

FIRST DAY

Tuesday 30 August 2022

DRAFT HANSARD

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Corrections should be authorized by signature and contain the name, office and telephone number of the person transmitting/making corrections.

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HARRY MOMOS

Principal Parliamentary Reporter

FIRST DAY

Tuesday 30 August 2022

The Parliament met at 10 a.m., according to the terms of its Resolution of 9 August 2022.

The Speaker, (**Mr Job Pomat**) took the Chair.

ADMISSION OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY

Mr SPEAKER - Honourable Members, I wish to inform Parliament that His Honour, Chief Justice, Sir Gibuna Gibbs Salika, Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea, and members of the Judiciary are in the precincts of the Parliament.

With the concurrence of honourable Members, I invite His Honour, the Chief Justice and members of the Judiciary to be seated on the Floor of Parliament.

Motion - That Chief Justice and members of the Judiciary be seated on the Floor of Parliament - agreed to.

The Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea and members of the Judiciary were escorted into Parliament.

ENTERING OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

His Excellency, the Governor-General, **Sir Bob Dadae**, entered the Chamber and was seated at the Speaker's Chair.

02/01

PRAYERS

Reverend **Bernard Siai**, Moderator of the United Church of Papua New Guinea representing the Council of Churches to say Prayers:

God almighty, the creator and sustainer and the source of everything, including our lives. This morning, we are grateful to you because we are able to, once again, live. We express our thanks and our gratitude to you for giving us a new life and a new day to live once again. We come into your presence, not worthy, knowing that we have fallen short of your glory in many, many ways. We are sinners, because God, we are just mere human beings, we fall short of your glory. Therefore, Father, in Jesus name this morning, we ask you to forgive us from all our sins and make us new. O God, create in us a heart that is able to express to you our thanksgiving because God, you have forgiven us. We thank you for Jesus who died on the cross for us and by his blood we are cleansed

This morning Father, we humbly come into your presence and we seek your presence in the midst of us. We come to celebrate this very special day in the calendar of our nation, where our first session of the Eleventh Parliament will take place. Therefore, God we place all our Members of the Parliament, who are representing your people throughout Papua New Guinea this morning into your hands O God We pray for our Speaker, our Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Opposition Leader and all Members of the Parliament, both in the Government and in the Opposition, we commit every one of them O God into your mighty hands. And we pray Father that your presence will make a difference as they sit today and discuss issues of our nation.

Father, we pray that you will remind them that they represent all the people of Papua New Guinea and as they speak this morning and, in the future, the next five years, remind them Of God that they represent the people of Papua New Guinea.

So, therefore God, this morning, we commit this Session from its beginning to the end, that Lord you will take the lead and help us O God, In everything we do, we say today, we will bring glory and honour to you.

We invite your presence in the midst of us, in Jesus's mighty name, we offer our prayer.

Amen.

03/02

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE ELEVENTH PARLIAMENT – ADDRESS BY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Sir BOB DADAE (Governor-General) – Speaker of the National Parliament, Honourable Job Pomat and Mrs Pomat, the Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape and Mrs Marape, the Opposition Leader, Honourable Joseph Lelang and Mrs Lelang, Ministers of State and Members of Parliament, Chief Justice, Chief Sir Gibuna Gibbs Salika and Lady Salika, members of the Judiciary, members of the diplomatic corp, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, as a mandated representative of Her Majesty Queen Elisabeth the Second, Queen of the United

Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Queen of the Commonwealth and Queen of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, it gives me great honour to preside over the Official Opening of The Eleventh National Parliament and to welcome new and continuing Members of Parliament.

Congratulations!

Mr Speaker, a special welcome to the Members of the seven new electorates. You will go down in history. Congratulations.

On that note may I also pay my respects to our Senior Statesman. The last man standing, of the pre-Independence leaders, none other than Chief Sir Julius Chan, the Governor of New Ireland. Sir, you deserve to be accorded the next title that Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare has held.

I also want to thank and congratulate the Speaker, and our Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape. After PANGU Pati secured the highest number of elected Members of Parliament and I invited the party to form the new government on Monday, 8 August 2022.

Mr Speaker, our people exercised their constitutional rights to vote each of you through the ballot box for a robust, vibrant and thriving democracy.

04/01

You have been given the mandate by our people to lead and make right decisions for our nation in the next five years.

Mr Speaker, in this context, I acknowledge the Joint Security Forces for providing security during the 2022 National General Election and for their role in minimizing election-related violence throughout our country.

I also want to commend the relevant government agencies and election volunteers whose hard work and untiring efforts ensure the completion of the 2022 National General Elections. Our country is also indebted to our friendly nations and the Commonwealth countries who provided extra logistical support. We thank you.

Mr Speaker, the confidence displayed by the voters in our parliamentarians here in this Chamber today comes with the belief and conviction, that their members will deliver on the respective mandates and work for the collective wellbeing and the common good of the people of Papua New Guinea.

Mr Speaker, I must admit that the 2022 National General Elections encountered its share of problems. And therefore, it calls for electoral reform process to be undertaken before 2027 National Elections to improve the basic tenet of our democracy; the election system. It must be

reviewed to restore transparency so that equal opportunity is given to our people to independently exercise their democratic rights in future elections.

The *Common Roll* is the principal document that ensures all who are eligible to vote, exercise their democratic rights and the process of election is assured with unquestionable integrity. It was unfortunate that many eligible voters could not cast their votes due to the absence of their names.

I suggest that the power to update and maintain prudent records be decentralized back to the provinces. We need to ensure that our future elections are violence free. We need to explore option such as biometric identification and electronic voting system. We must set new standards and hold officials to account through the adoption and execution of these standards. Our constituents expect these from us and we must deliver to their expectations and provide the right leadership in the delivery of basic goods and services.

Mr Speaker, you are all privileged to be in this House, when our country crosses the line of 50 years of nationhood. Our fore bearers had the foresight to chart important pathways for our country with the establishment of important institutions, passed fundamental legislations, established key international relationships and set in place broad parameters that created this nation.

It is now incumbent upon each of you, to determine and deliver important reforms that must set a solid foundation for the next 50 years. It is especially incumbent on the Marape/Rosso government to lead strongly and establish the right development parameters to get over the line within the next three years before we celebrate our 50th Anniversary as an independent nation in 2025. Let us do this for our people.

05/01

The key focus areas for the Government going forward include electoral reforms, economic reforms, with more focus on agriculture and import replacement and infrastructure connectivity to facilitate economic and social development.

Mr Speaker, with regards to the economy the ultimate goal of this government for the next five years is to achieve economic independence and to ensure every Papua New Guinean is involved in growing and benefitting from our economy.

Infrastructure

Infrastructure connectivity, connecting our people through infrastructure development in the next five years is necessary to grow our economy and facilitate efficient and cost-effective service delivery. The government is going to focus on key infrastructures such as roads, airports.

airstrips, wharves, bridges and ports, established and made operational to ensure free movement of our people, services and businesses.

Equal importance will also be given to all the services such as information and technology, electricity and internet connectivity which the government is focused on delivering to our people throughout the country. The regular occurrence of power black outs must become a thing of the past under this Government. And with the aftermath of Covid-19, and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine, our immediate focus must be to address the high cost of living brought about as a result of increased world prices on oil and gas. Targeting broad-based economic growth by increasing the number of our population in the production of goods and services and downstream processing will not only grow our economy, but importantly, benefit our people to earn an income during this difficult time.

Mr Speaker, we must ensure that the SME policy is fully implemented and is made conducive to meet our people's aspirations. We have praised ourselves enough about the abundance of natural resources we are blessed with. Now is the time to invest in these resources for the benefit of our people and of our nation.

Strengthening Law Enforcement and National Security.

