



Record of Meeting

Special Meeting of the Joint Supervisory Body

Port Moresby

11 to 12 October 2018

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

A Special Meeting of the Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) was held in Port Moresby from 11 to 12 October 2018.

The meeting was convened to discuss unresolved issues from the meeting of the JSB held in Arawa in June 2018 and was primarily to consider key issues related to the upcoming referendum, specifically referendum preparations, the referendum budget and the question to be put.

In attendance were key Ministers of both the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government, together with the Chair of the Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC) the Hon. Bertie Ahern.

The meeting commenced with introductory statements by the two leaders, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon. Peter O'Neill and the President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, the Hon. Dr John Momis.

In his opening remarks, the Prime Minister thanked all those in attendance. He affirmed that the National Government remains committed to the peace process and intended to ensure that everything possible is done to enable the referendum to take place. He acknowledged the presence of BRC Chairman, the Hon. Bertie Ahern, noting the importance of the BRC in ensuring that the referendum is conducted freely and fairly, laying the foundations for productive discussions after the referendum takes place, regardless of the outcome achieved.

President Momis endorsed the Prime Minister's remarks and also extended his warm welcome to BRC Chair, the Hon. Bertie Ahern. The President spoke of the unique nature of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, providing historical context. The President noted that both Government's must do everything possible to resolve the issue of Bougainville's long-term political status, once and for all.

BRC Chair Bertie Ahern spoke to the meeting. He said he was honoured to have been appointed as Chair of the BRC, and that he was committed to working in partnership with the two governments to do everything possible to ensure the referendum was conducted freely and fairly. Mr Ahern also noted the importance of awareness and the need for the people of Bougainville to fully understand the options that would be put to them, the outcomes that would arise, and the process that would follow once the referendum takes place.

The meeting then adjourned briefly to allow external partners to depart, before considering the formal agenda.

AGENDA ITEM 1: REFERENDUM UPDATE

Chief Secretary to the ABG Mr Joseph Nobetau briefed the meeting on progress in preparing for the referendum, noting the significant efforts by both governments to date. A draft update of the referendum workplan, endorsed by the JSB in 2016 was tabled. Chief Secretary to the National Government, Ambassador Isaac Lupari noted that efforts would be made to further update the workplan on a periodic basis, and that a full report would be furnished when the full JSB next meets in December 2018.

Resolution: The update was noted by leaders, with agreement that a further comprehensive update would be provided at the next full meeting of the JSB in December of this year.

AGENDA ITEM 2: REFERENDUM BUDGET

Ambassador Lupari briefed the meeting on the proposed referendum budget of K34 million. He noted that the budget had been formulated with a view to being realistic and achievable, and that officials were of the view that what had been proposed would enable the referendum to take place.

The Prime Minister indicated his support for the budget, noting that it would be incorporated into the 2019 National Budget. He further committed to ensure that previous funds that had been committed would be honoured, and be over and above the K34 million approved.

Resolution: The Budget was noted and endorsed by leaders.

AGENDA ITEM 3: JOINT AUTONOMY REVIEW

Mr Nobetau briefed the meeting on the Joint Autonomy Review, noting that the last review had taken place in 2013, and the Review was required to determine whether the ABG was being conducted in accordance with internationally accepted principles of good governance. He indicated that the independent experts who conducted the review had now furnished draft reports, and that final reports would be forthcoming in the next week.

Ambassador Lupari advised that the Review was a key requirement of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, and that the findings of the independent experts would help inform the work of both governments to strengthen autonomy arrangements.

President Momis noted that a recent study had found that the ABG had only achieved 20% of the benefits that should be derived from autonomy due to continued capacity constraints. In response, the Prime Minister indicated that the next meeting of the JSB in December should consider the Review in detail with a view to progressing initiatives to enhance autonomy in the future.

Resolution: The update report was noted, and leaders agreed to consider the findings of the Review when they next meet.

AGENDA ITEM 4: THE REFERENDUM QUESTION

The meeting was briefed on the work of officials to formulate a draft referendum question.

The Prime Minister noted this work. He indicated that the wording of the question and the design of the ballot was a sensitive issue on both sides. He noted that the referendum must be free and fair and that people must be able to make informed choices. He indicated he was not comfortable with the question as proposed, noting that he was of the firm view that the ballot must make it clear that any final decision on the outcome of the referendum would be made by the National Parliament. Whilst not wanting to delay the process further, the Prime Minister indicated that officials should do further work and come back to leaders.

President Momis indicated that he was of the view that the question was clear, but agreed with the Prime Minister on the need to ensure that people understand the options to be put, and the process that must be followed after the referendum takes place.

On that basis, it was agreed that the meeting would adjourn, to reconvene the following day to consider the matter further. Officials were instructed to review the question, and to undertake further work to accommodate the concerns that had been raised.

The meeting reconvened at midday on 12 October 2018.

Officials presented a new ballot paper design for the leaders to consider.

The proposed reformatting included a preamble noting the requirements under the Bougainville Peace Agreement for consultations to take place once a result is known, with any final decision to be a matter for the National Parliament.

Both the Prime Minister and the President indicated a higher degree of comfort with the revised approach.

Resolution: The following ballot design and question is endorsed for the referendum:

Preamble: The outcome of the referendum on the future political status of Bougainville, will be discussed by both governments (the GoPNG and ABG), and will be presented to the National Parliament for final decision making in accordance with the Bougainville Peace Agreement and the National Constitution.

Question: Do you agree for Bougainville to have:

- (1) Greater Autonomy; or*
- (2) Independence*

Explanation of process:

- 1. Eligible people of Bougainville will vote in the referendum.*
- 2. National Government and the ABG will consult.*
- 3. National Parliament will make the final decision.*

Conclusion

The meeting concluded with commitments on the part of the leaders to continue to work in partnership and address the requirements of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

It was agreed that the next full meeting of the JSB will take place in in the third week of January 2019 in Port Moresby.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.

Hon. Peter O'Neill, CMG MP
Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea

Hon. Grand Chief Dr John Momis, CGL MHR
President of the Autonomous Region of
Bougainville

