



PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND OUR PACIFIC PARTNERS

IN A GLOBALISING WORLD

Introduction

In July 2013, I presented a foreign policy statement on the Government's behalf. The theme was 'Papua New Guinea Connect: growing Papua New Guinea's connections in a Globalising world'.

I rise today to report on progress and challenges in the past year in growing important connections for our nation.

I do so at a time when our Prime Minister, Hon. Peter O'Neill, is Chair of the leading inter-governmental organization in our region, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Having hosted the PIF Leaders' meeting in Port Moresby last September, he will continue as Chair until he hands over to the President of the Federated States of Micronesia, H.E. Peter M. Christian, in September this year.

The past year has been an exceptionally busy and productive period for growing vital connections with other countries and international organizations.

Papua New Guinea has hosted several high-level visits and events.

Our Prime Minister has made important visits in Asia and Europe.

Both the Deputy Prime Minister and I have assisted the Prime Minister in providing high-level representation for our nation at some important international summits.

I will briefly explain the outcomes and importance of these engagements and how they have helped to raise our profile as a responsible, committed and constructive regional partner and actor.

In doing so, I assure Honorable Members and the people of Papua New Guinea that, while we have been busy growing our country's international connections, we have not for a moment taken our eyes off the vital duty of safeguarding Papua New Guinea's core national interests.

Significant Recent Engagements

Papua New Guinea enjoys close, friendly and constructive relations with many countries and international organizations, including those in our immediate neighborhood.

But relationships do not grow on their own. Government must make right choices in deciding with whom and how to engage. It must invest the time, energy and resources required to develop positive and mutually beneficial relations that support Papua New Guinea's national interests.

Visits to Papua New Guinea

The visits by the Indonesian President, H. E. Joko Widodo, President of Indonesia, on 11-12 May and Foreign Minister, Hon. Retno Marsudi, on 27 February were directed towards promoting mutual respect and understanding, resolving potential differences, particularly in border management, and advancing co-operation in trade and other cross-border arrangements.

The Australian Foreign Minister, Hon. Julie Bishop, visited in November to launch two important initiatives with significant national and regional implications: the Pacific Leadership and Governance Precinct, a valuable initiative designed to strengthen public sector management and develop senior public servants' skills; and the Pacific Women in Business website, a portal for women to connect with each other and share information online.

Other important bilateral issues were also discussed during the Australian Minister's visit. They included the Regional Resettlement Arrangement, the Joint Understanding on additional funding of \$A420 million for further development of the Manus Island Asylum Processing Centre and the Resettlement Programme. They also included a Joint Understanding on the delivery of key impact projects, including the Angau Hospital Re-development, Waigani Magistrates' Courts, the Madang-Ramu Highway, rehabilitation of the University of Papua New Guinea, and assistance by the Australian Federal Police. Other issues discussed included visa arrangements, seasonal workers, the new Colombo Plan, Australian assistance in dealing with the effects of the drought in Papua New Guinea, as well as regional trade-related issues. Minister Bishop took the opportunity to visit a number of projects in Wapenamanda.

The New Zealand Foreign Minister, Hon. Murray McCully, visited in August to discuss New Zealand's bid for election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, as well as fisheries, air services, investment in large-scale agri-business and proposed mini- hydro projects, as well as investment in forestry, infrastructure and an LNG refinery, together with the

provision of support for Papua New Guinea's hosting of the 2018 Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) leaders' meeting. He, too, visited Wapenamanda to see current and potential project sites at firsthand.

These bilateral visits were additional to those of the large number of leaders and other high- ranking officials who came to Port Moresby for the 46th Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) in September. They included representatives of PIF members as well as observers and Post-Forum Dialogue partners.

The first three months of 2016 have also been busy.

The Prime Minister of Tonga, Hon. Samiuela Akilisi Pohiva, came to inspect our sporting facilities and seek Papua New Guinea's support for hosting the next Pacific Games in Tonga in 2019.

The Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, came to seek our continuing support for Solomon Islanders studying in Papua New Guinea institutions. In his capacity as Chairman of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), he also raised the question of West Papua, and additional funding for the MSG Secretariat, as well as issues concerning the MSG Humanitarian and Emergency Response Co-ordination Centre, airline and shipping connectivity between MSG members, and leadership of the MSG Secretariat in Vanuatu.

The Italian Minister of Environment Hon. Gian Luca Galletti, came to discuss his government's 2018 bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council. He also discussed Italian investment in Papua New Guinea, and climate change issues.

Other important visitors included a scoping team from the Brussels-based Secretariat of the 79-member African Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states party to the *Cotonou Agreement* with the European Union, who met with officials to discuss government plans for hosting the 8th Summit of ACP leaders here in Port Moresby in late May-early June.

In February, the Confederation of Indian Industries sent a team to discuss potential business opportunities in Papua New Guinea. The President of India will pay an official visit later this year.

Meanwhile, the Vice-Minister of the People's Republic of China, Mr Zheng Zeguang, visited us on 25-26 February to discuss a wide range of bilateral issues, including Prime Minister O'Neill's forthcoming visit to China in July.

The Israeli Ambassador accredited from Canberra, H. E. Shmuel Ben-Shmuel, visited on 23-25 February. We discussed various matters of shared interest, including ratification of the agreement on visa exemption for diplomatic and other passport-holders.

It was a very particular pleasure to receive Dame Meg Taylor, the Papua New Guinean Secretary-General of the premier South Pacific regional organization, the PIF, who came here from Suva to continue our dialogue on implementation of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism and other important regional issues.

Papua New Guinea leaders' visits to other countries

Heads of government meetings provide important direction and momentum in building our country's foreign relations.

Thus, the Prime Minister's visit to Japan in October included such productive outcomes as the signing of project agreements for the Port Moresby Sewerage Upgrade and Nadzab Airport Redevelopment. Notes were also signed to allow visa-on-arrival for diplomatic and other government officials.

Since the visit to Papua New Guinea by the Prime Minister of Japan in 2014, and the commencement of LNG exports to Japan, there has been a significant increase in government and business exchanges between the two countries. More high-level exchanges are planned for later this year. Japan is committed to expanding assistance to the PIF through meetings with Pacific Islands Leaders Meetings (PALM).

Prime Minister O'Neill also held wide-ranging bilateral talks with United Kingdom Prime Minister, Hon. David Cameron in London in June. In August, he met in New Delhi with Hon. Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India, an increasingly significant regional and global actor, during the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Co-operation (FIPIIC). These were the first such exchanges with leaders of these two important countries. The Prime Minister's meetings have opened the way for increased interactions with the governments and private sectors of both countries.

While he was in Europe last year, the Prime Minister also visited Brussels for high-level talks with the European Commission and to address the representatives of the ACP countries stationed there.

In December, I travelled to Morocco to participate in a follow-up to the Crans Montana Forum on African and South-South Co-operation, in which representatives of African countries engaged with representatives of Pacific islands countries on vital aspects of shared interest in sustainable economic and social development.

International Co-operation

Papua New Guinea works closely with our partners in the Pacific, Asia, and elsewhere in various regional and other international organizations.

In August, I represented Papua New Guinea at the twenty-second Regional Forum of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ARF), which was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. While Papua New Guinea continues to be a special observer at ASEAN, we are full members of the ARF, which focuses on regional security and related issues. Issues discussed included tensions in the East and South China Seas, North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, as well as Japan's 'Pro-active Contribution to Peace', including Japan's support for the ARF.

In September, Papua New Guinea was privileged to host the 46th PIF in Port Moresby. This important event was held almost back-to-back with the Pacific Games and the celebrations marking the 40th anniversary of our national independence.

The key outcomes of last year's PIF are contained in two important documents: the Hiri Declaration and the Joint Communiqué. They clearly reflect a simple yet effective government strategy to add value to regional co-operation through:

- a determined effort to implement the new framework for Pacific regionalism, and
- building consensus to promote the Pacific Islands' agenda in global fora.