Mr Speaker, we must reform structures of the law enforcement agencies to adequately respond to threats to national security and law and order issues in our country. Instilling discipline back into the common structure of the three disciplinary forces and building loyalty is a start and must be fully implemented. Increasing manpower, adequate training, appropriate technology and improving infrastructure, providing personnel incentives will surely enable our disciplinary forces to provide our nation and its people the best in security capability expected of them.

06/01

Mr Speaker, the Law and Order Sector, we cannot talk about development and prosperity, without addressing law and order problems confronting our nation. It is important to identify the root causes of these problems and put in measures to tackle them.

The youth unemployment, tribal fights and rural-urban migrations are some of the major challenges that is facing our nation.

Mr Speaker, as regards to public service reforms; delivery of public services to our people must be effective and efficient. Public servants must perform as expected of them and to their fullest potential for the benefit of our people.

Merit based appointments of all public servants starting from the very top must be applied if you are to see any positive changes in the public service. This is the first step towards alleviating many of the problems that we see in the public service.

We need to ask ourselves; do we need an expensive public service that is not productive or a cost-effective public servant that performs to expectations?

Mr Speaker, demarcation of powers and responsibilities is equally important. Let me draw your attention to *section 148* of the *Constitution*, which is very clear on the demarcations of roles and responsibility of politicians in terms of issuing directives to public servants. In fact, *section 148 (2) and (3)* does not confer on a Minister any power of direction or control over the bureaucracy.

This requires leaders to work in close consultation with their bureaucracy at all times to ensure government policies, initiatives, NEC decision and key performance indicators are implemented forthwith.

Mr Speaker, as regards to Health Sector. This government will ensure health services are accessible to all, especially, our people living in rural areas. We must ensure that a village has a health facility and they can access every district hospital.

This Government is focused on enabling all 21 provinces to have their hospital in time for our countries 50th Independence anniversary. Equally important, all specialist hospitals for diseases such as cancer, kidney and health diseases must be established in the country.

Our people are our greatest asserts and we must ensure that they are provided with the best health care services for a better and a healthier Papua New Guinea. Going overseas to get treatment remains favourable to only a few who can afford it.

Mr Speaker, may I respectfully remind you and perhaps insist that you spend some ample time to read and acquire in yourself on your constitutional duties and responsibilities.

07/01

This includes the *Leadership Code*, *Public Service (Management) Act 2016*, Public Service Appointment Process, the Public Accounts Committee, *National Procurement Act 2020*, *Fiscal Responsibility Act 2016*, and the requirements on the disbursement and accountability of the District Service Improvement Programme (DSIP) funds, and Provincial Service Improvements Programme (PSIP) funds, including support programs from the development partners, such as the Incentive Funds which complements our National Budget.

Mr Speaker, on our health issues, in the last Tenth Parliament, we lost 10 good leaders, mostly through ill health. It is sad and regrettable to lose one sitting Member of Parliament, however, to lose 10 one term of Parliament is unthinkable.

I want to remind you, honourable Members of Parliament, that this job will demand more from you. Your life must now be shared with your constituents. As you work hard, take care of your health. Avoid the excesses that your position can afford and go for regular medical checks; do regular physical exercises; take right and balanced diets and sleep well.

Mr Speaker, we have come thus far, in our adherence to the Westminster System of government. It has not been an easy road, given our vast and diverse cultures, different religious persuasions and values. Let us remain strongly united and leave a better legacy for our children and their children.

It is my strong conviction that we continue to build a strong, stable, transparent and responsible democratic system of government, that is primarily focused on the well-being of our 10 million people.

Mr Speaker, before I conclude, kindly allow me to express my heartfelt appreciation to the returning Parliamentarians who demonstrated your faith and trust in my leadership abilities and elected me as the Tenth Governor-General on the 2nd of February 2017. I have performed my job, did my outmost and will continue to do so until my six years' term comes to an end in February 2023.

Mr Speaker, with that I want to wish you all well in your five years' journey, henceforth, and may the blessings of our Almighty God be with you and your families.

I, Governor-General, Grand Chief, Sir Bob Bofeng Dadae, on this day, Tuesday 30 August 2022, have the distinct honour and privilege to declare the Eleventh National Parliament of Papua New Guinea officially open.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, His Excellency, the Governor-General of Papua New Guinea will now retire.

His Excellency, the Governor-General, Grand Chief Sir Bob Dadae, retires from the Chamber.

08/01

(Members standing)

Sitting suspended from 11:17a.m. to 2 p.m.

09/01

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY – STATEMENT BY THE PRIME MINISTER

Mr JAMES MARAPE (Tari-Pori–Prime Minister) – Mr Speaker, I move that the following Address-In-Reply to His Excellency’s speech be agreed to. May it please you, your Excellency, with the Members of the National Parliament of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea in Parliament assembled desire to express our loyalty to our most gracious, Sovereign and thank you, your Excellency for the speech, which you have been pleased to address the Parliament.

Mr JELTA WONG – Mr Speaker, I second the motion.

Mr JAMES MARAPE – Mr Speaker, I rise to on this occasion to thank the Governor-General, His Excellency, Grand Chief Sir Bob Dadae for officially opening the Eleventh (11th) Parliament of Papua New Guinea. I would like to extend my profound gratitude to His Excellency for his kind words of encouragement on how we should conduct ourselves and manage our country in the next five years. I note the key challenges His Excellency has pointed in this 11th Parliament that includes what must be done to reform our electoral processes, building the road to 50 years and beyond, building a stable and transparent government, effective implementation of our various programmes, adherence to law and policy, building a stronger economy and making sure we all have a healthy life.

Mr Speaker, I want to assure His Excellency and all our people that we are absolutely committed to our national *Constitution*, our collective policy and legislative conversations and actions must continue to find their relevance in our guiding principles and directives enshrined in the preambles of our *Constitution*. We also commit to ensuring that what we do must be necessary to ensure that all our elected leaders are provided with the best care as they embarked on fulfilling their roles as elected leaders of our country.

Your Excellency’s reminders are timely. We have a great responsibility to carry out our duties with pride and absolute commitment, if we are to achieve our socio-economic development goals and improve the livelihoods of our citizens in the urban, but more particularly,

all the rural settings where a majority of our people live. Our actions must be to never leave anyone or any place behind.

Mr Speaker, we must apply a more innovative and practical approach to implementing our overarching plans and initiatives to bring about real change that positively impacts on the lives of the people. We must capitalise on the vast natural resources and convert those into real development outcomes which will grow our economy and make us self-sustaining and more importantly, improve the lives of our people.

Mr Speaker, as we approach the 50th Anniversary of our nationhood, we must work together to push to achieve the goals and aspirations as entailed by our *Vision 2050* and our various national statements so that we become a middle-income earning economy by 2050. We must work towards improving our GDP and our human development indexes. We must do this in collaboration with all our stakeholders, particularly our private sector.

Mr Speaker, to bring about real change, we have embarked on important improvements in our National Executive Council focuses and our structure. We have maintained all our stakeholders, particularly our private sector.

10/01

We have maintained stability but also moved to ensure our renewed vision of our government is fully captured in the make-up of Cabinet is geared to making our country better. We have merged certain functions but created the opportunity for Ministers to take full responsibility for key focus areas in trade and investments and in key areas where most of our people are engaged in, particularly agriculture. We have also built accountability processes into the determinations so that Ministers and bureaucrats alike have an obligation to report progress on major initiatives of our government.

Mr Speaker, it is necessary just to reinforce some of the things which I said when I was first given the privilege to be elected Prime Minister on 9 August 2022 for the 11th Parliament. Because my statement reflects the full intentions of the government that we are part of today and the Government that I lead and will therefore be reflected in matters which will be conducted through this Floor of Parliament over the course of the next five years.

