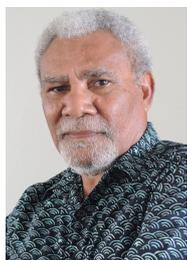


**Public Statement  
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta  
Port Moresby, 26 June 2017**

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**Gamato and Lupari must go**



Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato and Election Steering Committee head Isaac Lupari must be sacked or stood down immediately to prevent further election chaos occurring.

They must be replaced by competent, independent people capable of conducting the election effectively and honestly.

Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today that Mr Gamato and Chief Secretary Lupari have compromised the election. “Many people expressed fears previously that the election would not be free and fair. Under Mr Gamato and Mr Lupari we are seeing those fears come true,” he said.

“The election has barely started and reports are coming in from all over the country of chaos, delays, irregularities and problems of all sorts. The public does not have any confidence in Mr Gamato and Mr Lupari.

“There is growing dissatisfaction with the conduct of the election, and if it continues the way it has begun, the public cannot have any confidence in the outcome.”

Sir Mekere said he had personally been told of many irregularities regarding the electoral roll, including hundreds of ghost names, registered voters being left off in very large numbers after appearing on the preliminary roll, discrepancies in voter numbers between wards and LLGs and in comparison with the 2012 roll.

“We even have candidates saying they they have just discovered they have been taken off the roll,” he said.

“The roll is not available to the public. Why?”

There are widespread allegations of tampering with ballot boxes and ballot papers and of duplicate ballot papers being smuggled into the country. There have been numerous reports of ballot papers being in the possession of unauthorised people.

Some Police and Defence Force personnel are said to be refusing to provide election security because their allowances have not been paid. It would seem that payment of allowances is being done very selectively.

Serious allegations about bribery and corruption have been made. For example the Department of Finance is alleged to have paid a large sum of money into an election official’s private account to pay “poll officers”. There are numerous reports that one prominent candidate in the Highlands has been handing out demonetised K100 notes, purportedly hijacked in transit between the central bank and an overseas destination. Meanwhile the Governor of the Bank remains silent on the hijacking of the notes.

Questions arise about many of the election-related contracts and provision of goods and services.

A helicopter company owned by a candidate has been contracted to transport boxes and papers in Central Province. Defence Force personnel in the Highlands are residing in properties owned by people with connections to PNC.

Reliable sources have reported that the Defence Force team in Ialibu-Pangia has been removed and replaced with hand-picked favorites on the personal instruction of a candidate, Prime Minister Peter O’Neill.

In the absence of election security, according to various reports on social media, polling material is being handled and transported without any scrutiny. Other logistical problems are being reported elsewhere.

Polling has not proceeded in a number of areas, reported to include East Sepik, Oro, Kairuku-Hiri, Gulf, Manus, Madang and South Fly.

“These reports, from the first day of polling, signify that the election is in chaos,” Sir Mekere said. “The only way out is to get rid of the people who caused this mess and replace them with independent, honest and competent people.”