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**PRESS STATEMENT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**PAGA HILL CASINO DEAL MAY LEAD TO WEAKENING OF REGULATOR'S  
ROLE**

**Tuesday, 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Port Moresby** - The recent announcement by the National Gaming Control Board (NGCB) that it will be partnering with a private firm to build a casino in Port Moresby raises serious governance implications on the sector says Transparency International PNG (TIPNG). It has been reported by the media that the NGCB and the Paga Hill Development Corporation (PHDC) signed an MOU to build a casino which in its first phase of development will cost at least K150 million.

“In signing this agreement, the State through the NGCB is seriously undermining its independence as the industry regulator. Regulators like the NGCB have the important role to uphold and maintain the probity and the integrity of operators in the gaming sector and of individuals involved in the sector. They are the referee responsible for applying the rules of the game, they should not be running around as a player on the field. This type of conduct may lead to an abuse of the rules and bias in decision making” said Chair of the TIPNG Board Peter Aitsi in a media statement.

“TIPNG calls on the Board Members of the NGCB to ensure their role as an oversight body under the Gaming Control Act is not diminished in pursuing this agreement.”

“The global experience with casinos suggests an increased likelihood of money-laundering and undue political influence where the regulator is weak or is compromised. TIPNG calls for details of the MOU to be made public and all financial details involving the use of public monies be disclosed. We don't want to end up in the same situation as past failed investments like the 5-Star Boroko Casino Hotel scandal,” said Mr. Aitsi.

In seeking means of increasing revenue generation, the State must ensure good governance, the rule of law so the well-being of our citizens is protected and importantly public funds are not wasted.

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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.