Mr Speaker, I said then that we will begin our work by strengthening the democratic processes, build a resilient economy, build economic enabling infrastructures, address the natural resources and especially how we harness the benefits from our resources, address business and investor confidence, address law and order, working on education and health to improve quality aspect and improve accessibility to our people, and of course strengthen all institutions of State

including the much burdensome public service. These are fundamental components of our focus and as we work them Mr Speaker, I am certain that together in the next five years and beyond, we will start to reach the K200 billion economy size that we have for the upcoming five years and beyond.

Mr Speaker, the electoral reform process is placed at the forefront of our work for the immediate future. We will begin with a clear audit of the 2012 National General Elections as well as 2017 and 2022 elections and develop and map out the process of improving our processes, including the electoral roll, and the conduct of the elections which will ensure that we, once and for all improve our voting and counting processes. The fundamental principle of our people's right to vote especially, one person, one vote must be achieved in this Parliament.

There was also a concern raised by our Governor-General this morning, and we will undertake a response that we will commit to make this happen in this term of Parliament. We will also move immediately into planning and execution of the National Population Census which will allow the electoral processes to be anchored on the correct population data.

Mr Speaker, apart from securing the budget repair and reconstruction, our government will continue with the building of economic infrastructures through the connect PNG program, through ICT development, through increased power and utility coverage of the country, and through reforms with our State-owned Enterprises. These are the economic development enablers which our government will focus on especially. Infrastructure development is a key enabler to development and growth especially in agriculture, fisheries, forestry and in the food and vegetable sector. Enabling infrastructure also provides for services in health, education, and commerce to be supported.

Mr Speaker, our country is blessed with an abundance in natural resources, in mining, oil and gas, in fisheries and forestry and in agriculture. These natural endowments are natural assets which are to be monetized in order to finance development costs, build technical capabilities, and provide wealth to our people who owned these resources. Our government is committed to building a mechanism of benefit sharing that recognizes the need for developers to make a decent profit and reinvest in this market, but also ensure that the Papua New Guinean stakeholder is able to maximise his benefit from resources we own in our country.

The government will see to it that Porgera, Wafi-Golpu, Papua LNG, P'nyyang LNG and Pasca A projects all move across the line in terms of the different milestones that they have in their plans. These projects will contribute significantly to the economic growth of the nation, provincial governments, and the communities

Mr Speaker, we must build business and investor confidence by maintaining a stable government, with very focused policies. We have to build transparent processes in business entry, work permits and visa reforms and a stable policy and operating environment. We have to continue to work on

11/01

We have to build transparent processes in business entry, work permits and visa reforms and a stable policy and operating environment. We have continued to work on establishing business processes improvement, important infrastructure and energy sustainability. There must be a willingness to engage the private sector on important matters. Taxation reforms, the process of auditing and improvements are some important initiatives which would build confidence to the economy for investments and businesses.

Mr Speaker, before the Tenth Parliament rose, this Parliament authorised K611 million in relief assistance to ease the burdens on prices brought upon by the Russia-Ukraine War. It came in four main components, K250 million to remove fuel taxes from 1 May to 30 October, K135 million to lift the tax free threshold from K12, 500 K17, 500 for the remainder of 2022, K100 million to reduce the prices of key consumer items and another K126 million in other reliefs, especially removing the project fee from our parents.

We are proposing in the upcoming supplementary budget a further K83.3 million in fuel tax relief, a further increase in tax free threshold from K17, 500 to K20, 000. This will cost K60 million and an additional K34 million to fully fund the school fee project fee reimbursement programme.

These are reliefs to both private sector and government employees. The net effect is that we are putting back money into their pockets to spend on consumer goods and their essential needs.

Mr Speaker, we have now combined the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary and the Correctional Services under one ministry called the Internal Security Ministry. We will also make sure that all offences are prosecuted through the entire judiciary system and we will support the different levels of the judicial arm. We must also instil discipline back to our disciplinary forces. We will build prison industries which will enhance the skill sets of the prison population.

We also must address corruption head on. On this matter, let me announce that we are in the process of completing the appointment of the commissioners of ICAC. We will ensure we implement and get ICAC to work at the earliest and we will start to implement the *Proceeds of Crime Act* that is available for use and ensure that undisclosed wealth is investigated.

We will implement the fundings of the commissions of inquiry that are outstanding to date.

Mr Speaker, speaking on other areas in response to our Governor-General's concerns, we will not leave any child behind. Every Papua New Guinean child must be educated to Grade 12. We have to be innovative on how we maximise current capacities to make sure we educate all our children to year 12.

In this instance, in the face of current capacity constraints, we will use the flexible Open and Distance Education mode. We have to build capacities in all our schools and universities. We must use digital technology. We want to create additional 20 000 spaces in our colleges and universities in this decade.

Our government recognises that a small minority of Papua New Guineans are currently carrying the rest of the country through their taxes. We need to change this status quo. We must get more people engaged in the economy and to start that, education gives our citizens the opportunity to participate in our economy going forward.

In the Health Sector, Mr Speaker, in response to our Governor-General's concern we are rallying a call to have health facilities accessible to our people. They must be within one hour of walking, one hour of boating, one hour by plane or one hour by truck. This means health services must be accessible to our people.

12/01

This is the call and work that is upon us. The Covid-19 pandemic did expose the vulnerability of our health system. Our government commits to ensure health accessibility is given to our people.

As we work through the next five years, every district must have a district hospital and every province must have a provincial hospital. Each region must have a regional hospital and there must be specialist hospitals in our country.

Mr Speaker, we want to reform our public service and make it fit for purpose. It means that, we must continue on the work that the Special Parliamentary Committee on Public Sector Reform has started so that this reforms and changes are made in this term of Parliament as would prepare our nation to live beyond 50 years of nationhood.

We want to ensure all our public servant are working well and the leadership is appointed based on merit as asked by our Head of State earlier today. We will work to make sure that the

bloated public service up here in Waigani at the top is streamlined and right-sized. Excess public servant in Waigani will be transferred to the districts and provinces where our people are.

Mr Speaker, land is a key component of our development, only three per cent of our land are alienated while the rest still remain under customary ownership. Developing land with our people, allows us to mobilize resources for development and the economy will be unlocked looking into reforming land sector space and without alienating the land from our people. This will be one big task undertaken by our government.

Mr Speaker, the provinces must be given greater support to build their revenue bases and we hope to look into this area. Let me take this time to encourage all Members of Parliament, especially the Open Members, to not see provincial governments as a competition but as a very important stakeholder in this space. They are the big posts in which the house called PNG is anchored upon. We allow them to prosper, become economic bases and some of them will talk about autonomy, let's discuss those in a constructive manner. They should be empowered to unravel revenue options for their own greater development plans.

This government will support instead of allowing provinces to figure out things for themselves. We will work in partnership with provinces to empower them to grow and not just be collecting money for their budget support from Waigani but raising revenue back home in their provinces.

Mr Speaker, let me inform this House and our Members of Parliament. Bougainville is not a province in our midst. Bougainville is a special autonomous region and it must have our attention.

The National Government is committed to the consultation process, especially the *Wabag Road Map*. The Referendum gave an opportunity for the people of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville to have a say on their future. The National Government also, based on the, *Wabag Road Map*, will work in the next two years to consult the rest of the country and the outcome will be brought back to the Parliament, especially the referendum outcome.

We will bring to Parliament as detailed or required by the *Bougainville 2001 Peace Agreement*. When this matter is brought to Parliament, Parliament will then have the opportunity to find a solution for this long outstanding Bougainville issue.

Mr Speaker, I propose that it is a political problem and political solutions must be found to settle the Bougainville issue once and for all.

Mr Speaker, I want to assure His Excellency, our Governor-General, this Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea that we are committed to important work that stays and lays ahead of us. Our ministers have been given targets for implementation and subsequently our

public servants also have been given targets for implementation and have been asked to commit themselves to the cause.

We are in the process of developing and standardizing reporting protocols which will ensure that all establish targets of our government are implemented and reported back to the Executive Government. And the Executive Government reports back to this House, the Legislature.

