the delegation and transfer of powers. Such assessments shall support adaptive implementation and allow arrangements to evolve in response to practical experience, emerging needs, and agreed priorities. Monitoring, review, and adaptation shall be done through jointly agreed mechanisms, which may include independent, international, and domestic elements with international oversight.

2.9 Continuity of Development, Services and Protection of Livelihoods

The process shall ensure the continuity, accessibility and effective delivery of essential services and development and safeguard the welfare and livelihoods of the people of Bougainville.

2.10 Good Governance and Rule of Law

The Parties commit to establishing and strengthening institutions that uphold the rule of law, human rights, transparency, accountability, and inclusive participation.

2.11 Cooperation and Ongoing Consultation based on Melanesian Values

The Parties shall engage with one another in good faith, and be guided by Melanesian Principles of consensus, respect, relationship, and peaceful dialogue, fostering trust, understanding, and cooperation and preserving peaceful relations between the Parties.

2.12 Progressive International Engagement

International and regional engagement for Bougainville shall develop progressively, in a manner consistent with this Framework and with the evolving exercise of authority and the broader objectives of peaceful transition and cooperation in accordance with international law.

2.13 Support and Partnership

The process may be supported by the United Nations, witnessing signatories of the BPA, regional organisations, and development partners, in ways jointly agreed by the Parties.

2.14 Agreement on Pathway and Outcomes

In the event of an affirmative outcome from the Parliament's consideration of the referendum the Parties commit to working towards modalities, institutional arrangements, legal measures, and joint assessments of progress against agreed readiness indicators, carried out within agreed timeframes, through which the Independence aspirations of the Bougainville people will be advanced in a stable, peaceful, and sustainable manner.

The Parties affirm their common intention to advance Bougainville's transition to Independence, while fully respecting the Constitutional responsibilities of the National Parliament, in a manner that secures peace, stability, dignity, cooperation, and enduring relations between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.

2.15 Dispute Resolution

The Parties commit to resolving disagreements through the BPA-endorsed process for dispute resolution, by applying Melanesian values, constitutional principles, and international law, and by making use of the principles and mechanisms agreed through this framework.



3. Considerations, Criteria and Readiness

3.1 Purpose of this Section

THIS section establishes the considerations, criteria and readiness factors that will guide the establishment of indicators and milestones, to advance the transition through a phased approach to exercising governance functions, agreeing on cooperative shared mechanisms, and exploring pathways for the delegation of S.289 powers, functions and authorities and the accelerated transfer and assumption of S.290 powers, along the pathway outlined in this Framework.

It is intended to provide the National Parliament, the Bougainville House of Representatives, the two Governments, and the people of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville with a stable, predictable and responsible basis for understanding how authority will evolve over time. It recognises that the transition from the present constitutional arrangements towards self-government and political independence for Bougainville must be managed in a manner that protects peace, maintains stability, sustains public services, strengthens institutions, and gives practical effect to the will of the people expressed through the Bougainville Referendum.

The criteria set out in this section are not intended to create obstacles to the shared pathway.

They are intended to provide a shared basis for confidence building, preparation, mutual accountability and orderly implementation. They should enable the Parties to identify what is ready for immediate drawdown, what may be exercised jointly, what may be delegated or transferred through interim arrangements, and what may require further institutional, legal, financial or technical preparation before full assumption by Bougainville.

In this sense, readiness is understood as a shared responsibility. It is a jointly determined and jointly supported process through which the Parties assess the enabling conditions required for each function or authority to be exercised effectively, sustainably and peacefully.

3.2 Guiding Approach

The Parties agree that the exercise, sharing, delegation, transfer and assumption of powers, functions and authorities relating to sovereignty shall be guided by the principles articulated in Section 2 of this Melanesian Framework.

The Parties further agree that delegated authority may be exercised in different forms at different stages of the pathway. Depending on the nature of the power or function concerned, and the readiness conditions jointly identified by the Parties, a power, function or authority may be:

a. *exercised by Bougainville under self-government arrangements during the transition;*

b. *delegated to Bougainville by the National Government for a defined period, purpose or function;*

c. *exercised jointly by Papua New Guinea and Bougainville through an agreed shared mechanism;*

d. *exercised through an interim or transitional arrangement pending full assumption;*

e. *reserved for final status arrangements, where this is jointly agreed to be necessary.*

The Parties recognise that some powers and functions associated with Section 289 may need to be unbundled into their practical components. These components may not all require the same form of treatment or the same sequence of transition. Some components may be suitable for early cooperation or joint exercise.

Others may be suitable for delegation. Others may require further agreement, legislation development and constitutional amendments, institutional development or international recognition processes.

The purpose of this Framework is therefore to provide a practical pathway for moving responsibly from current arrangements into the future, in a manner that ensures a peaceful enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville through a transitional pathway between self-government and Independence, towards a Treaty of Friendship between sovereign countries.

