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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Government must be Transparent on Central Rice Project Deliberation

Port Moresby, 26 January 2018 –Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TIPNG) is calling on Minister for Agriculture and the National Government to ensure that the decision-making process for the controversial Central Province Rice Project must be transparent for public scrutiny. The project involves an alleged international criminal and could damage the food security & well-being of all Papua New Guineans.

In a recent statement Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Honorable Benny Allen, said that the Government was in the process of reviewing the Naime Rice Project in Central Province. Naime Food Ltd, a company only registered in 2011, was requesting both a 10-year break from paying taxes and 80% control of the domestic rice market in Papua New Guinea.

In response to this, Chairman of TIPNG, Mr Lawrence Stephens, said, “The people of Papua New Guinea deserve to know why their Government is endangering their access to food by bringing in a company that was registered only 7 years ago, has not grown a single grain of rice and is alleged to have ties to the former Indonesian fugitive DjokoTjandra. These circumstances raise serious questions about why this proposal was made to give Naime Food, by law, control of 80% of the rice in PNG.”

“TIPNG finds it concerning that other state bodies responsible for Competition, Consumer Protection, Trade, Commerce, National Planning, National Security or even compliance with International Criminal Law have not vocalised their opposition to this shady deal,” said Mr. Stephens.

“As an organisation representing the views of citizens that value clarity and integrity in Government’s deliberations, we call on Minister Allen to be open and inclusive of all views before making this important decision,” added Stephens.

In 2009 Indonesian businessman DjokoTjandra was sentenced in absentia to 2 years imprisonment and ordered by the Indonesian Supreme Court to pay back \$57 million he allegedly received from the sale of now bankrupt Bank Bali. Tjandra fled to Port Moresby in 2009 and was given refuge by the PNG Government 3 years later with local media reporting him getting PNG citizenship. Tjandra’s dealings with the O’Neill government were highlighted in a 2017 Review of 20 Outstanding Cases of National Concern 2007-2017 by TIPNG.

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What is TIPNG?

TIPNG is a member of Transparency International a global anti corruption movement committed to fighting corruption. TIPNG is an independent organization in PNG known as a Chapter of the international movement. The PNG chapter advocates against corruption and promotes transparency, good governance, honesty and accountability both in private and public sector dealings. TIPNG tries to assist strengthen the integrity systems of our country such as the police, the parliament, the public services and the judiciary.