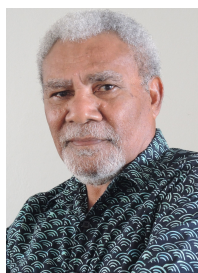


Public Statement on 2017 election issues
by Rt Hon Sir Mekere Morauta
Port Moresby, 17 March 2017

Need for rational and constructive political debate



Former Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta today called for a more rational and constructive debate about national issues in the lead-up to the election.

“The election result will determine the future of the nation,” he said.

“It is important that voters are well informed about the issues that are critical to the nation through informed, open public debate.

“It is also important to ensure that the conduct of the election itself is free and fair and that electoral systems and processes are transparent and subject to international and domestic public scrutiny.”

Sir Mekere said the adoption of appropriate policies is the key to getting Papua New Guinea back on track, not grandiose schemes, vote-buying and sweet-talk.

“The latter is what has brought the nation to its knees, coupled with unprecedented levels of corruption, waste and mismanagement,” he said.

The former Prime Minister said he is concerned about the level of gutter politics exhibited in the election debate so far. There has been a tendency on the part of puppets of the current regime to engage in slanging matches and personal attacks.

“Such self-preserving behavior is counter-productive and clouds the real issues.”

Sir Mekere, who is considering whether to nominate for election, said he saw six main issues that should be discussed widely and openly:

- Extraordinary levels of **CORRUPTION, WASTE AND MISMANAGEMENT**, which have brought Papua New Guinea to the brink and into international disrepute
- Grave threats to **PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY**, human rights, freedom of speech and freedom of association. The election itself is under threat from the Government’s stranglehold over the institutions that influence election outcomes
- Unprecedented **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL MISMANAGEMENT**, which is shaking the foundations of the nation. If allowed to continue, the task of rescuing and restoring the economy and public finances will be extremely difficult
- The **STALLING OF THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT AND CONSEQUENT FAILURE OF SERVICE DELIVERY**, resulting in declining living standards. Essential sectors such as health and education have been so badly funded and managed that Papua New Guinea is begging Australia to fund them by way of direct Budget support, as well as to underwrite the lavish APEC exercise
- The collapse of **LAW AND ORDER** with growing social dislocation because of poverty, unemployment and rising prices caused by the Government’s recklessness. The Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary, once a proud and effective institution, is struggling to cope because it is under-funded, under-manned, fractured and politicised
- Politicisation, misuse and abuse of important **INSTITUTIONS OF STATE** such as the Central Bank and the Treasury. State-Owned Enterprises have been used as personal piggy banks and slush funds. Watch-dog bodies have been undermined and perverted.

“These are the issues that need to be debated, in a rational and productive way,” Sir Mekere said. “Only through informed public debate can we understand the nature of our problems, identify solutions and implement rescue plans.

“At present we are hearing too few voices because there is an air of fear and intimidation across all sections of society. People need to speak out - silence serves to encourage thieves and wreckers.”

Sir Mekere specifically called for public vigilance and debate over the conduct of the elections - the nation cannot afford for the Electoral Commission’s systems to be bypassed or manipulated.

The first step should be for people to check the electoral roll – this can be done easily and quickly on the internet by visiting <http://pngec.gov.pg/irc/roll-lookup/RollLookUp>. Any omissions, mistakes or inconsistencies should be immediately reported to the Electoral Commission.

Free and fair elections are the cornerstone of parliamentary democracy, Sir Mekere said, and part of that is faith in and support for the Electoral Commission and electoral processes.