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MEDIA STATEMENT

STABLE AND EFFECTIVE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IMPORTANT FOR SI

National and provincial politicians in Solomon Islands have been reminded of the importance of stable and effective political leadership given the experiences that the country had gone through during the recent social unrest.

Speaking at the workshop for MPs and provincial premiers currently underway in Honiara, the Chief Ombudsman of Papua New Guinea, Mr Ila Geno said “elected leaders must strive to provide stable and effective governance.”

“Considering the experiences your country has gone through, effective governance through stable and effective political leadership is paramount and is absolutely necessary. This must not be taken for granted,” Mr Geno said.

He said a politician must aim to be an honest and responsible person.

“However, we all know that in politics, you survive by your wits and often one has to play dirty. Honest politicians do not last long in the game of politics. I am not suggesting for a minute that you must play dirty so that you can survive. I am merely stating the obvious,” Mr Geno said.

He said considering the circumstances that Solomon Islands has and is going through, “political leaders must aim to be the beacons of hope for your country.”

“Today in Solomon Islands, as is the case in PNG, unethical conduct may be everywhere. Widespread incompetence and corruption is an obvious sign of this. It has crept into every institution and every fabric of society.

“The innocent are suffering the worst. Perpetrators seem to prosper or when compelled to face the law they use loopholes in law at their convenience,” Mr Geno said.

He said that the roles of the Leadership Code Commission and the Ombudsman in Solomon Islands are important to keep leaders in check.

He said in order to perform their duties properly the LCC and Ombudsman needs to be adequately resourced and be independent of Parliament and the Executive.
“There cannot be effective political governance and strong leadership if an organization like the Ombudsman Office and the Leadership Commission Office do not perform their roles and functions effectively.”

On Parliament, Mr Geno said: “The performance of the National Parliament as a vehicle for imposing accountability on public office-holders has, in my view, markedly declined over the years.”

“The Parliament is supposed to be the sounding board of the nation, a place where all decision of parliamentarians and other public officials should be subject to vigorous and regular scrutiny.

“Unfortunately, however, we have seen a decline in the number and duration of meetings of Parliament. Consequently serious matters and important affairs of the nation are not given the prominence and attention they require.”

Speaking on the situation in PNG, Mr Geno said: “One alarming development in Papua New Guinea’s system of government is the tendency for the Executive arm of governments to use Parliament as a rubber stamp.”

“The Executive who comprises members from the Legislature must give significance and real meaning to the working of the Parliament. Ineffective use of Parliament is a recipe for ineffective policies.”

Mr Geno added: “Another common trend of the Executive is to push aside career bureaucrats and make purely political appointments to senior government positions.”

“This has meant that the Public Service has been handicapped in its role of providing balanced and competent advice to the government.”

The three-day workshop on the theme of “Political Governance: Leadership and Accountability” will end to tomorrow with the release of a communiqué highlighting the main outcomes of the workshop.

The workshop is organized by the Office of the Ombudsman of Solomon Islands, the Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University and the UNDP Parliamentary Strengthening Project.

ENDS.

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