This approach allows the Parties to move beyond an all-or-nothing treatment of sovereign powers. It enables practical progress while preserving constitutional, and legal integrity. It also provides Parliament with a clear basis for understanding how the pathway can be managed responsibly, without creating sudden disruption or uncertainty.

In this way, the Framework provides a bridge between an announcement of self-government and independence for Bougainville. It enables the Parties to identify what can be done now, what can be prepared next, what must be shared or jointly managed during transition, and what must be resolved as part of the details of a final relationship.

3.3 Core Readiness Considerations

In determining the appropriate treatment of any S289 power, function or authority, the Parties shall be guided by the following core readiness considerations.

3.3.1 Policy Readiness

The Parties shall consider whether there is an agreed or sufficiently developed policy framework for the respective Governments to guide the exercise of the relevant power, function or authority.

Policy readiness may include:

a. *an agreed statement of policy intent;*

b. *clarity on the purpose, scope and expected outcomes of the power or function;*

c. *identification of the public interests to be protected during the transition;*

d. *identification of risks, safeguards and mitigation measures; and*

e. *where appropriate, consistency with regional and international obligations.*

Policy readiness requires that there be sufficient shared understanding to enable the function or authority to be exercised responsibly and in a way that contributes to confidence, stability and continuity.

3.3.2 Legal and Legislative Readiness

The Parties shall consider whether the necessary legal and legislative basis exists, or can be developed, to enable the proposed form of exercise, sharing, delegation, transfer or assumption.

Legal and legislative readiness may include:

a. *identification of the constitutional basis for the proposed arrangement;*

b. *identification of any existing laws, regulations or agreements that already permit action;*

c. *identification of any legal instruments, amendments, regulations, delegations, memoranda of understanding, intergovernmental agreements or transitional instruments that may be required;*

d. *clarity on whether the arrangement is administrative, executive, legislative, constitutional, transitional or final in character;*

e. *where appropriate, identification of legal implications for third parties, development partners, regional organisations or international actors.*

f. *where there are matters that have legal implications under international law, there needs to be a clear demonstration of legal capacity and capability to exercise a certain power that is consistent with the National Constitution and recognisable within international law.*

The Parties recognise that legal readiness may develop progressively. In some cases, an interim legal instrument may enable initial movement while more comprehensive legislation is prepared. In other cases, a legal action may be required before a power or function can be fully assumed. The Framework should therefore guide both immediate action and longer-term legal preparation emerging from further discussion and agreement between the Parties.

3.3.3 Institutional Readiness

The Parties shall consider whether the institutions required to exercise the relevant power, function or authority exist, or can be strengthened, established or supported within an agreed period.

Institutional readiness may include:

a. *an identified Bougainville institution, department, agency or authority responsible for the function;*

b. *clarity on mandates, lines of accountability and decision-making authority;*

c. *appropriate staffing, skills, leadership and administrative systems;*

d. *information management, records, data and reporting systems;*

e. *operational policies, procedures and internal controls;*

f. *mechanisms for coordination with National Government institutions;*

g. *arrangements for training, mentoring, technical support and capacity strengthening;*

h. *arrangements for public communication and community engagement; and*

i. *safeguards for transparency, accountability, inclusion and responsiveness.*

Institutional readiness shall be assessed in a practical and functional manner. The question is not whether Bougainville institutions are already perfect or fully mature, but whether the relevant function can be exercised responsibly, with appropriate support, safeguards and phased development. The Parties recognise that institutions are often strengthened through the exercise of responsibility, and that carefully sequenced assumption of authority can itself be a means of building capacity.

3.3.4 Financial and Economic Readiness

The Parties shall consider whether the financial and economic arrangements necessary to support the relevant power, function or authority are sufficiently clear, sustainable and predictable. In considering financial and economic readiness, the Parties recognise the distinction between transitional financing arrangements and the longer-term establishment of a sustainable economic and fiscal foundation capable of supporting the exercise of sovereign responsibilities. Particular attention shall therefore be given to the progressive development of Bougainville's revenue raising regime and broader economic self-reliance.

Financial and economic readiness may include:

a. *identification of the costs associated with the function or authority;*

b. *clarity regarding existing and future sources of funding, including the progressive establishment of a sustainable domestic revenue raising regime*

c. *arrangements for budget planning, appropriation, transfer and reporting;*

d. *financial management and audit capacity;*

e. *development and operational readiness of revenue raising institutions and legal frameworks, including taxation, customs (where applicable), royalties, fees, licences and other lawful sources of public revenue.*

f. *transitional funding arrangements between the National Government and Bougainville;*

g. *development partner and International Financing Institutional support, where agreed by the Parties;*

h. *economic sustainability and service delivery implications;*

i. *safeguards against fiscal disruption or unfunded mandates;*

j. *arrangements for monitoring the financial viability of the function over time;*

k. *agreed revenue sharing arrangements;*

l. *regular assessment of the resilience, diversity and projected sustainability of Bougainville's economy, including medium and long-term fiscal projections.*

The Parties recognise that financial and economic readiness are central to the credibility and sustainability of the transition. Financial readiness extends beyond the availability of transitional funding and includes the progressive establishment of the fiscal institutions, revenue raising regime and economic foundations necessary to support the effective exercise of public authority over the long term. These capabilities should be strengthened progressively through partnership, agreed transitional support, predictable financing, institutional development and measures that enhance Bougainville's long-term economic self-reliance.