13/01

Mr Speaker, all our academic institutions are important think tanks for our country and our vital source of institutional and policy advisory support. I recently met with some of them and I directed that they pull together resources and create an independent localized real time data base to be stationed and managed by the National Research Institute and coordinated by the Department of Prime Minister and NEC. This will enable our government agencies to access relevant data and statistics crucial for planning and decision making across all sectors.

We will be taking a very collaborative approach to ensure the appropriate researches are being undertaken to inform government of the strategic actions we must undertake especially in response to some of our country's problems that our Governor-General emphasized on this morning.

Mr. Speaker, we will further embark on improving our sector performance and management through the new Ministries of Trade and Investment, Oil Palm, Livestock, Coffee, and Agriculture. More focus and equal attention will be given to their mandate to strengthen and enhance their capabilities and outputs. And to grow these vital economic sectors and harness their potential for increased investment and revenue generation and participation by our rural people.

Mr Speaker, at this juncture let me say this is a deliberate target by the Government to bring the 80 per cent of our rural population who have land but are not economically productive, into the productive economic space to participate in the cash economy, as against the current place of existence in the subsistence sector.

The Ministry of Trade and Investment must implement the National Trade Policy and work in tandem with all relevant ministries, especially Agriculture, Oil Palm, Livestock, Coffee, Mining, and; Petroleum and Energy in a coherent manner, given these sectors' potential to be competitive on global markets and generate revenue streams that will support the National Budget. The immediate to long-term approach is to venture into downstream processing to

become self-sustaining, achieve food security, address export opportunity, and import substitution.

This Government realizes the great potential in the renewable sector and the importance of sustaining it to meet our domestic market obligations, food security, import substitution and overall export to neighbouring Asian countries and global markets.

Mr Speaker, PNG is strategically located, I don't have the figures, they are not in my speech but 110 million people in the Philippines, 260 million people in Indonesia, 1.5 billion people in China, 1.5 billion people in India, 120 million people in Japan, and 60 million people in South Korea are demanding coffee. They have demand for oil palm, they have demand for beef, right next door is Indonesia the largest Muslim nation. We have been taught that we cannot grow and supply vegetables and other agriculture products or raise livestock.

Mr Speaker, those days are gone we are focused to ensure we grow food in our country and supply our country but more importantly to export outside as we are within eight hours of reach by flight and few days of reach by ship. Our target to the Asian market place is big and we ask our bilateral partners that we will be opening our trade missions in all our embassies and all our bilateral partners are asked to partner with us in that space. Our traditional partners, USA, Australia and elsewhere are asked to buy PNG made products and in the next few years we will be ramping up products in all our natural resources God has blessed our country with.

Our agriculture and fisheries export to Asian countries like Indonesia and China in particular, we will export our foreign exchange earnings as these countries have comparable population and demand for food consumption.

14/01

Mr Speaker, just to give you all some figures, the engagement in this sector will bring 82 per cent of our people into productive commercial economy participation.

Our current figures from Coffee Industry Corporation, Oil Palm Industry Corporation, Kokonas Industri Koporesen as of 2021 show that coffee brought in K385 million, Oil Palm K2.6 billion and Copra K168 million. For example, if one million families are able to generate K20,000 per annum from these commodities, it equates to an additional K20 billion per annum in earnings for Papua New Guinea.

Mr Speaker, why am I labouring hard on this one? Because my government in the last three years have put in price support. Price support has never been put in place by any past governments and we have done that.

We also put in place freight subsidy a mechanism which we had trialled and will continue to expand on.

We also set up SME support program in the banks for agriculture, forestry and fisheries but more importantly, agriculture is the place where 80 per cent of our citizens can get engaged in productive participation.

Mr Speaker, to complement these initiatives, the amalgamation of Labour and Immigration Ministry is intended to streamline the business sector space as we work to ramp up business in expansion of our economy, streamline the issuance and processing of work permits and visa's under a "one-stop shop" arrangement to encourage business, investment, labour mobility and people to people in exchange with our development partners.

Mr Speaker, this Government remains fully focused on implementing Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). This focus and partnership combined with the emphasis on agriculture and our rural base industries have greatest potential to move our people, to participate in the commerce and economic space with us.

The piloting of Special Economic Zone in Kikori and the Special Economic Region in Manus, places like Madang, the Maritime Park area, East and West Sepik, Oro, East and West New Britain and places like Central the entire plains from Laloki back to Kerema; these places should be special economic zones focused on the rural base industries.

We have been giving concessions to oil and gas and mining companies, it is about time that we look into special consideration for large scale rural base industries in agriculture, downstream forestry and fisheries, for value adding of our natural resources which will help our economy and create employment for our country to get bigger and better.

Mr Speaker, we need to continue encouraging value-adding and down-stream processing of our vast timber, fisheries, oil, gas, petroleum and our rich organic agriculture produce for domestic consumption and global export market. For example; when you go online, Israel does not have natural running waters like the Sepik River, yet they export fresh agriculture produce to Europe. For Russia, we are right next door to the big Asian market place. We want to find new spot in the organic agriculture export to Asian markets who are next door to us.

We must immediately undertake a foreign policy review and develop a white paper to find solutions on how best we can develop an effective foreign service that is focused with a strategic outlook to attract foreign direct investment and developing international markets for our products.

Mr Speaker, on this note, his Excellency reminded Members of this Parliament to take your personal health seriously. I also would like to encourage each and everyone of us, take our health seriously in order for us to be fit to work for our country.

I propose and I support the proposal to establish medical services within this House for the convenience of each Member of Parliament. And as we take care of our health, I would like us to focus in putting our countries welfare and health first to ensuring that we make our country better.

Mr Speaker, finally, I want to thank His Excellency the Governor-General for gracing this Parliament with his presence and his words which reminds us of our roles and responsibilities, and how we conduct ourselves in this Eleventh Parliament.

15/01

Our Government is very committed to undertaking the work in this term of Parliament, but secures its mandate from this House of Legislators. We have a core business as our nation faces 50 years of nationhood.

We must look at the laws that our nation is running on. We have to refurbish, strengthen, oil and grease them to make sure that the laws we have today are compatible to the business and livelihoods in this century, more or so, in the 2020s.

We are called to these offices that we hold now and to exercise responsibilities, not for ourselves but for and on behalf of those who have elected us. Our ultimate responsibility is to them, our people.

We are therefore reminded once again to be prudent, responsible, to be forthright in our deliberations and to ensure that their interest is always kept at the forefront. If we have had in the past, but then, it is not late to make these changes.

The lessons we have learnt will serve as stepping stones to restructure and realign our focuses, in terms of meaningfully and practically implementing our socio-economic policies, and the over-arching plans and initiatives that starts today, not tomorrow.

I want to leave with these few questions. To our members of Parliament, as our nation approaches 50 years of independence in 2025, as we live through the Eleventh Parliament, the question to fix our country is this; if it is not me, then who? If it is not us, then who? If it is not now, then when?

Our people have entrusted us that responsibility, it is now our business to put PNG first, putim PNG first, PNG atoa guna. God bless Papua New Guinea.

Thank you, Mr Speaker. God bless you too.

Mr JOSEPH LELANG (Kandrian-Gloucester) – Mr Speaker, it is with great pleasure and honour that I take this privilege to address this honourable House as the Leader of the Opposition on this important occasion.

On behalf of honourable leaders on this side of the House and the people we represent, I rise first of all to thank His Excellency, the Governor- General for the address to Parliament earlier today.

Mr Speaker, the significance of the occasion and the message delivered demands our full attention and careful thought. Our people from all corners of our nation had been watching and listening in by radio or television and our other citizens will read about this in the papers.

Mr Speaker, an important point is that leaders of all three arms of our nation's Government were present here today in this important occasion.

I acknowledge at this juncture, the attendance of the honourable Chief Justice and eminent justices of our nation's judiciary who were here this morning. I also acknowledge the honourable Prime Minister and ministers of State who head the executive government. I also acknowledge members of the diplomatic community who have been with us also in this ceremony.

