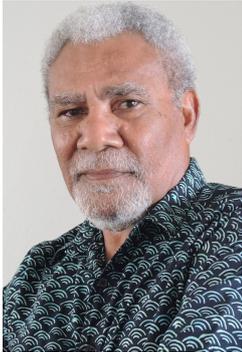


**Public Statement by
Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta**
Port Moresby, 31 May 2016

Parliament being undermined



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta said today the National Parliament is in danger of becoming a rubber stamp for the decisions taken by the Prime Minister, surrounded by a small group of unelected advisers, high-priced foreign consultants and vested interests.

“In recent years the Office of the Prime Minister and those who influence it have come to dominate the structures and processes of decision-making by the Parliament and the Executive,” he said.

“Parliament in particular needs to be restored to its rightful place as the embodiment of the rights, aspirations and views of the people.

“Likewise the rights and the duty of Members of Parliament to represent the nation and their people need to be restored and respected.”

The refusal of the Government to allow Parliament to discuss properly issues or proposed laws - such as the Budget, revenue, expenditure, taxes and borrowings – is an attack on the House’s position as the centerpiece of Papua New Guinea’s democracy.

MPs have a democratic right and a legal and moral duty to analyse, debate and make informed laws in the national interest.

Failure to do so has resulted in the Supreme Court declaring a stream of laws to be unconstitutional.

An example is the ruling of the Supreme Court that the current government’s attempt to avoid a vote of no confidence was unconstitutional.

“It is also not right that District Support funds be used as a weapon to control votes in Parliament, recruit MPs to the ruling party and maintain political dominance,” Sir Mekere said.

“The result of all this is that people are fast losing confidence in and respect for the Parliament,” Sir Mekere said.

The growing practice of the Prime Minister not consulting Parliament and MPs, or experienced and professional Papua New Guineans in the public service, the business sector, churches and NGOs, was contributing to a general decline in public confidence in national institutions.

“It is clear to all of us that the Prime Minister’s decisions are influenced and flavoured by an army of publicly funded foreign lawyers, foreign bankers, accountants, financial advisers and spin doctors,” Sir Mekere said.

“It is annoying and frustrating for the many educated Papua New Guineans who have been effectively silenced.

“The victims of the Prime Minister’s ruthless, dictatorial style are the Parliament, the Constitution and the Laws of Papua New Guinea and the rights of citizens,” Sir Mekere said.