3.3.5 Service Continuity and Public Welfare

The Parties shall consider whether the proposed arrangement protects the continuity of essential services, livelihoods and public welfare.

The Parties agree that the pathway must be people centred. The transfer or assumption of authority is not only a constitutional or institutional matter. It must improve, or at minimum protect, the everyday well-

being, dignity and security of the people of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.

3.4 Criteria for Determining the Form of Authority

In applying the above readiness considerations, the Parties shall jointly determine the appropriate form through which each power, function or authority that may be delegated or transferred will be exercised at each stage of the pathway.
The following criteria shall guide that determination.

3.4.1 Existing or Available Authority

Where a power or function is already available to Bougainville under existing constitutional, legal or administrative arrangements, the Parties shall identify the steps required for its effective exercise or immediate drawdown.

In such cases, the focus shall be on removing practical obstacles, clarifying procedures, ensuring resourcing, and supporting implementation.

3.4.2 Delegated Authority

Where a power or function is not yet fully transferred but can be exercised by Bougainville through delegation or administrative authorisation, the Parties may agree to a delegated authority arrangement.

Delegated authority may be appropriate where:

a. *Bougainville has or can develop the institutional capacity to exercise the function;*

b. *the National Government retains constitutional or legal responsibility during the transitional period;*

c. *clear terms of delegation can be agreed;*

d. *accountability, reporting and review arrangements are established;*

e. *risks can be managed through agreed safeguards; and*

f. *delegation would contribute to r eadiness for future assumption.*

Delegated authority should be used as a practical bridge between current arrangements and the realisation of final independence. It should be designed to build experience, confidence and capacity, rather than to delay transition.

3.4.3 Shared or Jointly Exercised Authority

Where a power or function requiring continuing involvement by both Governments, can legally be jointly exercised in order to protect stability, legality, service continuity or the future relationship, the Parties may agree to a shared or jointly exercised authority arrangement.



Shared authority may be appropriate where:

a. *the function affects both Papua New Guinea and Bougainville;*

b. *the function has significant constitutional, security, financial, regional or international implications;*

c. *the Parties agree that joint decision-making would build trust and reduce risk;*

d. *the function requires coordination between national and Bougainville institutions;*

e. *the function is part of a broader transition towards future assumption by Bougainville; or*

f. *the function is expected to remain an area of cooperation in the future relationship.*

Shared authority arrangements should clearly define the respective roles of the Parties, the decision-making process, the duration or review points, the responsible institutions, the applicable law, and the mechanism for resolving differences. Where appropriate, shared authority may include joint committees, joint boards, co-chaired mechanisms, agreed protocols, shared technical secretariats, or other arrangements agreed by the Parties.

3.4.4 Interim or Transitional Authority

Where a power or function is associated with future sovereignty or independence but cannot yet be fully assumed, the Parties may agree to an interim or transitional authority arrangement. This may require amendments to Part XIV of the National Constitution.

Interim or transitional authority may be appropriate where:

a. *the function is important to Bougainville's pathway through self-government to independence;*

b. *immediate full transfer is not yet legally, institutionally, financially or operationally feasible;*

c. *a phased arrangement would enable preparation, learning and confidence-building;*

d. *the function requires engagement with external actors, regional bodies or technical partners;*

e. *continuity of services or obligations must be protected; or*

f. *the arrangement can serve as a bridge between the present constitutional order and the future relationship.*

Such arrangements should be subject to regular assessment and review, and linked to clear readiness indicators. They may include phased assumption, co-administration, shadow functions, observer status, joint representation, delegated representation, technical participation, or other agreed modalities.

3.4.5 Full Assumption or Transfer

Where the Parties jointly determine that the relevant readiness conditions have been met, or on a date agreed by both of the Parties, a power, function or authority may be transferred to, or fully assumed by, Bougainville in accordance with the applicable constitutional, legal and political requirements.

Full assumption or transfer may be appropriate where:

a. the legal basis is clear;

b. the responsible Bougainville institution is established and operational;

c. financial and administrative arrangements are in place;

d. service continuity can be maintained;

e. accountability mechanisms are established;

f. risks have been assessed and mitigated;

g. any necessary parliamentary or legislative steps have been identified or completed; and

h. the transfer is consistent with the agreed pathway and future relationship.

