

Public statement
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 23 April 2017

Sir Mekere: Stop personal attacks and discuss national issues, PM



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today he was disappointed that the Prime Minister continues to indulge in personal attacks rather than focus on issues and policies that could rescue the nation from the economic and financial chaos he has created.

“Personal attack, especially when it consists of falsehoods and fantasy, is not a substitute for substantive and constructive public discourse,” he said.

“I repeat my suggestion to the Prime Minister – that he focus on the things that matter, such as repairing the economy and government finances, refinancing the health and education systems after the massive cuts he has imposed, eradicating corruption, improving the quality of services, rebuilding the institutions of state that he has abused, respecting the law, following proper systems and processes of Government.

“These are the critical issues after five years of his government. The people of Papua New Guinea deserve to be treated with respect by being provided with policies and action plans that will help overcome the O’Neill fiasco.

“I have put forward my suggestions on what an incoming government should consider. The Prime Minister should follow suit. Or is it the case that he has no policies, no action plan, and no idea, except to continue the damage he has caused?”

“He has no concern for Papua New Guineans. All he is concerned about is promoting glamour projects and his own personal interests, and saving his own skin.”

Sir Mekere noted that the Prime Minister had criticised PNG Sustainable Development Program Ltd and his role as chairman. Sir Mekere said every “particular” mentioned by the Prime Minister in relation to PNGSDP was false. The truth of the matter is as follows:

- (i) I have taken legal advice long ago about my position as chairman of PNGSDP, and I will take the appropriate action at the appropriate time – which has not arrived yet. “Mr O’Neill forgets that PNGSDP is a company, and I am not a public employee,” he said.
- (ii) It is simply false to say millions of dollars are missing. Every year since its inception, PNGSDP has been subject to independent audit by Pricewaterhousecoopers, an international firm with an impeccable reputation. In all that time they have never found evidence of mismanagement or the whiff of fraud
- (iii) Since I took on the role of chairman of PNGSDP, I have instigated strict cost control measures and the evidence is there for anybody to see in our audited annual reports. PNGSDP takes pride in its transparency. There is no nepotism and Mark Davis, who is indeed an old friend, has not been on the PNGSDP payroll for a long time
- (iv) Far from being a white elephant, the Daru Port was a potentially transformative development project which was derailed by the Prime Minister when he expropriated the OkTedi mine. I don’t know where the Prime Minister gets his information. PNGSDP has never sold its telecommunication towers to Digicel. PNGSDP continues to own them and they continue to deliver a vital service to the people of the Western Province

“He should check the facts and clean his own dirty backyard,” Sir Mekere said.

He said the latest machinations in Western Province by the Prime Minister were yet another attempt to get his hands on Western Province monies and on the \$US1.4 billion in the Long Term Fund. “I am pleased the National Court has stayed the Government’s attempt to appoint a new Administrator, who is a close associate of the Prime Minister,” he said.

“As for the PNGSDP court case, the matter is still pending. So the Prime Minister should not comment, particularly when what he says is incorrect.

“Since the Prime Minister illegally expropriated the company’s 63.4 percent shareholding in Ok Tedi in 2013, PNGSDP had to suspend its development program, at great social and financial cost to the people of Western Province. I look forward to the day when that program resumes.”

In the meantime, Sir Mekere said, he will continue to put forward responsible, constructive and achievable suggestions for rescuing the nation for discussion and comment by the public, and advocate for a change of government.