



PAPUA NEW GUINEA AT THE CROSSROADS

Notes for a Speech in Parliament by
Rt Hon Mekere Morauta KCMG MP
Member for Moresby North-West and former Prime Minister
On the Election of Prime Minister James Marape MP

30 May 2019

Prime Minister Marape, sincere congratulations. Your overwhelming win reminds me of the time twenty years ago when I was elected Prime Minister on the floor of this House.

People of Papua New Guinea, today we have a new Prime Minister. But we do not have a new Government. Prime Minister, you could have been Prime Minister of a new Government, had you stayed with the Laguna camp. But you chose to return to the old government, the very government you said you had lost faith in.

The people of Papua New Guinea want to see change. We on this side of the House also want to see change. And we want to remind you that we helped make you Prime Minister. We will continue to provide an Alternate Government and be the watchdog of our great country. We will support your government where we see it is doing the right thing. We will support good policies. We will support good governance. But we will also be critical of bad policies, bad practice, and poor governance.

Prime Minister, you have a very heavy load on your shoulders. The people of Papua New Guinea are suffering.

If you want to demonstrate that your Government will set a new course, a course different from the Government you left and have now rejoined, you will need to address the challenges the nation faces head on:

- Corruption and abuse
- Mismanagement of public finances and mountain of government debt
- Recession in the non-mining sector, with job losses and businesses cutting expenditure
- Shortage of foreign exchange, which is crippling businesses, as are the huge debts owed to many of them by the Government
- Hospitals and health centres short of drugs, consumables and equipment
- Schools struggling as they have not been paid full school fee subsidies or been supplied teaching materials
- Basic infrastructure crumbling in most parts of the country

The people of Papua New Guinea want change. They wanted a new Government. They do not want a new hat on an old body. They do not want empty promises. They want an end to their problems. They want hope, order, opportunities to earn income and to participate in change.

They also want government for the people, not the few.

The people want your Government to solve the chronic problems they are facing and lay a firm foundation for growth and sustainable development.

Papua New Guinea was one of only two countries in the world that failed to achieve any of the Millennium Development Goals; and we have not made a good start on the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), agreed by 170 countries including PNG.

We must and can do better.

We need proper data on living standards of our people, so that people are at the forefront of policies; so that we can evaluate programs; and so that we can maximize impact. We need to find ways to improve spending on and management of basic services such as health, education and infrastructure.

And finally, Prime Minister, the people want your Government to strengthen democracy.

Our Constitution is predicated on the power of the people to be represented in Parliament, with checks and balances from an independent judiciary, constitutional office holders, an independent and professional public service and an independent media.

The people want a government for ALL Papua New Guineans: 22 provinces, 89 districts, 8.6 million men, women and children. As well as sharing power with all people, the people want the Government to distribute the benefits of development more equitably between peoples and regions.

The people want you to **TAKE BACK PNG** on their behalf, so they can share in the wealth of the country, educate their children well and live healthy lives.

Prime Minister, if you can show the people of Papua New Guinea that you will set a new course by taking such actions, you will earn their support and respect. But if you do not set a new course, the suffering of the people and the nation's problems will become greater, and more costly and painful to solve in the future.

People will rightly wonder why they have a new Prime Minister at all.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.