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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Transparency on Covid-19 Funds Will Protect Lives

Thursday 05 May 2020, Port Moresby - Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) is demanding greater accountability and proper detailed disclosure of financials from the Government and Leaders, as allegations of financial impropriety relating to use of funds allocated to the Covid-19 State of Emergency (SOE) response.

Since the declaration of the Covid-19 SOE in March 2020, the State has allocated public funds to address the Emergency, however the clear details of funding and evidence of procurement processes have not been made public. For instance, it is unclear what measures have been put in place to ensure corruption does not impact Covid-19 efforts in Papua New Guinea.

TIPNG has collated public statements in the media and created a funding timeline, of both internal funds and external contributions to the Covid-19 budget in PNG, but there is a distinct lack of objective financial data. This absence of information creates suspicion and undermines the public's confidence in the Government and our Political leaders. This should be a concern for Papua New Guinea, a country already vulnerable to corruption and a history of impunity.

"The exact sum of funding for the Covid-19 emergency currently at the PNG Government's disposal is still unverified. As a further matter, there is no independent verifiable information or data on exactly how much funding has been spent so far and how it has been spent. We call on the Government, state of emergency authorities & SOE Parliamentary Committee to be proactive with information and ensure good governance is upheld during these times," said Chairman of TIPNG, Mr. Peter Aitsi.

"The best way to combat disinformation during this time is to let independent media do their job and to grant media access to Government's information related to Covid-19 SOE funding and spending. TIPNG supports the call from the Media Council of PNG for Government to issue official information through official channels and via authorized sources to engender public confidence and peace of mind" said Mr. Aitsi.

The Marape Government should not repeat the mistakes of 2018 when there was alleged gross misuse of APEC funds, with no expenditure report to date provided to Parliament and the public. TIPNG reminds citizens, churches, like-minded organizations and the media that it is their right to demand accountability from the Covid-19 SOE authorities on funds. In the absence of decisive action to prevent corruption, Papua New Guinea could be hard hit by Covid-19, and the number of lives lost would not solely be due to the illness but also as a result of mismanagement of Covid-19 funds.

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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.