



A MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFERENDUM, PEACE, SECURITY AND UNIFICATION COMMITTEE HON JOSEPH WATAWI MHR

Thursday April 20 2017

GRAND CHIEF SIR MICHAEL SOMARE'S STATEMENT QUESTIONED ON THE FLOOR OF THE HOUSE.

Grand Chief, Sir Michael Somare statement that '*Bougainville will not be allowed to break away from the rest of Papua New Guinea*' was questioned on the floor of the Bougainville House of Representatives on Wednesday by the Member for Eivo Torau, Clarence Dency.

In his reply, President, John Momis said, the statement by Somare is his own opinion as the founding father of this Nation. The statement was made while he is exiting from active public duties.

Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Referendum, Peace, Security and Unification, Joseph Watawi said, the people of Bougainville are angered by Somare's statement, which predetermines the National Government's position on independence for Bougainville.

The question on whether or not Bougainville remains or leaves the rest of Papua New Guinea now rests with the people of Bougainville.

"I want to assure the people of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea that the question on the political future for Bougainville shall be decided according to the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the Constitutional laws that give effect to its implementation.

"We are geared up for the conduct of the Referendum. Ongoing preparations, both at the political and administrative levels are an indication that the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the people are ready to determine their own political future through a democratic process.

"Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare's statement that Bougainville will not break away from the rest of PNG does not change the National Government and the

Autonomous Bougainville Government's commitment to fully implement the Bougainville Peace Agreement. That is his own opinion as an individual who strongly maintains a united Papua New Guinea since independence in 1975."

"However, the Bougainville Peace Agreement and changes made to the National Constitution has changed the political dimension in dealing with the Bougainville issue which should not be undermined by all of us but accepted as a fact that the people of Bougainville decide whether to remain or leave the rest of Papua New Guinea through the conduct of the Bougainville referendum."

"The Parliamentary Committee on Referendum has been further tasked by the Bougainville House of Representatives to follow up on constituency referendum ready status reports tabled by the Members in the Bougainville House of Representatives to verify whether or not the entire region of Bougainville including Me'ekamui are ready for the conduct of Referendum in 2019."

This media statement is signed and approved by the Hon Joseph Watawi.