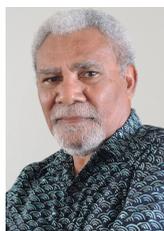


**Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 27 June 2017**

The Gamato-Lupari-PNC poll chaos worsens



The election chaos caused by Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato, Election Steering Committee head Isaac Lupari and the PNC Government has reached the point of no return.

Either a new, independent, competent and honest election management team is installed immediately, or the election will fail. The Prime Minister has no choice – either he saves the election or condemns it to failure.

“This chaos and corruption cannot be allowed to continue,” former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today. “The possibility of a free and fair election is receding by the hour.

“People say they have lost faith in electoral systems and processes, and lack confidence in a result that will reflect the wishes of voters.

“Today it is the national capital’s turn – polling deferred to Friday because of an alleged funding shortfall and utterly inadequate planning. What sort of message does that send to international observers and media?

“I can tell you what that message is – that the 2017 election has been compromised by unheard of levels of incompetence and corruption. That is a fact, and it has been noted by the international media. No doubt it will be noted by the election observers as well.”

Sir Mekere said his worst fear is that the failure of Mr Gamato and Mr Lupari to run a free and fair election puts Papua New Guinea’s parliamentary democracy in danger.

The risk is that an outcome based on mismanagement and vote-rigging will drag the nation further down the path towards dictatorship.

Our rights and freedoms will be further curtailed, corruption, waste and mismanagement will reach even greater heights, and Papua New Guinea will become a pariah state.

Overnight and this morning further details of electoral mismanagement and corruption have been published in the mainstream media and social media.

The latest is that electoral officials and supporters of candidates in Port Moresby have been arrested with cash and NCD Regional and Open ballot papers wrongly in their possession, and allegations are spreading that duplicate ballot papers are about to be distributed to candidates and puppet candidates for one political party.

Is this the real reason for the deferral of voting in NCD – to allow more time for electoral fraud?

Mr Gamato has conceded that the K48 million update of the electoral roll has been a waste of money – he has now permitted the supplementary roll to be used. He should also allow the 2012 roll to be used, and allow all students at tertiary institutions whose names have been left off the 2017 roll to vote on presentation of their University registration identification.

Complaints about the roll continue to pour in – from Bougainville, West New Britain, Central, Western, Milne Bay, Southern Highlands, Eastern Highlands, Madang, Chimbu, Hela, Gulf, with thousands of people left off the roll and thousands of ghost names identified.

Candidates and voters alike are reporting large discrepancies in roll numbers between wards in their electorates, and compared with the 2012 roll.

And still the Electoral Commission is officially refusing to allow candidates to see the roll. Why? How is it that copies of the roll are being bought from election officials?

“Instead of running round the country campaigning for the Prime Minister, Mr Lupari should have been ensuring that the Electoral Commission was able to do its job,” Sir Mekere said.

“Instead he and Mr Gamato have presided over a shameful failure that threatens the foundation of the nation.”