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PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RESTORE PUBLIC TRUST - PUBLISH COVID-19 FINANCIAL REPORTS NOW

Friday, 23rd April 2021 Port Moresby – Concerns over the abuse of COVID-19 funding have been heightened in the past few weeks, with new allegations of the awarding of contracts to public servants suggesting a direct conflict of interest. Transparency International PNG (TIPNG) has now called on the government to release all reports on funding for the COVID-19 response to restore public trust. TIPNG has been calling for greater accountability of COVID-19 funds since the initial declaration of the State of Emergency (SOE) in 2020, and subsequent emergency declarations.

“In the absence of reliable and readily available expenditure reports, public trust in both the National Government and the National COVID-19 response is greatly weakened. It is understandable that citizens will be skeptical and suspicious of the Government’s handling of public health matters if they do not have full confidence in the management of public finances,” said Peter Aitsi, TIPNG Board Chair.

“Building on from the initial efforts in 2020 to track COVID-19 funding, TIPNG is sharing information from the most recent World Health Organisation situation report on PNG which includes funds received through the Government’s Trust Account. However, this is not all the information, for instance, there has been no consolidated public report released on international donor assistance received by the government or audited expenditure report presented in Parliament,” he said.

To ensure informed public debate, the National Government's Financial Procurement Committee, under the Pandemic Act, must release to the public the following:

- a detailed expenditure report for any procurement authorized by the office of the Emergency Controller.
- a breakup of the Bilateral and Donor assistance, financial or otherwise, received to date.
- a summary of funds allocated to Provincial Health Authorities, as well as acquittal status.
- the full Internal Audit Report by Pape Accountants In 2020.

While Parliament has now been adjourned to August 10th 2021, the matter of transparency and accountability in the management of COVID-19 funding remains as urgent as ever. TIPNG now calls on the National Government and the Financial Procurement Committee to prioritize the release of this information, as it is critical to restoring public confidence not only in the COVID-19 response effort, but also in the PNG Government as a whole.

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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.