Mr Speaker, the message from the Head of State is timely and challenging indeed. I cannot help but agree with the Head of State, that a serious array of socio-economic challenges confront us, the leadership of our nation today.

It is clear that the Eleventh Parliament has come at a very difficult time. In listening to the speech by the Head of State, it is clear to us on this side that many of the issues that we are dealing with today have lingered on for as long as our Independence.

We are almost 50 years old, as an independent nation but the task of lifting our people and building our strong nation is still very challenging. Our social indicators and economic performance so far describes these challenges very well.

One can simply look around our region and in the Commonwealth to see how we fail in contrast or comparison with other countries who have gained independence in the same period. The team I lead from this side of the House understand these challenges and are committed to doing our best to help the government find and deliver the way forward for our people.

Mr Speaker, I want to state clearly as the Leader of the Opposition, that my team is committed to protecting and promoting the interest of our people and nation. We understand that our roles do not require us to engage in gutter politics and meaningless disputes. We recognise the government's mandate to lead the executive arm and our nation's legislative programs. Our

role can be constructive, only if there is meaningful dialogue and cooperation on both sides of the House.

Mr Speaker, contrary to the common mistaken view, we are not just in the Opposition to oppose and oppress any government initiatives or interventions, we are here to ensure sound policy-based decisions are made in adherence and compliance to the *Constitution* and the laws passed in this House.

Mr Speaker, leaders on this side of the House are ready to support Government and Parliament initiatives through Parliamentary Committees and other platforms established to perform our mandated duties. We will support bi-partisan collaboration on matters of national significance. But as you know, that is only possible if both sides of the House share the same spirit and commitment to work for the national interest and development goals.

Mr Speaker, on alternative policy position, I am pleased to inform you that our policy positions and key interventions in different sectors were written and published widely before the national elections. We have heard the response of our people and we are ready to advance our policy contributions as we proceed.

But the onus is on the Prime Minister and the Government to release much needed policy details. so that we can hear and see a real need for our Government, especially to amplify many general statements they have made so far to enable us to engage in meaningful dialogue and debate.

16/01

Mr Speaker, we agree that the first challenge is to deal with the cost-of-living crises now confronting us. As we gather here today, many of our people cannot afford basic goods and services.

Mr Speaker, what is alarming is that the prices are rising particularly in the rural areas of our country. We have preexisting high employment figures and it continues to worsen as small businesses continue to shut down and big businesses are right-sizing or scaling down operations. We are meeting here at a time when our society has become violent and is no longer a peaceful society.

Mr Speaker, I am referring to the Governor-General's reference to the declining state of safety and security in our communities. The challenges in law and order are not just social concerns but directly underpins our efforts to rebuild a robust economy for our nation going into the future.

We must deal with the root causes for these negative social changes. We must identify the pressures on our youths and people to turn to the ways of lawlessness and violence.

Mr Speaker, we on this side believe that the process must start by admitting that we have real problems. Therefore, that need to be properly diagnosed before we start the recovery and restoration process. This calls us to stop pretending and we must stop the blame game and we need to start working on solutions. We agree with the Prime Minister, that the work is urgent and there is no time for unnecessary time-wasting rhetoric.

The Opposition looks forward to contribute to interventions that the Treasurer will bring to address the immediate impact of the economic crises and the longer-term redress to position our nation to ride the storm while driving and building a modern resilient economy going into the future. We support interventions that will improve quality in the health and education of our people as an important agenda in this regard. But these efforts must be accompanied by well defined interventions everywhere else. Right now, creating a conducive investment climate is a priority challenge confronting the Government at all levels. Once again, we stand ready to engage with Government in finding solutions to address this and other important challenges that is facing our nation.

Mr Speaker, closer to our shores our nation and others in the Pacific have become the forecast of geo-political events and decisions that have the potential to affect us directly or indirectly in some cases. We know how issues affecting our friends and major trading partners have had an impact on our nation and can potentially influence our duty to promote the interest of our people.

Mr Speaker, in response to the Governor-Generals points on the 2022 National Election, I have to say that we in the Opposition simply agree and in fact adopt these statements by the Head of State. Our recent National Election has been described by some as a national shame. There is reason for this harsh conclusion, Mr Speaker, and it reflects the frustration of our people everywhere following the recent national elections. We know the Government promises to reform the electoral system and the Opposition is looking into supporting what reforms will be brought forward and we offer our support to the Government in this area.

Mr Speaker, the Opposition sees a need to undertake comprehensive review and reform as anticipated by the *Constitution*. The Founding Fathers did see us time in our journey when the National Government must deliberately conduct review of our Constitutional Laws and Systems and Structures of the Government. We have not done so over so many years, and we agree and say that it is time we do this. This will give our citizens especially, the next generations, time to participate in the discussions and work of repositioning our country. It will rebuild public confidence in our systems of democracy of governments in our institutions.

Mr Speaker, this is a call for national consultations and meaningful conversation with our people and important national stakeholders in search for a way forward. This is why we say that creating new ministries and confirming existing ones as the Prime Minister has highlighted will bring us closer to the goals that we have aspired to be and to achieve.

If we want to increase trading in our agriculture and other primary resources, then the solution may require combination of interventions such as structural adjustments and funding support recommended in our existing national trade policies.

17/01

I use the opportunity, Mr Speaker, to retreat my calls for policy-driven, well-defined interventions by the government so that we can move forward and we are clear, and our citizens can have an idea about what we are doing and not merely ideas that floating in the corridors that have not gone through the due processes.

Mr Speaker, in the governance space, we support the move to get ICAC up and running as a matter of urgency. However, we would also like to see that the National Anti-Corruption strategy that was adopted by this House in the 10th Parliament, also be implemented if we are going to achieve sets of outcomes in the anticipated time.

Mr Speaker, on the issue of governance and integrity of government decision making processes, we will push to ensure the budget of the Judiciary and National Parliament must not be cut by the Executive Arm. This practice is unconstitutional and in fact it started recently and this needs to be corrected.

Mr Speaker, I will be insisting that Permanent Committee on Plans and Estimates be bipartisan and do its job independently and professionally. Necessary checks and balances on executive powers of the people now exercised by the Prime Minister and his Ministers and Department heads can only be scrutinised by Committees in Parliament and our Judiciary.

Finally, in this regard, the Opposition will be calling for more stringent measures to their appointment to the Judiciary and Constitutional office holders and other reforms in the course of time.

Mr Speaker, in the area of revenue generation, we will support government initiatives to empower our revenue collection agencies like Customs and Tax office. We will look for diagnostic initiatives in the revenue and resource sectors to identify low hanging fruits and address gaps that allow our revenue loss. Our attention will be given to current trade facilitation challenges being support increased funding and capacity building in trade agencies and import related activities needs to be better mobilised to create a buffer after Customs.

In the Agricultural Front we welcome the governments announcements to support import substitution initiatives. We encourage the government to create and allow for strategic private partnerships in the sector that will drive the agenda with a sound business approach and outcomes. The government needs to extend the desire to drive its economic diversifications with strategic partnership with those involved in the knowledge and information sector. In other words, Mr Speaker, the Opposition wants to see funds for research and development across government. The commitment to e-government is fully supported by the Opposition and it is ready to contribute to making this drive to modernised government and our society as a whole as an important foundation for our nation going into the future.

Mr Speaker, why am I highlighting all of these. I could go on with a longer list of challenges and opportunities we have as leaders in this 11th House but I won't. My team will do that in the coming sessions. I have focused my points to agree with His Excellency, the Governor-General concerning the leadership challenges that we all face today. More so to highlight the opportunity we now have to work, together to make a real difference for our country. I have tried to demonstrate that you have an Opposition, Mr Speaker, an Opposition team that has a position on matters highlighted and others. That we are ready to do our work and do our part in building our country while correcting the mistakes of the past.