Full assumption or transfer should be recorded in an agreed instrument and, where necessary, supported by legislation, regulation, administrative direction, budgetary provision or other enabling measures.

3.5 Joint Assessment and Determination

Consistent with the principle of joint determination, the Parties shall establish mechanisms in line with Section 6 of the Melanesian Framework to assess readiness, review progress and make recommendations on the appropriate treatment of powers, functions and authorities.

3.6 Readiness as a Shared Commitment

The Parties affirm that readiness is not only the responsibility of Bougainville. It is a shared commitment of both Governments.

The National Government has responsibilities to support an orderly transition, including through cooperation, information sharing, legal and administrative facilitation, capacity support, predictable resourcing where agreed, and timely consideration of required instruments or decisions. Where the National Government has reservations regarding readiness, it shall provide clear guidance on how readiness can be achieved and fulfil its shared responsibilities, including but not limited to capacity building, where relevant.

The Autonomous Bougainville Government has responsibilities to continue strengthening its institutions, policy frameworks, legal preparedness, financial systems, accountability mechanisms and public communication, so that powers and functions can be exercised effectively and in the interests of the people.

Both Governments have a shared responsibility to avoid delay, uncertainty or unilateral action that could undermine confidence in the pathway. Both Governments also have a shared responsibility to act in good faith, to address obstacles as they arise, and to ensure that the transition is carried forward in a way that protects peace, stability and the enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

3.7 Summary Commitment

The Parties agree that the pathway from self-government to independence for Bougainville shall be guided by jointly determined considerations, criteria and readiness indicators. These shall support the phased cooperative exercise, for the sharing and delegation of S289 powers, and the accelerated transfer and assumption of S290 and S289 powers, in a manner that is peaceful, lawful, practical, sustainable and consistent with the future close and enduring relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

The Parties further agree that the readiness process shall be grounded in partnership, shared responsibility and mutual respect. It shall provide Parliament with confidence that the Framework offers a stable and predictable pathway, while providing Bougainville with assurance that the pathway will give practical and meaningful effect to the referendum outcome through agreed stages of implementation.

The Parties shall therefore use this section as a common reference point when determining how powers, functions and authorities will move between the two governments. These are not checklists to be applied rigidly but rather guidelines to be interpreted in the light most favourable to the achievement of the objectives and principles of the Melanesian Framework.

4. Implementation Architecture

4.1 Purpose of the Implementation Architecture

The Parties agree that the Melanesian Framework shall be supported by an implementation architecture capable of guiding, coordinating, monitoring and reviewing the transition from the present autonomy arrangement, through a transitional period beginning with an announcement of self-government, as the beginning of a transition to the phased delegation and sharing of S.289 powers, towards independence and an enduring Melanesian relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

The purpose of the implementation architecture is to ensure that the pathway set out in this Framework is carried forward in a stable, predictable, coordinated and accountable manner. It shall provide the institutional means through which the Parties give practical effect to their shared commitments, manage the phased exercise of powers and functions, resolve implementation issues, and maintain confidence among Parliament, the Bougainville House of Representatives, the two Governments, and the People of PNG and Bougainville.

The architecture should be established immediately following or soon after an affirmative decision by the National Parliament. It shall support the Parties during the transitional period and shall adapt or phase out as appropriate upon independence, or be adapted to ensure a close, peaceful and enduring relationship.

4.2 General Design Principles

The implementation architecture shall be designed to be clear, practical and politically accountable. It should not create unnecessary complexity or duplicate existing institutions. Its purpose is to support implementation, not to replace the constitutional responsibilities of the National Government, the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the National Parliament, or



the Bougainville House of Representatives. Where required this architecture will be supported through appropriate amendment's to legislation and the National Constitution.

The architecture shall be based on the following design principles:

a. ***Political ownership:*** *the transition shall remain under the political leadership of the two Governments, with appropriate reporting to Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives.*

b. ***Joint responsibility:*** *implementation shall be carried forward through mechanisms jointly established and jointly mandated by the Parties.*

c. ***Subsidiarity and functionality:*** *matters should be handled at the level best placed to resolve them, whether political, ministerial, departmental, technical or community-facing.*

d. ***Clear division of mandate and authority:*** *each mechanism shall have a clear mandate, authority, reporting line and relationship to existing constitutional and statutory institutions.*

e. ***Phased adaptation:*** *the architecture shall evolve as the transition moves through self-government, to the phased delegation and assumption of powers, towards independence and an evolving future relationship.*

f. ***Transparency and accountability:*** *progress shall be monitored, reported and reviewed in a manner that builds confidence and allows corrective action where required.*

g. ***Dispute Resolution-the architecture*** *should provide a clear, transparent and effective way to respond to, prevent and resolve disputes arising through the implementation of the Framework.*

h. ***External support by agreement:*** *regional and international support may be included where agreed by the Parties, including support from the witnessing signatories to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, regional institutions, development partners and the United Nations.*

