

DEPARTMENT OF PRESIDENT & BEC. OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

PRESIDENTS MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ABG PARLIAMENT SITTING 6TH TO 8TH
SEPTEMBER 2016

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Mr Speaker I seek leave of Parliament to present to this Honourable House a Ministerial Statement on some of the current challenges and achievements of the Autonomous Bougainville Government in 2016.

1. INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS AND FINANCE

1.1 Firstly Mr Speaker, the Finance picture as we are experiencing in 2016 continues to be a major obstacle to the implementation of Bougainville's development priorities under the Autonomous arrangement as per the Bougainville Peace Agreement. The picture is indeed very gloomy with the National Governments continued ignorance of its obligations under the Bougainville Peace Agreement to provide timely and adequate funding to the ABG which is further exacerbated by the current tactics it is employing to undermine the authority of the ABG, a duly established government under the Bougainville Peace Agreement and given effect to by the PNG Constitution Part 14 as amended.

1.2 Mr Speaker, I wish to point out some very disturbing examples of this continued lack of commitment by the National Government

1.2.1 One obvious example of the non-commitment of the National Government is the non-implementation of the resolutions of the May 20th 2016, Joint Supervisory Body meeting held in Port Moresby. It is now more than three months after the JSB and there has not been any payment of the Constitutionally guaranteed Restoration and Development Grant (RDG) outstanding of K30million which the National Government agreed to pay as per the JSB resolution.

1.2.2 The continued siphoning of funds under the Special Intervention Fund (SIF) from the main SIF Trust account at the PNG Central Bank by the National Department of Works outside of the agreed SIF managements

guidelines, has greatly affected the implementation of approved SIF projects in Bougainville. This is done without the knowledge of the ABG and is a deliberate action by the National Government to undermine the ABG Mr Speaker.

1.2.3 The current issue on the transfer of 17.4 % BCL shares to the people of Bougainville including Panguna landowners against the wish of the landowners and advice from the ABG causing unnecessary anxiety to the people of Bougainville.

1.2.4 The current budgetary cuts under the National Governments supplementary budget of K42,000,000.00, a very significant amount under our development funding of which K40million is from SIF and K2 million from RDG.

Mr Speaker, this is an outright breach and mockery of the Bougainville Peace Agreement and cannot be tolerated because it amounts to total injustice to the people of Bougainville.

1.3. Mr Speaker, we have had enough and cannot sit around and let the National Government have a field day in making a mockery of the people of Bougainville and the very foundation that we stand upon, the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the ensuing constitutional provisions and enabling laws. My Cabinet has decided to pursue all these matters in court to ensure that all matters are independently dealt with by the courts and addressed once and for all.

2. ABG DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

2.1 Mr Speaker, on other positive fronts, I wish to inform Parliament that despite the negative trends in the National Governments attitude towards Bougainville, there are positive developments happening in all development sectors in Bougainville. Most of these developments will be presented by respective Ministers, but I wish to briefly touch on some .

2.1.1 Mr Speaker, we must be thankful to our Development Partners especially Australia and New Zealand and the United Nations through UNDP for their continued support to major developmental initiatives in Bougainville. The Commodity Support Facility(CSF) recently launched

and supported under GIF is a positive development for the farmers of Bougainville and will bring tangible development at the community and village levels whilst allowing Bougainville to explore downstream processing opportunities for products such as cocoa, as evidenced by the recent chocolate festival held in Buin and Arawa.

2.1.2. In the area of investments, we are continuing to foster activities that will bring investor confidence in Bougainville with continued engagements with international organisations such as the Cairns Chamber of Commerce and our continued engagements with Chinese investment interests which my government is confident will result in positive developments to grow Bougainville's economy on our path to fiscal self-reliance. My Cabinet has approved certain work streams that will allow us to properly concentrate our efforts to develop the investment environment in Bougainville one of which is a study on the creation of an entity that will facilitate trade, business, industries and investment for the purpose of developing the Bougainville Economy. This entity once approved and established will research, facilitate and advise on investment concepts and proposals and link Bougainville with international business and industry organisations and practice.

2.1.3. Mr Speaker, I must acknowledge in this instance the initiatives been taken by Bougainvillean resource owners in the Agriculture sector such as the (Konou)Tonolei Integrated Agriculture Initiative and the Bana District Development Initiative including the formation of Cooperative society groupings by Bougainvillean's in North, Central and South Bougainville. These people must be commended for organising themselves to make the environment conducive for development and for taking the bottom up approach in consultation with the ABG. I also acknowledge and commend the continued efforts of the private sector in Bougainville for being able to persevere during these hard economic times to continue to grow their businesses, provide employment to our citizens, provide much needed services to both government and the people of Bougainville and participating in growing our economy.

I encourage businesses in the agriculture and tourism sectors to continue to improve your business products and also encourage those that have the capacity to start looking at the manufacturing sector as you grow your business in order to develop Bougainville's economy.

2.1.4. Mr Speaker, in order to create a conducive environment for business investments and industry to thrive we need relevant infrastructure as enablers to help develop the economy of Bougainville. I am confident to say that we are on the right track to fulfilling this aspect of our development. Through funding that we have received in the past from the National Government including efforts of our National MPs through their DSIP and PSIP we have been able to rehabilitate many of our road networks in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville both Trunk and Feeder roads. The sealing of the Buka ring road phase 1 and 2 is a vivid example of these efforts. Major road upgrade and sealing in Central and South Bougainville are major economic enablers that will foster economic development through an improved road infrastructure.

The rehabilitation and upgrade of power supply in Buka including rural electrification and in Arawa and continued developments in the Buin power supply are positive developments that will support development of industry and business in the economy of Bougainville. The creation of Bougainville's own utility company to manage our power supply needs is the way forward that will both provide improved services whilst at the same time providing revenue to the ABG.

