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MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TIPNG CALLS FOR GREATER SCOPE FOR CoI INTO FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Transparency International today calls for more time to be given to the Commission of Inquiry (CoI) into the Finance Department for all relevant investigations to be conducted fully.

TIPNG acknowledges the new extension given to the CoI announced last week. The anti-corruption NGO says that the Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare has made the right choice in granting the CoI extra time, however TIPNG urges the PM to be even more flexible in granting the Commission of Inquiry into the Finance Department the scope it needs to do a proper job. It is very important that enough time be granted to the CoI given that it is scheduled to hear 33 cases alone in the next two weeks.

TIPNG acknowledges our Prime Minister's commitment and support for the COI from the time of its establishment to now. The COI has through its work, been very successful in bringing to the attention of the public the true extend and level of corruption and poor governance that is taking place to the detriment of the people of Papua New Guinea.

TIPNG appeals to the Prime Minister to meet with the Commission and agree on the number of cases that can be completed within an agreed timeframe. This will ensure that the time, money and hours spent is not wasted, and the final Report will be a more useful and effective document.

The Nation of PNG is sick and appalled by the level of corruption and TIPNG strongly believes that the work of the CoI will go a long way to achieving some successful prosecutions, which will send strong messages to our people that our laws must be respected and that no-one is above the law regardless of their position in government or the community.

The government must ensure there is eventual prosecution of people identified by the CoI to have defrauded the state and call on the Prime Minister to ensure institutions that will implement the CoI findings are adequately resourced materially and also in the independence of the constitutional authority accorded to them.

TIPNG also believes that the debate over extending the timeline for the CoI into the Finance Department would be avoided if the government established a fully resourced Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) with powers to prosecute. The anti-corruption watchdog says that with a permanent, properly equipped and mandated ICAC in place PNG would finally have the hard-hitting tools necessary to root out and prosecute corruption and gross mismanagement throughout the public service.

TIPNG concludes by congratulating the CoI into the Finance Department for its work to date and for persisting despite great administrative and legal frustrations. TIPNG says that these frustrations are further cause for the extension of the CoI's timeframe and also a cause to demand whole-hearted Government support extending beyond a one-month extension on the reporting date.

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