

**Public Statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 23 July 2017**

Return of Writs



Electoral Commissioner Patilias Gamato must not cook up an undemocratic, unfair and unrepresentative sitting of Parliament by selective and staggered return of writs and candidate declarations, former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today.

He has promised a free and fair election, and he must live up to his promise at least in the final stages. “Every step up to now has been compromised and manipulated to attain one particular outcome – the election of a PNC Prime Minister and Government,” Sir Mekere said.

“People have seen through all the tricks used by PNC and Mr Gamato and people will not tolerate more of the same.”

The Electoral Commission and the former PNC Government have engineered and presided over a chaotic election characterised by extraordinary irregularities, deaths and violence in many areas, and now deliberate delays in counting, quality checks and eliminations/distribution of preferences.

Enough is enough. Democracy and fairness must be allowed to prevail over base political interest and money politics. The people of Papua New Guinea have a right to expect that the votes they cast are reflected in the calling of the new Parliament, the election of the Prime Minister and the formation of the new government.

“It is clear from the declarations so far that the electorate has resoundingly rejected the PNC regime,” Sir Mekere said.

“Of the 40 plus declarations so far, PNC has won only one-third. PNC Ministers have been rejected by voters. PNC has lost Deputy Prime Minister Leo Dion, Speaker Theo Zurenuoc, Deputy Leader Mao Zeming, Attorney-General Ano Pala, Ministers Isikel and Miringtoro.”

Sir Mekere said the Electoral Commission must allow all the seats to be declared so that the true outcome of the election is reflected in the new Parliament.

The selective return of some writs so as to trigger the first sitting of the new Parliament with a bias towards PNC must not proceed. Returning some writs and seeking extensions for others would be unprecedented and undemocratic.

“The Electoral Commissioner has the power to seek an extension of the date for the return of writs so that all seats are returned and all voters are represented in the new Parliament,” he said.

“Citizens have a right to expect that. The Electoral Commissioner has a legal and moral duty to comply with the intent of the constitution and electoral laws, and the democratic desires and expectations of the people.”