2.1.5 Mr Speaker, the rehabilitation of Nissan, Buin, Boku and Torokina airstrip's will be a catalyst to development in the tourism sector whilst at the same time improving government service delivery in remote districts such as Nissan and Torokina. The reopening of Nissan airstrip Mr Speaker is been proposed for the 20th of September 2016 and I wish to thank the National Airports Corporation (NAC) for their continued support to the ABG on this project.

3. CAPACITY BUILDING AND DRAW DOWN OF POWERS & FUNCTIONS

- 3.1 Mr Speaker, we continue to take capacity issues in the Public Services as part of the continuing litany of problems that constrain us from moving forward. This is now been addressed through the current recruitment and selection process been facilitated by the Department of Personnel Management and the Office of the Chief Secretary. Mr Speaker, 239 positions representing key priority positions from all the 14 departments were advertised in July of this year. To date the selection process has begun with the first department completed last week. The targeted completion of all selections is the end of this month.
- 3.2 Mr Speaker, the drawdown of powers and functions is one important area that is worth mentioning. The draw down process has had a very slow progress rate so far. This can be attributed to lack of effective and cohesive engagement between the ABG and the National government and other related constraints such as funding etc. Attached is a matrix outlining the current progress and status of the draw down of powers.

To address the slow progress of the draw down of powers and their implementation Mr Speaker, an overarching MOU framework has now been drafted and fine-tuned and will be the vehicle through which all additional powers and functions required under the Bougainville Peace Agreement will be drawn down. The MOU has been endorsed by the JSB and will soon be signed by both governments after compliance issues to the new Bougainville Public Services Management & Administration Act 2014 are rectified between the National Government and ABG before the end of this month.

4. DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMUNICATION AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION SERVICES

- 4.1 Mr Speaker Since my government took office; we have attempted to improve delivery of information services to our people. This is in line with our government's priority on Public Awareness and Information. I am happy to announce to this Honourable House that on Tuesday 30th of August 2016, we launched the following;

4.1.1. Website. Today people are able to access information on the website. The website address is; www.abg.gov.pg . The website contains information on the government, Bougainville Peace Agreement, Referendum, news and many more. The website development was done by the Bureau of Public Affairs, Media and Communications with funding support from New Zealand and Australian governments through GIF. Since the day the ABG website was launched, there is an impressive increase in subscribers and people accessing the webpage.

4.1.2. Shortwave Radio. The ABG committed K 5 million for the improvement of NBC Bougainville during the Kokopo JSB in 2014. This included the procurement of new studio broadcast equipment, renovation to the Hutjena studio, procurement of a brand new fully digital 10 kilowatt shortwave transmitter. People can now listen to information on radio by tuning in to Shortwave 1 frequency; 3.325 kilohertz on NBC Bougainville. The shortwave radio signal covers all parts of Bougainville and can be heard as far as East of Hawaii, Germany, Australia and the Pacific. Currently the shortwave frequency is down due to a fault in the transmitter system as a result of current power blackouts but should be back in operation once the faulty parts are replaced. For the FM frequency mode, a renewal of an agreement with Telesat Canada is in progress for the satellite uplink connectivity.

4.1.3. Community Information Centre. The ABG also launched its Community Information Centre roll out programme with the first one established at Buka for North Bougainville. This support will be expanded to Arawa - Central and Buin - South Bougainville. The Community Information Centres will serve as focal point for the dissemination of information to Districts, Constituencies, Community Governments and Villages Assemblies. The facility will assist people access information on the Bougainville Peace Agreement and Referendum and other additional information. People can access information at their own time.

4.1.4. Bougainville Peace Agreement Commemoration Day. The Bougainville Executive Council made an important historical decision to commit the 30th of August as a Commemoration Day for the Bougainville Peace Agreement. This day was declared on Tuesday 30th of August 2016 at Buka

– Bel Isi Park. Solidarity was shown by our leaders including Ex Combatants and Mekamui in the presence of the United Nations and International Community, that we can all work together to achieve the vision and aspirations of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Bougainville will celebrate the achievement of the Bougainville Peace Agreement comes August 30th every year.

4.1.5. Radio Programmes and Radio Talk Back. We have since June 24th 2016 conducted 10 live talk back shows hosted by ABG’s Mobile Community Radio – Radio Ples Lain and relayed over NBC Bougainville and New Dawn. The talk back generated a lot of public interest as they participated in raising comments and questions on what the government is doing. The live talk is part of the government’s community conversation initiatives hosted on radio. We are now looking at establishing a toll free line to enable people to fully participate in the talk back.

The Bureau of Public Affairs, Media and Communication has so far produced and air 160 radio programmes since February to August 2016. These radio programmes have been well appreciated by our people as they gain insight and understanding on what the government is doing at Department and Ministry level.

4.1.6. ABG Newspaper: ABG’s very own Bougainville Bulletin has progressed well with well over 150,000 copies distributed all over Bougainville since 2015.

4.1.7. Communication Tools. We have started development on material resources to support awareness on the Bougainville Peace Agreement and especially Referendum. UNDP as per our request supported us with the procurement of equipment. The equipment will be utilised to conduct awareness at the community. We intend to embark on a region wide awareness campaign working closely with Constituency members, Community Government, Village Assemblies, Women, Youth and Churches.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion Mr Speaker, I wish to encourage all members of parliament to properly inform your people on current developments within government through the use of radio and available mediums of communications so that our people are made aware and well informed of government plans and development initiatives in order to support and participate in implementing the Bougainville Peace Agreement and building Bougainville for that matter.

Thank you Mr Speaker and God Bless Bougainville.

**HON. CHIEF DR JOHN L MOMIS
PRESIDENT OF THE AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE
GOVERNMENT**