



Department of the President & BEC
Office of the President

MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR INTER-GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS & MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Press Statement

Tuesday 4 May 2019

Congratulation to the New PM

The President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville today congratulated the new Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, about his taking on the new office. He said:

“I congratulate you most sincerely for your elevation to the Office of the Prime Minister. I wish you well as you take on the burden of that Office. Having observed the way in which you discharged your previous ministerial roles, I have no doubt that you will bring new vision and purpose to the role of Prime Minister.

“I will look forward to working closely with you and your government in the important work required over the next 6 months to ensure the holding of a free and fair election, as it required by the National Constitution in provisions that give effect to the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

The President said that there were some important aspects of the Bougainville peace process where urgent action and direction is needed from the highest office that the Prime Minister now occupies.

The first concerns the promised funding from the National Government to the Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC), funding which is necessary for the Commission to effectively prepare for and carry out the referendum in a timely and effective manner. I ask that the new Marape Government take action to ensure that the additional K20 million promised to the BRC by the National Government is paid as soon as is practicable.

The second matter also relates to the referendum. It concerns the regulations about the conduct of the referendum, which need to be made under the Organic Law on Peace-building in Bougainville. Those regulations provide for the forms to be used in the next stage of enrolment of voters. The draft regulation were prepared some weeks ago, but have yet to be approved by NEC and sent to the Governor General for approval. It would greatly assist the BRC in its work if the regulations can be actioned as soon as practicable.

The third matter relates to the funding of the ABG. As you know, that funding is not only provided for under the Bougainville Peace Agreement, but is also guaranteed by the provisions of the National Constitution and the Organic Law on Peace-building in Bougainville. But for this year, for the first time ever, the National Government made no provision in its budget for the annual restoration and development grant. The lack of funding under that grant has left the ABG with almost no discretionary funding for expenditure. I earnestly request that the Marape Government take the necessary action, as possible, to remedy this situation.

The fourth matter concerns the next meeting of the Joint Supervisory Body. The agreement that the previous Prime Minister had with the ABG was that the next JSB be held in early August, shortly before the issue of the writs for the referendum. It was agreed that the JSB be held in Buin, in South Bougainville.

The President said he had requested the new Prime Minister to confirm a date in early August (and the proposed venue in Buin) to enable both governments to jointly assess the progress in the preparations for the referendum.



Grand Chief John L. Momis GCL, MHR
President AROB