

**Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 20 July 2017**

Isolate PNC



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta today urged all newly-elected independent Members of Parliament to join the Independent Team or friendly parties in Opposition, but not PNC.

“Peter O’Neill and PNC have tried every possible trick to rig the election,” he said. “Despite this, Opposition candidates have made strong gains – witness the sweep Pangu is making in Morobe, while other Opposition parties and Independents are leading in most seats.

“These MPs-elect have fought strong campaigns against the odds and won. PNC is out-numbered 2-1 in the declarations so far. Opposition parties have joined together to provide a very clear alternative to Peter O’Neill.

“But the fight is not over yet. Mr O’Neill is trying to stall the Opposition’s gains by slowing counting and attempting to lure independent candidates.

“It will not work. People are not blind to Mr O’Neill’s tactics; people are sick of his abuse of power and are calling for change.

“Already PNC strongmen are looking to defect or to change their leader. They know that Mr O’Neill and his sidekick James Marape won by dubious means, with Sunday voting, more ballot papers than names on the electoral roll, and so on.

“PNC members realise that Mr O’Neill and Mr Marape could well lose their seats in the Court of Disputed Returns. The disputes are already registered.”

Sir Mekere said Mr O’Neill had a record of gross mismanagement of the economy and public finances.

He had also infiltrated and politicised important institutions that were set up to promote and uphold transparency and accountability.

“Look at what has happened to the Electoral Commission, the Police, the Defence Force, the Treasury and the Finance Department, the Bank of Papua New Guinea,” he said. “Look at how he has starved the Ombudsman Commission and the Fraud Squad of resources, and abolished Task Force Sweep after starving it completely.

“Mr O’Neill has muzzled the media. He has virtually outlawed public protest. Where is he going to stop?

“Papua New Guinea cannot allow an O’Neill Government to come back to power. That guarantees disaster for the nation and the burial of our young democracy.

“I appeal to all independent Members-elect to remain independent and join other independents to move strategically as a group. Let the numbers in the political party landscape take shape then move as a group to influence the making of a new Government.

“By moving individually now you lose that independence and the benefit of combined influence. You become a newcomer to the core group of a party and will be treated as such. Your fate will be determined by the fate of the party that you join prematurely.

“In a group of independents you retain your freedom, but have the advantage of the power of a group. If you choose to join a party immediately, join one of the parties in Opposition. Do not join PNC.”

Sir Mekere said Papua New Guinea’s future was at stake.

“All Members-elect, whether Independents, or from parties, must listen to the cry of the people, who are worried about the future,” he said. They want and are praying for a change of government.”