In summary, Mr Speaker, the people's Opposition recognises the challenges and statements of expectation delivered by the Head of State today. Your Opposition team is ready and able to meet the challenges and overcome them for the sake of our people and nation. We will support any motion moved in that spirit and intent.

Mr Speaker, I thank you and also thank His Excellency, the Head of State, honourable Chief Justice, our Prime Minister and all the leaders of our nation gathered here today. May God bless this Parliament and the people of Papua New Guinea.

18/01

Mr ALLAN BIRD (East Sepik) – Thank you Mr Speaker, first of all let me thank His Excellency Governor-General Sir Bob Dadae, also his Honour, the Chief Justice and the judges for gracing our Parliament today. May I do that on behalf of all our Members. I would like to also thank the Prime Minister and the honourable Opposition Leader for their very appropriate responses to his Excellency.

Mr Speaker, before I add my comments, I would like to acknowledge on behalf of the House, those of us senior MPs who did not make it back but to also commend the many new

MPs who have come to the House and we hope and Papua New Guinea hopes to see these young MP's flourish over the next five years and develop into leaders for the future.

Mr Speaker, I was very heartened to hear His Excellency begin by talking about the erosion within our electoral processes and the democratic process in general. If there is one thing that underpins our Government and our country, it is the system of government, and key to all of that is the electoral process.

Mr Speaker, it is my fear that our people have lost trust in our system of governance. We see that through the delayed counting processes. I think that is a symptom. We see that in the suspicions surrounding the elections. I have heard amongst Members of Parliament who suspect that this party or that party was involved in corruption. So, there is also distrust on this Floor, which is reflective of the general distrust out in our population.

As leaders we cannot afford to ignore this lack of trust. Whether it's an organization or a country, they cannot flourish without trust. The people need to have faith in the processes that deliver a government, they need to have faith in a Parliament where their voices are represented. They need to have faith in the judiciary that dispenses justice.

I fear Mr Speaker, over the past 47 years, there has been a continuous erosion of trust of the people for their Government and for their leadership. We see that everywhere in the discontent amongst people and particularly amongst our young people. Therefore, I want to couch all of this to sort of extract from some of the things that His Excellency said this morning. This Government is sitting in a unique position and when I say Government I mean both sides of the House and I want to again commend the Honourable Opposition Leader Joseph Lelang for his comments and I welcome them heartily. If we do not restore the trust that our people have in our systems, they will continue to lay their hands on it and pull it apart as we continue to see.

As we sit in this House there is one seat that continues to go through this lack of trust process and subject to a total lack of trust. People do not trust the counting officials, they do not trust the police, they do not trust the Defence Force. Now if we cannot trust these mechanisms of Government, who do we trust? And key amongst that are the candidates themselves, the scrutineers themselves, who absolutely do not trust the process. We cannot ignore this, and we cannot allow this situation to continue. Because it speaks to the whole fabric of our society. If there is no trust anywhere, we can't run a country.

19/01

I was heartened, Mr Speaker, as I go to my next point, about His Excellency talking about the empowerment of provincial governments. And I heard the same thing from the Prime Minister.

It gives me hope that as our country continues to get bigger, purely from a management perspective, we must start to diversify, to devolve power away from the centre. You cannot run a big organisation from the centre. This country is now 47 years old, perhaps 10 million people, 21 provinces and a special region. We cannot run it from Waigani anymore. This Parliament must make a concerted effort from the start to start to deal with that issue.

Mr Speaker, the Ombudsman Commission did not trust any of us. That's basically what happened. They shut down all provincial governments. We could not operate for almost three months. That needs to stop. The various arms of government need to trust one another to perform our functions.

We cannot come in, and because we suspect that one of our cronies on the other side may possibly engage in an unauthorised manner and we shut down the whole country. This is not a tucker box. It is unacceptable.

We have systems that are supposed to check other systems. Not one entity shutting down the whole country.

Mr Speaker, the elections in East Sepik should have failed. Had it not been for the public servants in East Sepik, who could not raise a single cheque Mr Speaker. I still want to know if money for the police and the Electoral Commission actually arrived in my province because I know that the East Sepik public servants went to the business houses and begged for money to pay for fuel, allowance, and helicopter so we could deliver the elections. That sounds like a tucker box to me Mr Speaker and it is unacceptable. No country on earth can run like that.

It comes back to the underlying issue of a complete lack of trust amongst the people and a complete lack of trust amongst all government agencies. We must fix that this term Mr Speaker. I implore the House.

Mr Speaker, when we were talking about the Russian-Ukraine War about eight months ago, I was one of those who stood up and made a practical suggestion to our people, which is, grow your own food in the gardens.

We know that the price of fertilisers will go up. We know that covid-19 is still affecting China so the factories in China are shutdown. Shipping is difficult. We knew eight months ago that the prices of rice and wheat would go up. We knew eight months ago that the price of fuel would go up. We knew all of these, yet, our government's response, which was commendable, but it still did not deal with the problem. We allocated money to subsidize prices.

What we should have done was to look at alternative form of fuel. If the whole world is looking at green energy, why aren't we? It is not difficult to go out and grow oil bearing plants. We've got significant arable land around the country that is unutilised. We need to utilise those land, we need to produce fuel in country. We need to divorce ourselves from overdependence on fossil fuels, Mr Speaker.

The blight of fossil fuel dependence around the world is affecting small countries more than all. Large countries are okay. They have diversified. Small countries have not.

Mr Speaker, as I look to Australia, they have now announced that by 2030 they will no longer have combustion engines. They will switch to all electrical vehicles.

What about us. Are we going to still depend on combustion engine? Now if that is the case, we must develop the capacity to produce our own fuel because the world is changing.

20/01

Mr Speaker, also with food, I spoke here on this Floor about it months ago and I talked about eating and growing our own food. Its sounds like we are giving up but it's not, when I spoke to the East Sepik people just before Covid-19, they went and planted a lot of food. In fact, in East Sepik now there is an abundance of bananas, sweet potatoes, vegetables and fruits in almost every village.

We are encouraging our people to start eating fresh fish and the things that our land provide which are healthy and wholesome food. This is your best hatch against inflation which is affecting the entire planet. When, I read the other day, the UK is experiencing 10.1 per cent inflation in one quarter.

Somehow, we believe that in Papua New Guinea, we can spend some money and subsidise the cost because our people are screaming for us to subsidise cost. But we are not getting away from the fact that rice, flour, and fuel are all produced in other countries. We will continue to import the inflation from the world.

The only way we can significantly protect ourselves from the effect of the world is to do that production here. We must stop eating rice and flour and revert back to foods that our ancestors ate and there's nothing wrong with that. It's not hard for us to plant these foods. We need to stop being lazy, not just the government, but the people as well.

Mr Speaker, one of the things that I was concerned about and I think we should talk about and I commend the Opposition Leader for talking about it. We need to remove the barriers to foreign direct investment. We need to stop vilifying foreign direct investment. There is nothing wrong with foreign direct investment so long as it's done on our terms.

I understand that foreign investors are afraid to come to our country. This Floor needs to send a positive signal out so that the genuine investors can come. Because if we don't, those investors that put money under the table will continue to come and take advantage of our weak systems. Genuine investors will be afraid to come because of our weak system.

We need to ensure that our systems are more robust and they can respond to genuine foreign direct investors when they do come, and not filter them and scar them away to another country.

Mr Speaker, finally as I come to close, our people don't need handouts. What they need is equal opportunities. Whether that equal opportunity be in the area of education, healthcare, justice system or economic, they must be available. We cannot skew our systems to protect certain cultural ethnic groups so that only they will survive and thrive.

Those opportunities must be available to all Papua New Guineans within these borders that we call our sovereign state. Anyone who has a citizenship right in this country must also have a right to equal opportunity whatever, that opportunity may be.

