

Joint Communique on the Outcome of the Bougainville Referendum

11 January 2021

In furthering the Bougainville Peace process in the Post Referendum period and having met today, we officially reaffirm and assure the people of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville that the Governments of PNG and Bougainville are committed to the process of the joint consultations on the outcome of the referendum.

The signing of the Joint Communique today signals our intention to immediately commence the joint consultations as is required by the National Constitution under Section 342 (1) and the Bougainville Peace Agreement under Clause 311 (b) for the Government of Papua New Guinea and the Autonomous Bougainville Government to consult over the outcome or result of the Bougainville referendum.

This Joint Communique affirms that as required by the Bougainville Peace Agreement, the referendum outcome will be subject to ratification (final decision making) of the National Parliament while Section 342 (2) of the National Constitution has prescribed that the decision of the National Parliament, relating to the referendum result is subject to consultation under Section 342 (1).

The Joint Communique builds on the tremendous achievements of both Governments on the Bougainville Peace process and embraces fully the statement of established facts and principles as outlined herewith;

- That the Bougainville Peace Agreement provides for a political right to Bougainvilleans to a referendum among Bougainvilleans, on the future political status of Bougainville; and
- That the National Government had guaranteed *that* political right through Section 338 (1) of the National Constitution; and
- That the constitutional guarantee for the referendum under Section 338 (1) of the National Constitution depended on the Autonomous Bougainville Government's (ABG) fulfillment of conditions relating to weapons disposal and good governance, of which the ABG satisfactorily met; and
- That the choice for separate independence was guaranteed under Section 339 (c) of the National Constitution as one of a number of possible choices available to Bougainvilleans in the referendum; and
- That the both Governments had agreed to the definition of *independence* before the conduct of the referendum to mean 'an independent nation with sovereign powers and laws, recognized under international law and by other international states to be

an independent state, separate from the state of Papua New Guinea, with a defined territory, inclusive of maritime boundaries and associated exclusive economic zones; and a government chosen by its people; and capacity to enter into and manage international relations and United Nations membership'; and

- That the referendum question and the following two choices of option 1 – Greater Autonomy, and option 2 – Independence was presented to Bougainvilleans in the referendum and were intended to facilitate a clear result; and
- That the referendum was conducted by an impartial Bougainville Referendum Commission (BRC), headed by Mr. Bertie Ahern of Ireland, which comprised of a fair number of representatives from the National Government and the Autonomous Bougainville Government; and
- The referendum that was held between November and December 2019 and witnessed by international observers was free and fair, and according to observer groups “credible, transparent and inclusive”; and
- That a total number of 181,067 Bougainvilleans voted in the referendum, out of that 97.7 % of them chose independence; and
- That the report of the Bougainville Referendum Commission was tabled in both the National Parliament and the Bougainville House of Representatives, and was unanimously endorsed by both parliaments.

In adopting fully these established facts and principles; we hereby agree that the upcoming joint consultations will be moderated by an appointed Moderator and would be, but not limited to, addressing the key issues on the future political status of Bougainville, the method of endorsement by the National Parliament and the Documentation of record of the joint consultation.

Finally, in memory of the late Sir Mekere Morauta, for his contributions to the Bougainville Peace process as a former Prime Minister of our Nation and for his role as a signatory to the Bougainville Peace Agreement in 2001, this Joint Communique embodies both our Government’s sincerity to continued peace by peaceful means.

God Bless our people of Papua New Guinea and Bougainville.

Source: <https://reliefweb.int/report/papua-new-guinea/occasion-signing-joint-communique-prime-minister-papua-new-guinea-honourable>