4.3 Core Components of the Architecture

The Parties agree that the implementation architecture may include the following core components:

a. *The Joint Supervisory Body and Joint Technical Teams*

b. *Joint Sector Oversight Committees as required;*

c. *Central Agency Transfer Implementation Committees*

d. *Project Implementation Teams*

e. *Monitoring, reporting and assurance mechanism; and*

f. *Agreed arrangements for regional, international and partner support.*

These mechanisms shall be established through an agreed instrument, grounded in law, which may take the form of an inter-governmental agreement, implementation protocol, constitutional regulation, legislation, parliamentary endorsement, administrative arrangement, or other legal or political instrument as jointly determined by the Parties.

The Parties may decide to establish all mechanisms at once, or to establish them progressively according to need. The core political and coordination mechanisms should be established promptly and should be in place before the start of a transitional period.

4.4 Joint Supervisory Body

The Joint Supervisory Body, in accordance with Section 332 of the National Constitution, will provide a consultative forum through which consultation between the National Government and the Bougainville Government will provide overall political leadership, direction and oversight for the implementation of this Framework.

The JSB shall be jointly chaired by senior political representatives of the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, as agreed by the Parties. Its membership may include relevant ministers, senior political representatives, and such other persons as the Parties may agree. When required the JSB will be led by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea and the President of Bougainville.

The JSB shall be responsible for:

a. *providing overall political guidance for the implementation of the Framework;*

b. *confirming priorities for the phased delegation and sharing of S289 powers and functions and the accelerated transfer and assumption of S290 p owers;*

c. *considering recommendations from technical, legal, departmental and review mechanisms;*

d. *resolving issues that cannot be r esolved at technical or departmental level;*

e. *ensuring that implementation remains consistent with the Bougainville Peace Agreement, Part XIV of the C onstitution, the Melanesian Agreement and this Framework;*

f. *guiding preparations for the transitional phase of self-government;*

g. *overseeing the transition through the period of phased delegation and sharing of S289 powers;*

h. *Establishing and directing the work of any Joint Sector Oversight Committees established in line with 6.5*

i. *approving matters to be referred to the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives;*

j. *negotiating the framing of the en during relationship between Papua New Guinea and independent Bougainville;*

k. *maintaining political and public confidence in the pathway; and*

l. *Clear, coordinated and responsible public communication that is accurate, accessible and consistent with a peaceful, orderly and dignified transition.*

The JSB shall not replace the constitutional authority of either Government or either legislature. Its role is to provide joint political direction and to ensure that implementation proceeds in a coordinated, consensual and accountable manner.

The JSB should meet at agreed intervals and may meet more frequently at key milestones or when urgent implementation issues arise.

4.5 Joint Sector Oversight Committees

The Joint Supervisory Body may establish Joint Sector Oversight Committees (JSOCs), or joint departmental arrangements for specific powers, functions or sectors requiring shared management during the transition. Sectors would be identified that would cluster together agencies and departments affected by the implementation of agreements reached in accordance with this Framework.

Joint Sector Oversight Committees should be practical bodies with clear mandates, defined responsibilities, agreed reporting lines and milestone-based functions.

Their responsibilities may include:

a. *preparing sectoral transition plans;*

b. *identifying functions to be drawn down, delegated, jointly exercised or transferred;*

c. *preparing legal, administrative and financial instruments;*

d. *supporting institutional readiness and capacity development;*

e. *ensuring continuity of services during transition;*

f. *identifying risks and mitigation measures;*

g. *coordinating technical assistance and partner support;*

h. *reporting progress to the Joint Supervisory Body on the Melanesian Framework; and*

i. *recommending when a function is ready for further delegation, transfer or assumption.*

Joint Sector Oversight Committees should be used where they add value. They should not be created for every function or sector. In some cases, existing intergovernmental or departmental mechanisms may be sufficient, provided their mandate is clarified and aligned with this Framework.

4.6 Joint Central Agencies Transfer Implementation Committee

A standing Joint Central Agencies Transfer Implementation Committee (JCATIC), including representatives from both governments, will be established which will provide input on the human resource and budgeting aspect of each drawdown project. There should be one standing JCATIC which can be consulted by all the SOCs and PITs as required on different projects.

The JCATIC should comprise designated technical officers from GoPNG and ABG central agencies, particularly Treasury, Finance, National Planning and Personnel Management. These technical officers should receive a specific induction and training on the Bougainville Peace Process, constitutional provisions relevant to the Melanesian Framework.

The purpose of this body is also to ensure that decisions on the exercise, sharing, delegation, and final transfer and assumption of powers are supported by a clear, jointly agreed assessment of readiness and sequencing.

