



ADB OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific

Combating Corruption In the New Millennium

The Secretariat

FORMAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION PLAN FOR ASIA-PACIFIC (Tokyo, 30 November 2001)

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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Thank you Chair and greetings from Papua New Guinea.

Distinguished representatives from participating countries, representatives from civil society groups, business associations of the region and non-government organization (NGO) representatives present her in this room.

It is also fitting that I join other delegates who spoke before me in sincerely thanking ADB and the OECD for bringing us together here in Tokyo. I would also like to thank the Government of Japan for hosting the event here in this beautiful hotel, Hotel Nikko Tokyo.

I am indeed honoured to represent my country at this important Conference. I am particularly honoured to have the authority of my Government to endorse the Plan of Action. The last two days have been very insightful for me. The Focus Groups discussions in particular were very informative, helping us to learn and take home ideas on how best to implement the Plan of Action which Papua New Guinea was privileged to have played a part in finalizing in Manila last month.

Papua New Guinea's decision to participate in this regional initiative is demonstrative of the Government's recognition that corruption in public places is a serious problem affecting development in the country. It also demonstrates the Government's priority and commitment to fight corruption. Papua New Guinea views the ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative as an opportunity that, if linked in a systematic, planned and coordinated manner, can assist the Government's effort towards eliminating corruption and in doing so, restore integrity in state institutions and bring about good governance. Good governance is the keystone of development.

Upon taking up office over two and a half years ago, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Sir Mekere Morauta, in a country statement described corruption in Papua New Guinea as "endemic, systemic and

systematic". He likened corruption to a cancerous disease that is eating away the fabric of the society, thus weakening the pillars of the State. This description in itself is illustrative of how entrenched the problem is in Papua New Guinea. This open acknowledgement by a Head of Government is to the minds of the many concerned citizens a positive step and underpins the political will of the Government to fight corruption.

I should make mention of the important part that citizens, society groups and the media in Papua New Guinea are playing in respect to highlighting bribery and corruption issues. In doing so they keep the agenda alive and of course impress on the Government to take action. This is an important role and I am glad to say that the Plan of Action I will endorse on behalf of my Government in a moment recognizes this and in an important way would facilitate and strengthen such interaction and dialogue between Government and the community. I am glad to also add that the type of democracy we have allows this important process to take place freely.

Furthermore, recent trends in Papua New Guinea and indeed in many other developing countries is that, the donor communities are taking tougher stand on corruption making it a condition for future development assistance. This is an important development that is making Governments take serious efforts in combating corruption. Corruption is an international phenomena which is increasingly becoming complex. International collaboration is therefore crucial to address the problem.

Papua New Guinea Government has taken measures to combat corruption. With the help of multilateral development financiers and bilateral aid donor governments, a public sector reform program was instituted commencing with capacity building programs focusing on the "watch organizations" of the State namely, the Ombudsman Commission, Auditor General's Office, Attorney General Department, and Public Prosecutor's Office, as well as the Police.

Another initiative that has direct connection to ADB-OECD Initiative is the Government's effort to speed up investigation and prosecution of cases of alleged bribery and corruption. This relates to the bringing together of key Government agencies (those mentioned earlier with the inclusion of Finance and Treasury and Personnel Management Departments) to cooperate in this task. Under the charter of the Statement of Alliance signed by the State Agencies, the Public Sector Anti-Corruption Liaison Committee was set up. The Public Sector Anti-Corruption Liaison Committee which is chaired by the Chief Secretary to the Government, is now working on setting up a National Anti-Corruption Agency.

The Committee has had extensive discussions on the problems of corruption in the country and has identified weaknesses in the Government systems that provide the environment for corruption to flourish. Recommendation will be made to the Government on corrective measures. Much of the activities identified in the Plan of Action reflect these problem areas. In this respect the Plan of Action of the Initiative will find easy accommodation in Papua New Guinea context. Papua New Guinea views such interventions programs by major development partners as supportive of national efforts and considers it crucial for the long-term development and progress of the country.

In Papua New Guinea it is not that we do not have laws, rules and regulations governing conduct of public officials. On the contrary we do have laws BUT it is the unabated abuses, manipulations for personal gains and inaction by the authorities that have allowed the problem to compound, reaching the level that is threatening stability, national integrity and sovereignty of the nation. Our priority in the short to medium term will be focused on strengthening the restraining institutions of State. The Government has begun this process and we intend to continue more aggressively. The ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative is timely and Papua New Guinea look forward to the specific programs support and technical assistance under this framework. Our priorities for the next 12-18 months will be communicated to the Secretariat of the Initiative in due course.

Finally, and before I do the act of commitment on behalf of my country, let me make one last comment. My challenge to the development partners sponsoring this Initiative is that Papua New Guinea and the Pacific Island countries are small players in the region. Please do not forget us after Tokyo. We will rely on your guidance in the process of implementing the Plan of Action.

It is truly the desire of Papua New Guinea to be a model in the implementation of the Plan of Action. I can assure you that we have all elements of democracy that provides the environment to move ahead with the implementation. We would like to start with areas that we can move very quickly and achieve positive results. We would like to win community support through action. My next task after Tokyo is to coordinate a country strategy which would link the Plan of Action to national programs. We look forward to cooperate in the task ahead and achieve the objectives of the Initiative.

Let me now do the act of commitment on behalf of the Government of my country. I, Mathew Yuangu, representing Papua New Guinea and with the honour granted to me on this occasion, strongly endorse the Plan of Action on Anti-Corruption in the Asia-Pacific. In doing so, let me convey Papua New Guinea Government's support and commitment towards the Initiative.

Thank you very much.