Mr Speaker, to our government and ministers in particular, the work starts this week. We have seen ministers in the past become ministers of their districts. It has been an all too common and popular pastime for ministers to become ministers of their district first, and minister of state second.

When we bestow upon you the responsibility of the people of Papua New Guinea as a minister, you act for the country, not your district. Whilst I am part of this government, you all will continue to hear me out. All the Ministers will hear from me.

21/01

We cannot focus on our districts and provinces while no body focuses on our role as a country. Someone must do their job. We the governors are working with our people. We have confidence in you all to do your work. Please step up we cannot have mediocre performances anymore, it is now 47 years, a lot of things are not going well and we need to put them right.

We must bring our people with us by communicating better. A lot of times our communication is not clear and people misunderstand us. When you go to social media, people get numbers and everything wrong and they make up stories and everybody likes to believe. a fancy story but will not believe the truth.

It all comes down to trusting in the government. When they do not trust a government and when a Minister is speaking and giving them the facts, everyone quickly assumes it's a lie,

because we start from a basis of trust. Our lowest lying denominator is a lack trust. We do not start from a position of trust. We need to be aware of that and we need to deal with it accordingly.

People must not expect the government to do everything, we must stop this mentality of free-handouts to our people. I know that we MPs get carried away with minor issues. We need to be serious on our leadership approach. Our people must learn to go out and take advantage of the opportunities that are there. If there are no opportunities it is up to them to knock on our doors to force us to look for those opportunities for them.

The declining safety in our communities cannot be unspoken of. I am glad the Opposition Leader raised it and our Prime Minister also did. Yesterday there was a massive fight in Wewak town.

Mr SPEAKER – Governor for East Sepik your time has lapsed.

Mr ALLAN BIRD – Thank you Mr Speaker, may I indulge you for another 30 seconds? This decline in safety must be addressed and solved. Why are our young people restless? We need to ask that question and find the answers. Finally, we need to get Parliament working and I come back to the issue I spoke about earlier. I see new young promising MPs in here. We have 17 parliamentary committees that can be activated immediately. I would like to see those fully funded so that we support the Speaker and the Parliament in its work but more so that we start the job of training future leaders by putting them into these parliamentary committees so that they start their apprenticeship and move up. It is important that the checks and balances are done. We must begin from this parliament and move onto the other arms of the government. I support the call made by the Leader of the Opposition for full funding to make it work.

Mr LUTHER WENGE (Morobe) - I will make my statement in *tok pisin*. I want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. Firstly, thank you to the people of Morobe for having the trust in me and to mandate me to be here to represent and serve them, in my fourth term here in parliament.

To all the people of Morobe who are listening or watching right now, I want to say a sincere thank you from the bottom of my heart. I also send my sincere appreciation to the Head of State, the Governor General who represents the Queen who is the head of the commonwealth, thank you for your speech and also thank you to the Prime Minister James Marape who added on to the Governor-General's speech. I also thank the Governor for East Sepik.

Thank you to all those who made speeches before me, especially the Opposition Leader, Honorable Joseph Lelang. We need to speak up and represent our people. One of the first things to talk about is our own constituency.

Mr Speaker, with all due respect, I want to comment on some of the important points which the Governor-General made in his speech. This is in regards to the role of the elections in this country. When we used the First-Past-The-Post method, there was not so much hiccups or problems. We nominated once, campaigned once and election was done and declarations were done, the system was easy and manageable. When we introduced preferential system has created a lot of challenges. Financially it has drained a lot of candidates and to top it all off the lawlessness involved because people are spending so much to get votes, 1, 2 and 3.

22/01

Mr Speaker, this country belongs to those who are not financially well. One of the former Member of Chuave, was the then Chairman of the Constitutional Review Committee made changes to the country's electoral system into preferential voting system. This was upon the advice on his visit to Australia.

The preferential system is creating a huge problem here in the country. Some of you here were fortunate because you were incumbent candidates contesting. People like us had to really struggle to campaign for the preferential voting system and it is really costly.

We must not lie to our people. We cannot be like Australia or any other nation, we are Papua New Guineans and we must be realistic and admit that, the preferential voting system has really failed us for some time now.

Whilst the counting process goes on, it is really costly and corruption also takes place once the counting progresses. This really exhausts us because a lot of foul plays happen when it comes to counting the second preferences.

Mr Speaker, my electorate is much bigger than yours and I am just letting you know. I was denied my right during the 2012 and 2017 election due to bribes of the counting officials to exhaust my votes. The same practice nearly failed me but I got them this time. I am very much thankful for my people

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Why should we allow this election system which is more expensive and more corrupt here in this country?

We are not like other nations. Our lifestyle here in Papua New Guinea is very much different so, don't pretend like you are an expatriate.

Mr Speaker, in order to alleviate this issue, I also agree with the Governor-General to have this system removed and bring back the First-Past-The-Post into the election process.

Mr Speaker, if you want the electoral system to remain, do it for the rest of Papua New Guinea but for Morobe alone, we will use the First-Past-The-Post system.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Mr Speaker, give the Provincial Governments a chance to decide on the electoral system. We must amend the *Organic Law*. It is not a Bible so that we cannot change. But if you change the Bible, that is between you and God for judgement.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Mr Speaker, this is a law that can be amended and I suggest that we give the Provincial Governments a fair bit on this to make a decision.

On behalf of my people from Morobe, I strongly go against the Preferential Electoral System and prefer the First-Past-The-Post System.

Mr Speaker, the second thing I would like to say is that the Governor-General has made the point clear. All the leaders on the Floor of Parliament must know that the nation is watching every move here. Yet we show a bad image here all because of who to form the next Government.

I came in from outside and I know what had happened here on the Floor, arguing your legal points and some may be true and some aren't. So, we must be aware that people are watching.

Those of you who got portfolios and the Speaker as well, must be well versed with the law of our country. We must not come here and open our mouths for nothing, because we want to give the best information to our people who really need it.

Mr Speaker, this morning the Governor-General reminded us again to read the law. Most of you here are highly qualified, but we must read and apply the law.

Mr Speaker, the third point I want to speak on is the Law and Order issue in the country.

23/01

Today, our youths are creating a lot of problems for us. This is why our people have elected us to come to the Parliament to represent them and make a difference to help our youths.

Many of them have completed their grades eight, 10, 12 and even tertiary education but there are no employment opportunities in this country. When they go back home, they are just like the uneducated ones in their communities. They are only human and this psychologically affects them. They are educated but why are they not employed? They then fight against their communities, the police and the government.

The Government in turn threatens to send them back to their provinces. Why will we send them back? This is their country as much as it's ours. They are protected under our *Constitution* and can live freely anywhere in this country.

If you are a leader that is always talking about sending the unemployed youths back to their provinces, it just goes to show that you lack ideas and initiatives. In fact, you should be the one to go back to your village.

Mr Speaker, that is why I want us to address the unemployment problem in this country. We must keep track of all the students coming out of every institution and must provide employment opportunities for them. Right now we do not have such records, because I have never seen one.

We do not cater for their needs, that is why they come back and create problems for us. We keep on talking about their attitude problems, but in fact we leaders are running away from our responsibilities of being innovative and creative to attend to the needs of our youths.

I am always fighting against foreigners coming into our country. But now, let us bring them in because we need them to help us create employment opportunities for our youths.

When I was the Governor of Morobe, I created a lot of employment opportunities for my people by bringing in a lot of factories thus reducing the unemployment rate. They wanted me to do things like that, that is why they elected me come back.

I want this thing to happen but I will need the support of the Prime Minister. You are a young man and I trust you that you have the wisdom to bring about these things. If you plan for these things, the NEC will see to it that you achieve your plans.

That is why I say bring in Asians that are able to create employment for our youths. We have to do it. I was arguing during the orientation because a lot of Papua New Guineans were supposed to go down to Australia to be employed by the Australians. They want to train and be employed there but the Australian Government would not allow that.