Its responsibilities may include:

a. *applying the readiness criteria agreed in this Framework;*

b. *reviewing sectoral transition plans prepared by Joint Sector Oversight Committees ;*

c. *assessing policy, legal, institutional, financial and service-continuity readiness;*

d. *identifying gaps and recommending support measures;*

e. *proposing milestones for phased delegation, transfer or assumption;*

f. *recommending whether a power or function should be treated as existing, immediate drawdown, delegated, shared, interim/transitional, or ready for full assumption;*

g. *reviewing progress against agreed milestones;*

h. *identifying delays, blockages or risks; and*

i. *reporting recommendations to the Joint Supervisory Body.*

The role of the JCATIC is to support joint determination on the implementation of the Melanesian Framework. Where readiness gaps are identified, the body shall recommend the actions, support, sequencing or safeguards required to address them.

4.7 Project Implementation Teams

SOCs will appoint specific Project Implementation Teams (PITs). PITs will comprise a small group of specialist technical and legal officers from both Governments and should engage advisory support and consultants where required. PITs should be made up of no more than 5-10 officials and should meet regularly and informally to drive progress. The PIT will be responsible for drawing up and implementing workplans and making progress on the ground

4.8 Monitoring Body

The Parties shall establish a Monitoring

Body to provide regular, impartial and credible reporting on implementation of the Framework to the National Parliament, the Bougainville House of Representatives and the Joint Supervisory Body.

The purpose of this mechanism is to build confidence that the pathway is being implemented in good faith, that commitments are being followed through, and that difficulties are identified early enough for corrective action to be taken.

The mechanism may include representatives or observers from Papua New Guinea, Bougainville, the witnessing signatories to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, relevant regional institutions, and the United Nations, as agreed by the Parties. Its composition should reflect the need for credibility, balance, regional legitimacy and respect for the ownership of the two Governments.

Its responsibilities may include:

a. monitoring implementation of agreed milestones;

b. reviewing progress reports from the Joint Committee;

c. identifying delays, risks or areas requiring corrective action;

d. supporting transparency and public confidence;

e. preparing periodic implementation reports for the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives;

f. advising on whether additional technical, financial or institutional support may be required; and

g. supporting peaceful dialogue where implementation difficulties arise.

The Monitoring Body shall not have decision-making authority over the Parties. Its role is to observe, report, advise and support confidence in the process. Its mandate, membership, access to information, reporting cycle and relationship to the Joint Committee shall be agreed by the Parties.

The involvement of regional and international actors should be carefully framed. It should strengthen confidence and support implementation, while preserving the ownership and leadership of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

4.9 Relationship with Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives

The Parties recognise that the National Parliament will have a central role in considering any legislative or constitutional measures required along the pathway. The Bougainville House of Representatives will also have a central role in preparing Bougainville's legal and institutional environment for self-government, and the phased assumption of powers in preparation for independence.

The Joint Supervisory Body and the Monitoring Body shall ensure that appropriate reports, recommendations or instruments are prepared for consideration by the appropriate committees of the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives at regular intervals

4.10 Regional, International and Partner Support

The Parties may invite regional and international actors to support the implementation architecture where such support is jointly agreed.

Such support may include:

a. technical advice;

b. monitoring and assurance;

c. capacity development;

d. institutional strengthening;

e. support to legal and constitutional processes;

f. support to public communication and dialogue;

g. financial or development assistance; and

h. facilitation of regional or international engagement.

4.11 Dispute Resolution and Problem-Solving

The implementation architecture shall include procedures for preventing, managing and resolving difficulties that arise during implementation.

Where possible, issues should be resolved at the lowest appropriate level. Technical matters should first be addressed by the relevant technical or sectoral mechanism. Matters requiring political direction should be referred to the Joint Supervisory Body.

The Parties may also agree to use facilitation, mediation, independent technical advice or regional support where a matter cannot be resolved through ordinary implementation channels.

The emphasis shall be on early identification, dialogue, good faith problem-solving and the preservation of the relationship between the Parties.

4.12 Summary Commitment

The Parties agree to establish an implementation architecture that can guide the transition from the present arrangements, through self-government and the phased delegation and assumption of powers, toward independence and an enduring Melanesian relationship.

This architecture shall be jointly owned, politically accountable, technically competent, legally grounded, transparent and adaptable.

It shall provide Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives with confidence that the pathway is capable of implementation, and it shall provide the people of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville with assurance that the transition will be managed peacefully, responsibly and in accordance with agreed principles.

The implementation architecture shall be established within a reasonable period following Parliament's decision to support the phased transition of powers and functions, and adapt or phase out as independence is reached and the future relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville is established.



5. Transitional Pathway

5.1 Purpose of This Section

THE purpose of this section is to outline the legal and constitutional transition which will guide the implementation of the Melanesian Framework. It is intended to recognise the agreement of both parties that the transition of Bougainville through increasing self-government must be governed up until independence by the Constitution of Papua New Guinea and other relevant legislation.

