

## 2017 PNG Update: PNG After the Elections

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August 10, 2017

Good morning,

It's truly an honor to be here today with such impressive colleagues to discuss the future of Papua New Guinea. It is a pivotal time to reflect, to establish priorities, to brainstorm solutions, and to chart the future of this unique and striving nation. As the U.S. Ambassador to Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu, I must commend you for continuing to pursue this open dialogue in PNG's interests and I wish to assure you that I, and my 120 colleagues in every section of the U.S. Embassy, our home team in Washington, and the American business and missionary communities are committed to the prosperous, secure, and wise development of PNG.

We hope that a common theme at this Forum and the coming years will be accountability. Accountability in governance, accountability in resource management, accountability in health care, and accountability for positively impacting the lives of Papua New Guineans. It is up to the people of this nation, including each of us and the media, to hold each other accountable and to promote decisions to benefit all of the people, not just a few.

Our greatest allies in this endeavor are our active civil society organizations, many of whom are represented here today. Not only the international NGO's, religious organizations, and others that are working diligently to help develop the people and infrastructure PNG needs to meet the demands of the future, but also your local civic organizations – your schools, churches, sporting teams, interest groups, and neighborhood organizations. Groups and teams serve to educate, and to build trust, resilience, and understanding among members.

I have been especially impressed by the women's groups I have met with as I travel around this country. In the recent elections, we were excited by the number of women participating as candidates, elections officials, and voters. And we encourage them to remain active in local level government elections next year; and to press the progressives of PNG to join 45 other nations in setting aside seats for women in Parliament in order to accelerate fuller representation and to advance accountability.

Having women involved at all levels of community government and decision making is critically important. At our annual Women's forum in Goroka this year we heard loud and clear that women want to be more involved – in governance and business. And the women of this country are hardworking and

increasingly mobilized. Many are very successful – I meet them every day. I would hate to see Papua New Guinea wait another two or three generations before women are full partners in this democracy.

We also must continue our efforts to invest in the youth of PNG – starting at birth. Investing in people, most importantly young people, is the single best thing this country can do to ensure a secure and prosperous future. Because investing in people, especially through education and health, builds long-term results.

As World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, has said “The opportunity to get children off to the right start happens just once. Investments made in children early in life bring far greater returns than those made later on. Poor nutrition and disease can have life-long implications for mental and physical health, educational achievement, and adult earnings.”

“Investments in girls and women are particularly important,” he continued, “because they have a multiplier effect on the well-being of the extreme poor. When empowered through education, mothers have healthier children; and, when they have financial resources, they’re more likely to invest in the next generation.”

We have seen this in PNG. We agree with the World Bank President. So what does investing in people look like? It starts with fathers and mothers who believe in the equal future of their daughters and sons.

It starts with health care, which is why the US Embassy provides technical support and capacity building to the National Department of Health and health sector of PNG to address HIV/AIDS, gender-based violence, tuberculosis, and other health programs. It continues with earnest efforts to address gender-based violence and the lack of access to preventative health care and reproductive health – which so disproportionately impacts and disadvantages the lives of girls’ and young women, robbing them of personal fulfillment, careers, and negatively affecting their families.

Accountability includes access to quality, comprehensive education and training so that young people meet the demands of the private sector, both to find jobs and to create their own businesses. Multiple studies have found that for every year of secondary education completed by a student, their income increases and the GDP of the entire nation rises. The potential in this country is staggering.

As this nation understands, entrepreneurship and sustainable businesses generate economic growth and jobs, but also stimulate structural change and innovation by encouraging the development of entrepreneurial skills and attitudes among future leaders – including environmental leaders. Economic opportunities in the green economy to preserve and restore the quality of the environment are growing – in agriculture, in industry, in research and development, in services, and in administration.

And we are here to help through our U.S. USAID Climate Ready initiative. Yes, you heard that right, we still provide active support to the Climate Change Development Authority, as well as community organizations and the private sector by providing expertise to assess PNG needs and to build their capacity to tap international funds like the Green Climate Fund. The United States supports a balanced

approach to climate policy that reduces emissions while promoting economic growth and energy security. In this light, we will continue to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions through the development and deployment of innovative technologies, and we will attend the COP 23 meetings in Bonn, Germany in November to negotiate terms to the Paris Agreement to continue to contribute to global efforts. In the meantime, some American states and organizations have pledged to abide by current Paris Agreement terms, and committed to climate change initiatives around the world. That's the American way – we step up to fulfill societal needs.

Continuing to invest in youth participation and volunteerism, particularly at the grassroots level, is a foundation for democracy and a chance to harness the contributions of the next generation. In the United States, there are over 10 applicants for every vacancy as a Peace Corps Volunteer – people seeking an opportunity to volunteer in a developing country for two years. We are seeing more and more Papua New Guineans pursuing the same volunteerism – on Mercy Ships, in churches, and in sports. We must promote this. The young people of PNG are calling for good governance, relevant education, greater fulfillment, access to affordable healthcare, access to jobs, and calling for environmental sustainability – all priorities for the future of this country.

The United States shares these values. In addition to outreach by the U.S. Embassy in classrooms, on social media, and in communities, there are more than 1500 Americans still working in rural communities as missionaries, anthropologists, educators, and health professionals. Their goal, like ours, is to help to build the capacity of Papua New Guineans to fulfill these vital services themselves. In my travels to their remote locations, I have come to believe that Papua New Guineans brings out the best in Americans who live and work here. American optimism, frontierism, respect for diversity, and benevolence blend comfortably into your cultures and communities – quietly impacting lives.

The private sector also plays an important part in investing in young people. Perhaps more than anyone they understand the importance of capacity building and a return on investment. American and other international businesses are here as employers, supporters of development, and as service providers. Exxon-Mobil, Coca-Cola, Colgate Palmolive, Caterpillar are household names for many Papua New Guineans. These companies have been major sources of employment, as well as providers of goods and technologies. They are also strong supporters of education and innovation, because innovation breeds progress.

Yes, with your commitment, and strong? governance of PNG institutions, the US is encouraged by the long-term future of Papua New Guinea.

- We are encouraged by the call for accountable leadership during this year's elections.
- We are encouraged by the growth of civil society focused on the environment, human rights, and good governance.
- We are encouraged by the new levels of respect for women emerging in many parts and professions in PNG.

- And we are encouraged by the young people of Papua New Guinea with their intelligence, energy, and their passion for improving their country.

But we must hold each other accountable, and multiply these positive trends by:

- Working together to ensure that newly elected representatives exemplify good leadership;
- Supporting civil society organizations working to protect your nation;
- Continuing to support women in all levels of society;
- Encouraging companies to continue to invest in innovation and education, and,
- Most importantly, by investing in young people; equally investing in males and females to ensure that their intelligence, energy, and passion for improving their country is channeled to support an accountable democracy and successful future for all Papua New Guineans.

Thank you.