Mr Speaker, I was arguing about this yesterday because Australians have been coming and working in our oil, gas and mining industries for a while now but yet they do not want Papua

New Guineans to go down and work in Australia. What kind of friendship is that? They will only talk about these things but will never do anything about it.

Mr Speaker, I want the Prime Minister to take note of this. We have to provide employment opportunities for our youths who are coming out of schools. We are the people who should be attending to this problem head on, and not running away from them.

When we solve this problem, we will not need a lot of police officers, courts and magistrates because we are attending to the needs of the people creating this problem. The people that cause problems for us, are our youths.

Mr Speaker, I am happy with the Prime Minister for creating different ministries for agriculture, oil palm, cocoa and coffee. I commend you for this new approach and that is the way forward. We are always talking about oil, gas and mining. Does this business belong to Papua New Guinea? Shame on us. This business belongs to the foreigners like the Chinese.

24/01

Mr Speaker, all the funds have been taken to other countries because they own 98 percent of the shares as stipulated in the *section 6* of the *Oil and Gas Act*. They only give two percent to our people which is really bad. After seeing all this mistreatment of our people, I as a citizen of this country don't want to live here. But unfortunately, I am from this country that's why I am debating here today.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Mr Prime Minister, I am so glad that you created the new ministry of Agriculture because it is the way forward. It will bring big returns from oil palm, coffee and other agriculture commodities. These commodities will be here until Heaven and Earth pass away and Jesus returns and we all disappear from this earth or what's going to happen after that I'm not sure.

These commodities will remain, but the natural resources such as oil, gas, nickel will one day be depleted. As a way forward I am fully supporting you on this point.

My third point is on education; during my schooling days starting from primary up to university all the fees were paid by the Australian Government. It was not an issue to me at that time which gave me confidence to study well. I completed my studies and got my degree in Law and here I am talking today.

Mr Speaker, these fees were paid by the Government. Therefore, no one in this country today will deny that we have no money, you are simply lying to yourself. We are blessed immensely with natural resources, which belongs to us as a country. We are surrounded by forest, coffee, cocoa and so forth. Yet we divert these resources to foreigners like Chinese's and we are left with nothing to pay for our children's school fees. And in that way frustrations build up and they attack us.

We come here and debate about relocating these youths back to Kabwum, Manus, Sabama and these other places. Do you own this country? You must be mad, Mr Speaker. We all are citizens of this country and likewise these youths. As long as they live they will remain in this country.

Therefore, we have to provide them the best education for our children because they are the future leaders and they will move this country forward so we can know and have confidence that this country is in the safe hands.

I want to tell Honourable Peter O'Neill who is sitting over there and Honourable James Marape to introduce free education starting from elementary up to university level.

Mr Speaker you must listen to me carefully

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Governor of Morobe, the Chair reminds you that your 15 minutes is up.

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Thankyou for the five minutes, so we have to be serious with all these issue because we cannot run away from problems and act as we don't have problems.

Mr Speaker, right now we have to attend to these pressing issues. Your Island is very small, with great respect. But as for Morobe over populated and there is fighting going on every day and it's really a big headache for me to handle. That's why I'm stressing here so listen to me carefully.

(Laughter in the Chamber)

Mr LUTHER WENGE – To conclude, sorry you allowed five minutes.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Governor, you have to stop because other Members also want to talk.

Mr LUTHER WENGE – Very final one, Prime Minister, I want you to address the issue of Bougainville amicably and properly.

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Mr BELDEN NAMA (Vanim-Green) – Sometimes we insult each other and call each other names. I personally feel that allowing the Bible in this Parliament must be reviewed. The Bible present in this Parliament can either be a curse or a blessing.

Mr Speaker, you as the head of this House and Mr Prime Minister, you as the head of the Executive Government; we must review and see the benefits of having the Bible in Parliament or not, because a lot of times we lie.

We look back to the old testament in the Bible, when the children of Israel carried the ark of the covenant. No one would go near the ark of the covenant. If someone went near it he or she would die. So whether the Bible being present with us in the Parliament is a good or bad idea. This is something we need to prayerfully discuss.

I personally think that we need to put the Bible in the Grand Hall for the visitors to come and see. It's an old Bible for the Westernized society not for us Papua New Guineans. For example, for Seventh Day Adventists, the church came into the country in 1908, when Christianity was brought to the Seventh Day people. I don't know about other churches. Therefore, where does this Bible originate from? Its 400 years old, so where does this Bible come from.? I am strongly suggesting that this Bible be put in the Grand Hall so that visitors who come to Parliament can view it outside but not in the Chamber because it can either be a blessing or a curse. Last Parliament, 10 members died, therefore we need to review this decision about where we can place this Holy Bible. This is my suggestion before we start this 11th Parliament.

The second point I would like to make is about the election, which the Prime Minister also commented on. I personally believe that this year's election is a total disaster. As we speak, the election is not yet over. NCD Regional seat is still counting. I would have expected that the capital city of Papua New Guinea to have been one of the first elections where all the seats had been declared already. What went wrong?

I support the call by the Prime Minister to have a bi-partisan approach to review and audit the 2022 Election and maybe date back to 2017 and 2012 Election. What went wrong? The Prime Minister gave K600 million to the Electoral Commission, that's plenty of money Mr Speaker, but what actually went wrong? Why is NCD Regional seat still in count when today we witnessed the inauguration of the 11th Parliament.

Mr Speaker, another point I noticed during this Election, is the declaration of Members of Parliament on special circumstances. With due respect to the members for Markham, Kabwum and Governor for Southern Highlands, it's not their fault. What criteria or what provision in the law are we using to declare members of Parliament on special circumstances. I thought the law is clear. You have to be an elected member, that means you have to have the conclusive process into being elected.

Are we setting a good or bad precedence? Otherwise in 2027, if someone is leading, he'll tell his supporters go and burn all the boxes and then he gets declared and that is the fact. We need to seriously look at these things.

And Mr Speaker, Prime Minister has given us the course of the country where he wants to take MV PNG to. Now I sit back and recollect on how I used to blame the Prime Minister for some failures in policy decisions, but I came to realize it's not the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister is just the captain

28/01

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS – ELECTION OF THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) agreed to –

That so much of the *Standing Orders* be suspended as would prevent Parliament proceeding with the election of the Deputy Speaker.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, we will now proceed with the election of the Deputy Speaker by exhaustive secret ballot. Before, I call for nominations, I wish to inform the Parliament that member's nominated must inform the Parliament whether or not they accept the nomination.

In accordance with *Standing Orders*, I now call for nominations.

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for Finance and Implementation) – Thank you, Mr Speaker. On behalf of people of Finchhafen and myself, I would like to nominate the Leader of United Labour Party, Member for Markham, Honourable Koni Iguan to be the Deputy Speaker for this Parliament.

Thank you.

Mr JELTA WONG (Gazelle – Minister for Fisheries) – I second the nomination.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Member for Markham you accept the nomination.

Mr KONI IGUAN (Markham) – Mr Speaker, I accept the nomination.

Mr SPEAKER – Are there anymore nominations?

Mr BRYAN KRAMER (Madang – Minister for Labour and Immigration) – I move to close the nominations.

Mr JOHNSON WAPUNAI (Ambunti-Drekikir) – I second the closure of nominations.

Mr SPEAKER – Honourable Members, since there are no other nominees, I now declare the Honourable Member for Markham, the Deputy Speaker unopposed.

Congratulations! You are now the Deputy Speaker.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr RAINBO PAITA (Finschhafen – Minister for Finance and Implementation) – I thank the members of the government and opposition rank for sitting through the Opening of 11th Parliament and I wish you all the best in this term of Parliament.

Motion (by **Mr Rainbo Paita**) – agreed to

That Parliament do now adjourn.

Parliament adjourned at 4 p.m.