At the same time, the parties recognise that the transition necessarily involves a change in the constitutional relationship between the Government of Bougainville and the Government of Papua New Guinea, which must be articulated through amendments to the Constitution and relevant laws.

Furthermore, while agreeing to conduct all actions in line with the commitment to rule of law and orderly and predictable transition articulated in Sections 3 and 4 above, the Parties also agree to seeking to apply and interpret the law, in case of uncertainty or ambiguity, in a light most favourable to the objectives and principles of this Agreement.

The law provides guardrails to guide the transition and offers an opportunity for the Parties to define their relationship according to the unique Melanesian context. The Parties agree to define all terms used in this Melanesian Framework, including self-government, through Papua New Guinean Law, to ensure a clear understanding of the legal character, relationships, rights and obligations of both governments throughout the transition.

The transition pathway envisioned by the Parties is bookended by two constitutional moments: one at or soon after the announcement of self-government in Bougainville and the second at the moment of independence. During the period in between, the transition will be supported through the gradual evolution of the legal framework applicable to Bougainville in a manner which supports increasing self-government and prepares both sides for the eventual end stage of independence.

5.2 Self-Government as a Transitional Phase

At or soon after 1 September 2027 the two Governments will mark the opening of a new chapter, a transitional phase that commences with a declaration of Self-Government.



Section 289 of the National Constitution provides an exhaustive list of powers that remain with the National Government during ABG's autonomy, which are tied to sovereignty and national security. Section 296 of the National Constitution further stipulates that the ABG may legislate on matters listed in Section 289 "but not so as to be inconsistent with National laws on such subjects". Moreover, Section 299 of the National Constitution provides an avenue whereby either government may delegate or transfer any of its powers and functions to the other following agreement.

Section 296 and Section 299 have been considered as potential constitutional mechanisms within the framework of Part XIV and the autonomy arrangements, that allow for the ABG to begin exercising Section 289 functions and powers whilst preserving its autonomy arrangement.

Section 299, in particular, allows for the "delegation" of functions and powers and is relied upon as the basis to begin delegating sovereign functions to the ABG. However, whether a particular Section 289 function or power may be delegated under Section 299 will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the nature of the function, and any constitutional or statutory limitations on delegation. This assessment is necessary to ensure that any delegation is constitutionally sound, effective, and consistent with the autonomy framework established under Part XIV of the Constitution.

A transition into this phase should support the framing of the new relationship under Self- Government between Bougainville and Papua New Guinea, as well as facilitate the pathway for transition going forward.

The pathway envisioned by the Parties will involve legal transition: enabling Bougainville to take up agreed-upon powers and authorities under Part XIV of the National Constitution, and agreement between the two governments on the legal character of the enduring Melanesian relationship in the future. Regarding the former, in line with Sections 3 and 4 above, there may be required changes to the applicable legal frameworks throughout the transitional period to facilitate progress along the pathway.

Concurrently, the Joint Supervisory Body of the Melanesian Framework will commence talks between the two governments regarding the contours of the legal character of the enduring Melanesian Relationship. This will be necessary to ensure a predictable and orderly transition, while respecting the rights of both parties, their citizens and third parties with ongoing legal interests in Papua New Guinea.

5.3 Independence

Subject to the final decision of the National Parliament the agreed end state of the pathway is the Independence of Bougainville and an enduring Melanesian Relationship with Papua New Guinea. This point will be triggered when both governments agree that Bougainville has satisfied all readiness criteria to assume agreed Section 289 functions and powers and may be marked with an amendment to Section 2 of the Papua New Guinea Constitution to redefine the territory of Papua New Guinea as no longer including the territory of Bougainville, as well as repealing Part XIV.

Readiness is understood as a shared responsibility. It is a jointly determined and jointly supported process through which the Parties assess the enabling conditions required for each function or authority to be exercised effectively, sustainably and peacefully.

Concurrently, Bougainville would promulgate its own National Constitution, which would no longer be the Constitution of an Autonomous Region, but would be the constitution of an independent state, including necessary and relevant issues pertaining to such which are not included in the current Constitution.

Furthermore, both parties agree to strive for an agreement between the two governments in the form of a Treaty of Friendship which may include such areas of cooperation and coordination as deemed necessary and desirable to give effect to an enduring Melanesian Relationship.

6. Future Relationship Arrangements Post-Independence

6.1 The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville affirm that the pathway provided for in this Framework is intended not only to give effect to the referendum result, but also to secure an enduring peaceful relationship between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville, post- independence.

6.2 The future relationship shall be guided by the principles of mutual respect, good faith, peaceful cooperation, non-interference, shared responsibility, and recognition of the historical, cultural, family, economic and geographic ties that bind the peoples of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

6.3 Future relationship arrangements may include, as appropriate, agreed mechanisms for cooperation in areas of common interest.

