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## Government must come clear on Kokopo BSA

Transparency International PNG Inc (TIPNG) is gravely concerned of the K60 million plans to conduct the national Licensed Based Agreement forums with LNG project landowners, given so much has already been spent and promised as a result of BSA consultations so far.

Before any more so called public consultations take place TIPNG is calling on the government to make available its report of the first BSA agreement so the general public, not just a select few bureaucrats and landowner groups in the project areas can be informed of the current agreements.

TIPNG says the Government should publicly disclose all outcomes of the Kokopo BSA forum, what reports were submitted to parliament and stakeholders, and the funds promised to different landowner groups for what projects. All of this information has to be made public before proceeding to the next step, so that PNG's people can be assured the continued consultation processes will not be an ongoing and limitless drain on public money.

TIPNG says open and public opposition by landowner groups from project areas is evident. They have gained national court orders to prevent the Licensed Based Agreement forums starting, which seems to illustrate that something is very wrong somewhere and needs to be fixed in an appropriate manner by the Government's line agency the Department of Petroleum and Energy.

Appropriate solutions also involve planning and accountability. Therefore TIPNG asks where the K60 million is coming from to fund the Licensed Based Agreement forums for the PNG LNG Project. The question is asked: were these funds ever included in the National Budget for 2009 for this purpose?

TIPNG Chairman Peter Aitsi says, "this is yet another example of the Government simply wasting funds, paying people off while trying to lend this dubious process an air of legitimacy. It seems that the government does not honestly consider the issues and impacts of the LNG project – but simply seeks to buy the silence of landowners' in the face of considerable opposition to the project and mass confusion about benefit entitlement."

Mr Aisti asks: "have we not learnt any lessons from our experiences in Bougainville?" He said that many people may be silenced in the short term thanks to shoddy cheque book negotiations, but the long term outcomes may not be positive. Widespread community agitation and perhaps even violent unrest may be the results of this flawed attempt to maintain an image of consultation and community participation.

The current process being used by the government through the Department of

Petroleum & Energy is not a path to national prosperity, but simply short-term politics playing on greed rather than a serious attempt to make sure PNG's development progresses and people nationwide benefit.

TIPNG says that economical benefit to the entire country is equally important as landowner interests. Therefore the government should handle the project diligently in a manner satisfying to all parties, and not resort to short cuts. TIPNG believes it is also in the long term interest of the commercial operators involved in the LNG project to demand more accountability and transparency in the actions of the PNG Government.