



## AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE GOVERNMENT OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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MEDIA STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, THE HONOURABLE  
CHIEF JOHN MOMIS, GCL, MHR PRESIDENT OF THE AUTONOMOUS  
REGION OF BOUGAINVILLE ON 21<sup>st</sup> MARCH 2012

### **Media Statement: - ABG President Gives Assurance That Buka Shipping Incident will be Properly Investigated**

As President of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, and on behalf of all peace loving and law abiding citizens of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, permit me to express our very deep regrets over the incident involving the seizure and burning of three vessels belong to a commercial shipping line in Buka on Friday last week.

The Government of the Autonomous Bougainville Government unequivocally re-states it position that it is a government and a Region that respects the rights of private ownership. The ABG also respects the tradition of the rule of law and respect for the rights of others. We do not share in the belief that one wrong action justifies another, no matter how tragic the circumstances. This is not the tradition of Bougainville and this is not the way that Bougainvilleans have traditionally conducted their affairs. Such actions have no place in our society. Again, for these reasons we unequivocally condemn the actions that occurred on Friday evening in the strongest terms.

As a Government, we realise the sensitivity of the matter but we also have a right and a responsibility to get to the bottom of this senseless action. This we are determined to do. I have therefore appointed a small task force, involving leaders of the community (within and outside of the ABG) and the Bougainville Police to thoroughly investigate this matter and to report to me in the shortest period of time. What further actions that will be taken will be determined after the report is received. But we must uphold law and order in Bougainville.

This incident might have some practical consequences for the people of Bougainville. Commercial shipping into Bougainville may very well be curtailed for a period of time. This will create some temporary hardships related to the travel of Bougainvilleans throughout the archipelago and for importation of goods and commodities, some of a vital nature. It will also have a direct bearing on the economy as the only way for the primary commodities, copra and cocoa, to be exported is through shipping lines

There is intelligence to suggest that the action against the three ships of the Rabaul Shipping Line was a specifically targeted action. There was and there is no threat or danger to any other shipping lines operating in Bougainville. We have, therefore, immediately sent representatives to discuss the situation with the PNG Ports and other shipping lines regarding the resumption of regular services as soon as is practicable. I can confirm, however, that the port in Buka has not been closed and is in fact open for regular shipping movement.

As President of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville, I must express my dismay at the attitude of Mr. Peter Sharp, the owner of the Rabaul Shipping Line. Throughout this tragedy, he has remained mostly silent and when issuing any comments it would appear as if these were contemptuous of the effect of the incident on the families and those involved in the tragedy. His attitude, in no small way, has contributed to the unfortunate unfolding of events. He has not displayed the characteristics of a good corporate citizen of Bougainville or Papua New Guinea.

I appeal to all Bougainvilleans to remain calm, as you have been, throughout this ordeal. I wish to assure the public in Bougainville and beyond that the situation in Bougainville remains normal. There is no sense of alarm and it is business as usual in communities across Bougainville. I appeal to all to use reason and sound judgement in the current situation.

**OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
AUTONOMOUS BOUGAINVILLE GOVERNMENT**

**22/03/2012**