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**PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Lack of Law for Access to Information in PNG is Cause of ‘Fake News’ says TIPNG**

*Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2019, Port Moresby* – The spread of unfounded speculation on Social Media in Papua New Guinea is caused by the lack of legislation to empower citizens to access accurate information from state institutions says Transparency International Papua New Guinea (TIPNG).

TIPNG calls on the government to address the underlying issue that is the lack of an Access to Information law, which has led to unreliable information on social media, referred to by the Prime Minister as ‘fake news’ in media reports.

“Proposals by elected leaders to close down social media sites hides the real issue of the inability of citizens to access timely, verified public information so that untrue rumors and speculation can be disregarded,” TIPNG said in a media statement

“TIPNG calls on all Parliamentarians to not be victims of lazy thinking which demonises civic spaces provided by modern technology. Leaders must avoid the trap of proposing short-term solutions that deprive citizens their rights to free speech and expression, but rather, be visionary and consider the long-term goal of empowering citizens by passing legislation for all State Entities to provide information upon request by the public. This vision was expressed by our founding fathers in Section 51 of the National Constitution which gives a general Right To Information, and calls for a Law to be made – this still has not been done in the 43 years since Independence.”

Citizens can reasonably expect this legislation as the Government in NEC Decision No. 323/2018 endorsed the PNG Open Government Partnership (OGP) National Action Plan 2018-2020, which is coordinated by the Department of National Planning and Monitoring (DNPM), and has a commitment that Access to Information Law be drafted and brought to Parliament by 2020. TIPNG urges elected leaders, including members of the Opposition, to support the Bill when it is tabled in Parliament. Members of Parliament should use the Right to Information Bill as the avenue to meaningfully address so-called ‘fake news’, not resort to reactive unconstitutional threats.

TIPNG is the Civil Society Co-Chair of the OGP in Papua New Guinea and has been working to use that platform to create a space for Government and Civil Society to come together and create an agenda for a more Open Government in PNG, thereby ensuring reliable and cost-effective service delivery to citizens. The need for Access to Information is also listed under the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) which PNG ratified in 2007.

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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.