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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NO AUDIT ON COVID 19 FUNDS AS LEGISLATED DEADLINE LOOMS

Tuesday August 25, 2020, Port Moresby – With the August sitting of Parliament commencing this week, the PNG Government now has 21 days left to produce and table in Parliament a report on SOE expenditure, as required under Section 8 (3) of the Emergency Act 2020. As the legislated deadline approaches, Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) raises serious concerns on the PNG Government’s lack of follow-through on its promise to conduct and table a proper audit of COVID-19 SOE funding.

An announcement by Police Minister Bryan Kramer last month on the completion of an internal audit report undertaken by PABA covering K45.3m of funding released to the Department of Health raises a number of questions;

- What about the funds and emergency supplies donated, given or otherwise injected into COVID-19 emergency response operations (figures TIPNG based on available public records indicate an estimated total value of these external contributions at approximately K145 million)?
- If not the Emergency Controller, then who is responsible for reporting on this “additional” tranche of funding?
- Why did the government not use an independent external audit firm?

TIPNG has not been able to see a financial report which comprehensively captures all the various contributions (funding & in kind) provided by both the international and domestic community in supplementing government allocations for COVID-19 emergency response operations.

“Our country has seen the overwhelming support and contributions made by international and national organizations to COVID-19 emergency operations since February. These contributions are all publicized on both mainstream and social media. However, as it stands, the government has yet to fully account for the total value of resources received and expended under the COVID-19 SOE,” said TIPNG Chair Peter Aitsi.

“It is clear that the recent internal audit report of the K45.3m funding is not the comprehensive audit that the government is constitutionally required to produce for the purposes of its reporting to Parliament and more importantly to its citizens. With Parliament sitting this week, TIPNG calls on the Prime Minister, Health Minister and the SOE controller to keep their promise to provide a full and proper audit of “all” SOE finances and expenditure. Given the down-turn in our economy and the resulting financial pressures being experienced in our communities, now is not the time for wasting public funds or settling for half measures in holding people accountable on how they manage and use public monies,” he said.

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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.