6.4 These arrangements shall be developed progressively, alongside the phased transfer, delegation or assumption of powers, and shall be designed to support stability, predictability and continuity during the transition.

6.5 The Governments may establish joint or reciprocal mechanisms, including agreements, protocols, liaison arrangements, technical committees or other instruments, to manage areas of mutual responsibility.

6.6 Nothing in these future relationship arrangements shall diminish the agreed pathway toward Bougainville's assumption of sovereign powers.

Rather, such arrangements shall provide the basis for a cooperative and enduring Melanesian relationship between two closely connected peoples and governments.

6.7 The detailed content, legal form and timing of these arrangements shall be developed through further consultation between the two Governments and, where required, submitted for appropriate constitutional, parliamentary or legislative consideration.

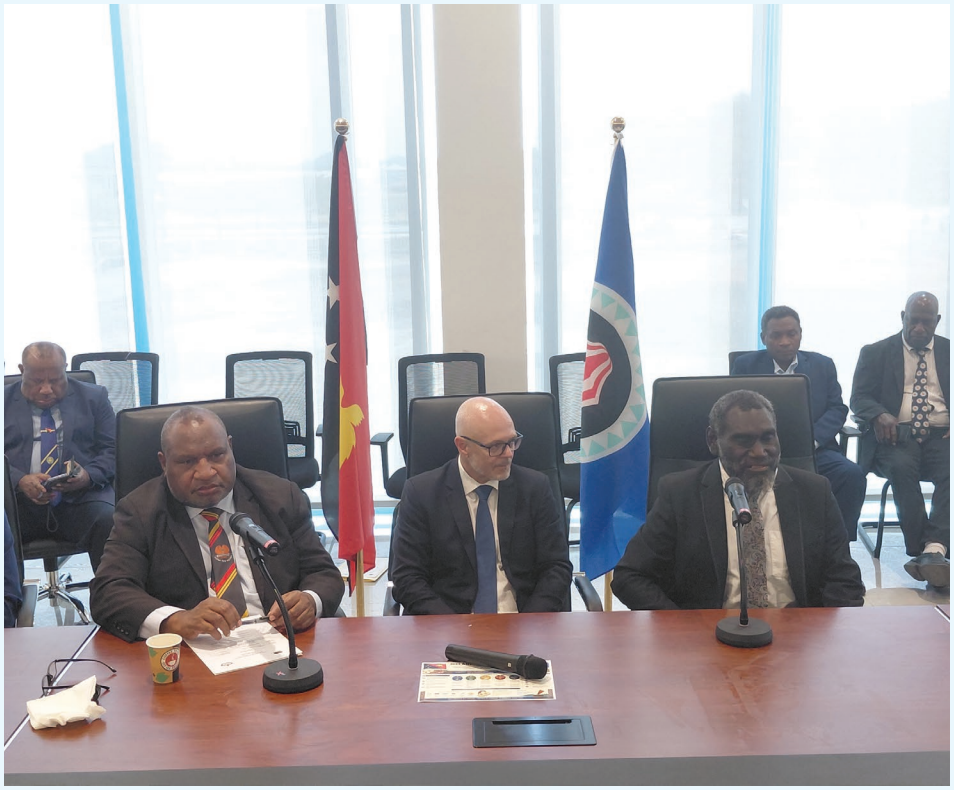
7. Final Provisions

7.1 The Melanesian Framework is a joint political and procedural framework. It does not, by itself, amend the Constitution, transfer sovereign powers or create legal obligations beyond those already established by law.

It provides an authoritative agreed reference for both governments in guiding the next phase of the Bougainville process, including parliamentary consideration, interim and transitional arrangements, and the phased and sequenced transfer, delegation, assumption or joint exercise of powers and functions. Any measure requiring legal, constitutional, executive, parliamentary or administrative action shall take effect only through the procedures required by law.

7.2 Where the Framework identifies possible interim, transitional, delegated, shared or jointly exercised arrangements, such arrangements shall be developed through appropriate legal, constitutional and administrative processes. This may include, as required, legislation, constitutional regulations, executive instruments, intergovernmental agreements, memoranda of understanding, administrative delegations, treaty-type arrangements, or other mechanisms agreed by the parties and consistent with applicable law.

7.3 The specific legal consequences of any element of the Framework shall depend on the legal instrument through which that element is implemented. Entry into effect of the Framework shall not remove the need for separate legal, constitutional, parliamentary or administrative action where such action is required.



7.4 The Framework may be amended by mutual agreement of the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government.

7.5 Any proposed amendment shall be considered through the agreed implementation architecture established under the Framework. Unless the parties agree otherwise, proposed amendments should first be reviewed at technical level, then submitted to the relevant senior officials' mechanism and thereafter to the appropriate political decision-making body of the two governments.



MELANESIAN FRAMEWORK

Endorsed by the Joint Supervisory Body on 5 August 2026

For presentation to the National Parliament alongside the Referendum Results