The new Framework for Pacific Regionalism is a package of fresh initiatives to improve the way the PIF conducts its business that follows a review of PIF operations and outcomes over the last 30 years by a high-level panel led by former Prime Minister, Sir Mekere Morauta.

Arrangements for hosting the PIF in Port Moresby ensured that leaders could optimize the time spent together, working through a much shorter and carefully selected agenda, and making decisions in the best interests of our region.

The focus of the Port Moresby PIF was:

- increased economic returns from fisheries and maritime surveillance
- climate change and disaster risk management
- Regional Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Advisory Council
- cervical cancer, and
- West Papua

The Prime Minister has issued a progress report on implementation of PIF decisions since September 2015. We await the Indonesian Government's

response concerning the proposed PIF mission to West Papua to look into allegations of human right abuse.

Papua New Guinea regards the PIF as the paramount regional body. Our responsibility as Chair of the PIF continues for another six months. We will do our utmost to ensure that the PIF's agenda for development is actively progressed.

In line with our Government's commitment to regional co-operation, we have made sure that our assessed contributions to the PIF, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and other regional organizations are all paid so that these organizations can work together effectively whilst Papua New Guinea is PIF chair.

The Government has also made modest contributions to several island countries to assist them in meeting development challenges:

- K5 million to Niue for the construction of a new Parliament House,
- K1.5 million to Tuvalu to co-fund construction of a Parliament House and Court House,
- K10 million to Vanuatu for rehabilitation of Kumul Highway in Port Vila, and
- K350, 000 to Palau for development of its new marine sanctuary.

We have expressed our sympathy to the government and people of Fiji when struck by devastating cyclone Winston, and offered K5.5 million to support rehabilitation.

A similar commitment was made when Vanuatu was hit by cyclone Pam in 2015.

In the past six months, there has been a change of political leadership in several PIF countries (Australia, Vanuatu, Marshall Islands and Kiribati). Our government has been among the first to congratulate the incoming leader and government and express our firm commitment to continuing close and fruitful relations.

Immediately after the 2015 PIF, a series of major summits was held at which Papua New Guinea was represented: the United Nations General Assembly, September to December 2015; the meetings of APEC Leaders in Manila and Commonwealth Head of Government in Malta, both in October, and the promisingly productive Climate Change Conference in Paris in December.

The Climate Change Agreement commits the global community to transparency in making Intended Nationally Determined Contributions to limiting

global warming to no more than two degrees – and, preferably, 1.5 degrees – above pre-industrial levels.

When the High-Level UN Summit met in New York in September, the Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Leo Dion, was on hand to confirm Papua New Guinea's support for the new Sustainable Development Goals.

As chair of the PIF, the Prime Minister took every opportunity at the APEC Summit and the Climate Conference to promote and advance the Climate Declaration and other PIF outcomes, both at the formal sessions and at other meetings in the margins with world leaders.

I did likewise when I had the privilege of representing the Prime Minister at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Malta.

We were pleased when President Obama invited Prime Minister O'Neill and other leaders of island states at the Paris conference to discuss the challenges of island nations as the "most seriously" affected by climate change.

Similar interactions among leaders helped to build the global consensus that led to the adoption of the Climate Change Agreement. This Agreement is now open for signature in New York.

I am pleased to report that our contribution to building a common approach in raising the concerns and aspirations shared by Pacific Islands states in global fora was both valued and rewarding.

Safeguarding vital national interests

Amid a busy schedule meeting our international responsibilities at home and abroad, the Government's very firm commitment has always been to secure Papua New Guinea's national interests.

My Ministry is paying increasing attention to important trade and economic arrangements that bring practical benefits for our nation. They include negotiation of agreements for Air Services, Development Cooperation, and Investment Promotion and Protection, and on Double Taxation and Reciprocal Visa arrangements.

An engagement held earlier in March in Canberra was the Papua New Guinea-Australia Ministerial Forum (MINFOR).

