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## **PM O'Neill Outlines Intent for APEC PNG Joint Security Task Force Border Security Workshop to be Convened in Coming Weeks**

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The Prime Minister, Hon. Peter O'Neill CMG MP, has announced a stepping-up of security preparedness and planning for APEC Papua New Guinea 2018 events that will begin with the Informal Senior Officials Meeting in December later this year.

As part of this, the Prime Minister said the APEC Papua New Guinea Joint Security Task Force (JSTF) will increase planning for the APEC year, under the direction of the Commissioner for Police, as the Task Force Commander.

The Prime Minister said one of the most pressing issues before the JSTF is to enhance border security and he expects a high-level workshop will be convened by the JSFT in the coming weeks.

In highlighting the importance of APEC security, the Prime Minister has restated the Government's intent for security operations in support of APEC.

"The safety and security of Leaders, Ministers, delegates, staff and members of the public is of primary importance to ensuring the successful delivery of Papua New Guinea's APEC year," the Prime Minister said.

"NEC has approved the establishment the APEC PNG Joint Security Task Force under the Command of the Commissioner of the RPNGC.

"Direction has been given to properly staff the JSTF, so that it can formalise planning and facilitate operational deployments in support of APEC events that will begin later this year.

"In providing civilian oversight of national security services, Cabinet has directed the JSTF to ensure the safety of all Leaders, Ministers, delegates, officials and members of the public for the duration of APEC meetings.

"These meetings formally begin with the informal Senior Officials' Meetings in December 2017 through to the Leaders' Summit in November 2018, but will have a pre-deployment operation to support the APEC Transportation Ministers' Meeting in October.

"To provide this, the JSTF Commander has the task of fully standing-up the JSTF, its staff and assets, in order to plan for the engagement of all force elements. This involves agencies of State, working with our partner economies, to be operationally deployed from December 2017 to November 2018.

"The Commissioner of Police, as JSTF Commander, will now develop a JSTF staffing structure that will second officers of Papua New Guinea's security agencies to the JSTF when they are required.

"The Commander of the JSFT is responsible for establishing planning, command and staffing, drawing on the resources that had been earlier identified by the Committee on Safety and Security, as the peak advisory body, to formalise immediate planning.

“In a constantly evolving global security environment, preparation for major international events has become increasingly complex and Papua New Guinea is ensuring planning is on track.”

To cover one of the important elements to APEC Security, the Prime Minister said a high-level Border Security workshop will be convened in the coming weeks.

"Under the JSTF, a Border Security Workshop will convene that will bring together relevant Government agencies to assess concerns and gaps, and set the way forward, not only for APEC but the longer-term border security of the nation," the Prime Minister said.

"We have ongoing border security concerns that are being addressed, and we must increase the pace of these activities.

“Part of this includes enhancing the integrated processing of passenger information that is essential for the next step in facilitating the movement of passengers through our airports.

“But we also need better eyes-on people who enter our sovereign waters or seek to cross our land border.

“We already have very close working relationships with our immediate neighbours, Australia, Indonesia and the Solomon Islands, and we will increase this co-operation.

"We must also strengthen our geospatial surveillance capacity to enhance border security so we can detect and deal with threats to national and economic security.”

The Prime Minister said an essential part of APEC planning is that it will have an enduring legacy for many sectors that are important for the economy and national development.

The Border Security Workshop will include Customs, Immigration, Fisheries, Police, Defence, Justice, Foreign Affairs, and very importantly, the APEC PNG 2018 Joint Security Task Force.

The Prime Minister said the hosting of APEC provides an important opportunity to enhance security, but all reforms put in place ahead of APEC will have long-lasting impacts for decades to come.

“APEC is of high significance for our nation, and at the same time any reform that we deliver for APEC must last beyond November 2018 when we host APEC Leaders.

“These are reforms will not only keep Leaders and delegates safe during APEC, but will help ensure longer term security for Papua New Guinea.”

The Prime Minister has extended gratitude to members of the Committee on Safety and Security, that comprises State agencies, under the leadership of the PNGDF and the RPNGC, for its hard work and determination, in laying the foundations for the success of APEC Papua New Guinea 2018.

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