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Date: 31/07/09

TIPNG: NAMAH HAS MISSED THE POINT

Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) today says that Forestry Minister Belden Namah has missed the point in his public statements made today in major newspapers.

TIPNG asserts there is a principle of not mixing politics with business that should be adhered to. The anti-corruption watchdog says that the principle of not mixing politics and business applies to all leaders and MPs, not just Mr Namah. Furthermore TIPNG says that demanding this principle is upheld is in the public interest and in the interest of the integrity of political office.

TIPNG stands by its public statements published in the *Post Courier* on July 20th, and says that Mr Namah can still make a choice between representing the people of Vanimo Green and his money-making enterprises. TIPNG reminds Mr Namah that at no stage in its previous statements did it make any claims other than those reported in the media, made no particular accusations against Mr Namah, and hence had no case to answer for regarding Mr Namah's incorrect belief that TIPNG made defamatory remarks.

TIPNG reminds Mr Namah that the questions asked regarding his involvement in the Samoan property affair were relevant to the public interest and in support of the principle of not mixing politics and business. TIPNG says that if Mr Namah is not comfortable being publically questioned, he should not be an MP.

TIPNG acknowledges that Mr Namah and his business partners have developed infrastructure in his electorate, however says that it is the role of government bodies, not individual MP's to provide services and infrastructure. TIPNG says that questions remain as to whether Mr Namah's infrastructure investments in Vanimo Green electorate was for the benefit of the citizens living there or to assist the operations of Mr Namah's own logging company.

TIPNG adds that Mr Namah could use his position as an MP and NEC minister to educate the people of his electorate on the responsible roles of leadership in PNG rather than succumbing to financial demands on his person.

TIPNG also says that the use of a government logo by Mr Namah on a press statement to defend himself personally is inappropriate, and that Mr Namah should explain if newspaper statements were paid for by himself or the Government department he heads.

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