Australia is – by far – Papua New Guinea's most significant trading partner (with two-way trade valued at K20 billion per annum); aid (valued at K2 billion p.a.); a major source of investment; and a close and active partner in people-to-people relations.

Our Canberra meeting reaffirmed a number of important commitments in support of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, modernising the Police Force, security arrangements for APEC in 2018, and funding of agreed government priorities.

Our Ministerial team also signalled the Government's firm determination to review and update many existing areas of co-operation to ensure that they better reflect mutual respect, including our country's sovereignty in their implementation. The sensitive subject of foreign advisers engaged to work for our government is still under active consideration by both parties.

Our Ministerial team also signalled that Papua New Guinea's dependence on aid will be reduced over time. Trade and other economic arrangements will become the main pillars of our relations with Australia as well as our partners in Asia and Europe.

The government is vigilant in management of our sovereign borders. We actively co-operate with neighbours and in regional meetings such as the Bali Conference - which I attended last week - that deals with security, people-smuggling, money-laundering and other illegal cross-border activities.

As the Prime Minister has made clear following the recent terrorist attacks at Brussels airport, we strongly condemn acts of terrorism in all its forms. Fortunately, our Embassy staff and assets in Brussels were not harmed or affected by the recent attacks.

The Government has also voiced our concern at North Korea's recent bomb and missiles testing.

We are a strong advocate at the United Nations and in other fora for peace and resolution of violent conflicts through agreed principles and mechanisms specified in the *United Nations Charter*. We are concerned to see current issues in the East and South China Seas resolved in such ways.

Closer to home, following the United States of America's lodging of a year's formal notice of its intention to withdraw from the *South Pacific Tuna Treaty*, relevant Government agencies are paying careful attention to the implications and possible ways forward. They are also paying close attention to issues arising from the yellow-card issued by the European Union in regard to management of our national fisheries.

Conclusion

The Department of Foreign Affairs – working with and through Papua New Guinea's diplomatic missions, consular posts and honorary consuls abroad – is

the recognized first and key point of contact when foreign governments seek to deal officially with the government of Papua New Guinea. This is so because of longstanding international agreements and practices.

My Ministry is responsible for ensuring that whatever issues are raised are channelled to the right Minister and government agency on a timely basis.

Growing Papua New Guinea's connections makes a vital contribution to nation-building. Without strong external links, we cannot mobilize vital supports needed for the government's development agenda or to grow the economy.

The development of foreign relations is also a shared responsibility. Almost all ministries and departments have some responsibility for dealing with foreign aid donors and other governments as well as international organizations and non-government organizations. Almost all are charged with ensuring that relevant aspects of international law are upheld.

We are successful when we work together in a whole-of-government approach. Failure to do so can compromise vital national interests, and give rise to the very real risks of being manipulated or cheated.

As the Minister responsible, I have instructed my Department and overseas missions and posts to keep making every effort to work closely together with other government Ministers and agencies to secure the best possible outcomes for Papua New Guinea.

The more we engage in the globalizing world in which we live, the more we need well-qualified and committed staff in the front-line to conduct business on Papua New Guinea's behalf.

Papua New Guinea's representation overseas has recently been strengthened by the opening of a trade office in Taiwan.

Work is in progress towards opening a diplomatic mission in Geneva, Switzerland – which is home to many United Nations-affiliated organizations, including the World Trade Organization, the World Health Organisation, the International Telecommunications Union, and many other inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations of international importance.

Training and skills development at all levels in the Department must be a focus, both in the formal courses we run and at work on a daily basis.

On 15-16 February, I convened a Head of Mission/Posts conference to review the operations of the Department and overseas missions and posts with a view

to streamlining operations systems and integrating our efforts with key government agencies to provide better outcomes for Papua New Guinea.

One important follow-up of this conference is a major foreign policy review directed towards modernizing and strengthening institutional capacity, and to better defining priorities and actions required to keep growing Papua New Guinea's connections with other countries and international organizations.

I will present the outcome of this review later this year.

Thank you.