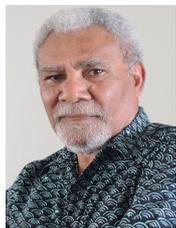


Public statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 17 May 2017

Baki must resign



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today the Police Commissioner, Mr Gary Baki, must resign forthwith or be dismissed by the Prime Minister.

It is impossible for a Police Commissioner to remain in office after organizing and conducting an illegal operation involving foreign mercenaries.

“His is a Constitutional Office,” Sir Mekere said. “The holder of such offices must be beyond reproach, and Mr Baki does not fit into that category. He must go.”

Sir Mekere said the deportation of the illegal foreign mercenaries and the winding up of Mr Baki’s illegal operation meant there is added urgency for an independent inquiry into the scandal. The Ombudsman Commission now has ample public evidence on which to base an inquiry.

Such an inquiry should cover all the financial and legal aspects of Mr Baki’s operation. It should also seek to establish who else might have been involved, including Prime Minister Peter O’Neill, Chief Secretary Isaac Lupari, national security officers including members of the National Security Advisory Committee, APEC officials and other police.

“There are many fingerprints on this operation and the public has a right to know who they belong to. Who ultimately approved the operation or was involved in its implementation,” Sir Mekere asked.

“Mr Lupari’s official statements as chair of the NSAC demonstrate that both he and the committee were well aware of the operation. The Prime Minister must make clear what the involvement of Mr Lupari and the NSAC was, and if necessary he should be suspended pending an investigation.

“None of the public statements issued by the police or the Government has answered any of my questions,” Sir Mekere said. “All we have got is the usual spin, half-truths and deception from this Government.

“It is time for the Prime Minister to show some leadership by taking take action against Mr Baki, and by establishing the facts about the operation and making them public. People remain extremely concerned about this scandal and only a full independent inquiry can ease their fears.”

Sir Mekere said it was important that the Ombudsman Commission has available to it the legal basis on which Mr Baki acted, including whether there was an NEC decision or any other executive approval for or involvement in the operation.

There are other important legal questions, for example the basis on which Mr Baki was creating a special force involving police, Customs, Correctional Services and the Defence Force. And whether there were any plans to involve mercenaries in any capacity.

Two knowledgeable lawyers have questioned the legality of establishing such a force without the approval of Parliament.

They also question the legality of swearing in the mercenaries as Special Constables without the approval of Parliament.

Sir Mekere also questioned the financial arrangements for the operation, and who approved them. Is it correct that K7 million has already been paid, and has any further money been committed, he asked. Did the financial arrangements comply with the Public Finances (Management) Act?

He said he remained concerned by Mr Baki’s plans for his rapid response force to continue after APEC. “The Prime Minister should state unequivocally that any special force to be created for APEC is legal and has the backing of Parliament,” he said.

“He should also state unequivocally that any such force will be disbanded on the completion of APEC.”