



**STATEMENT BY
PRIME MINISTER HON. JAMES MARAPE
ON THE OCCASION OF THE
DEFEAT OF THE VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE MOTION
NATIONAL PARLIAMENT OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
12 SEPTEMBER 2024**

Mr Speaker,

I thank you for the opportunity today to address our National Parliament, and in so doing, our people of Papua New Guinea.

I want to use this time to return the focus of the nation on the more important things at hand, now that we have put to rest the issue of Members' "confidence" in the Prime Minister.

Our 49th Independence Anniversary is only four days away. Our 50th Anniversary is only 12 months from now. We have pressing issues in Law & Order, Economy, Health, Education, and building our nation in all other areas.

Mr Speaker,

We must not waste any more time. We have squandered months to politicking – precious time which we could have invested in bettering the lives of our people.

Vote of No Confidence, unfortunately, has become the recurring theme of every government since Independence. I have pointed out these unnecessary disruptions a number of times in the past, and I point them out again today.

In the existence of our country, nearly all government formations after the elections have followed with Votes of No Confidence and change of government, leaving only about two years on average per government life, which have been too short to have real, meaningful impact on development.

Mr Speaker,

We must continue to seek better solutions to addressing the negative impact of Section 145 of the Constitution. If Provincial Members and even the ordinary (Open) Members can have assurance of tenureship of five years through constitutional mandate, the most crucial role of them all – of the Prime Minister – must also be allowed the same length of time, if not more.

We must get rid of the divisiveness and toxicity that have been created as a result of this provision – a provision that was well-intended initially, but given our cultural context today, is now totally abused.

We must demonstrate our oneness as a government of the people, for the people and by the people. We must lead by example. We must mirror to our

constituents what we expect of them. In our Nation of a Thousand Tribes, this is absolutely essential. It is demanded.

A robust Democracy needs a vigilant Opposition to complement a strong leading Government. It also demands for bipartisan leadership from both sides of the House to operate above petty politics, greed, and manipulation.

Mr Speaker,

I want to recap on the work we started in 2019, recommitted to in 2022, and continue to this day.

Economy and Growing our Economy

We are successfully reversing the recessed economy we took over in 2019; we have put the country on a solid path to recover from debts within 10 years; we have put in place interventions to help our citizens cope with adverse economic situations; and we have refocused on growing our economy to K200 billion over the next years. We are taking back more from our natural resources, beginning with New Porgera, and will not look back.

Education

Our Government has successfully brought back over 100,000 young people into the education system; we are expanding higher education capacity from the current 10,000 to 30,000 by the end of this decade, as we work at improving the quality of our students with specialized programs and scholarships.

Health

Our specialist health facilities are up and running. We are working with Provincial Health Authorities to put in place provincial hospitals in every centre. Our aim is to bring health care as close as possible to our people in the country.

Infrastructure

Our flagship Connect PNG Program continues taking roads into the remotest areas of PNG. Under this banner and with the help of our development partners, we are also rehabilitating ports, airports and airstrips, power supply lines, and telecommunication facilities.

Law & Justice

Major work is going into rehabilitating the sector. We are adding an appeals court, lifting the ceiling on judge numbers, spent over K400 million on building the new National & Supreme Court building in Waigani, we are better resourcing the Magisterial Services, we have put in place ICAC, we have put in place supporting legislation for ICAC, we have reopened Bomana police college for recruitment, we are building police manpower to 10,000 over the 10 years, and upgrading prisons with better infrastructure and prisoner rehabilitation programs.

Mr Speaker,

There is more, much more work going on behind the scenes by our government. Much of this work is foundational – rebuilding the bones up, so to speak – as our government’s focus is to address these issues holistically instead of in pieces. One must appreciate the fact that our starting point of

the first four years have been riddled with the astronomical challenges of a recessed economy, COVID-19 and adverse global events.

This is the context, the backdrop from which I speak. We have been able to get through most of our inherited and forced-upon circumstances because of the solidarity of our Coalition Government. And God's grace.

Mr Speaker,

Before I get to the crux of this statement, let me acknowledge all our coalition partners. I thank and applaud all parties and their members for recognizing the importance of solidarity, stability and continuity. For the working relationship and camaraderie that has defined the administration of this government. And for believing in the vision to do better for our country, to TAKE BACK PNG.

Our coalition partners have stayed solid since 2019, in 2022 after the elections, up to now, and still going strong.

I also commend my own Pangu Pati membership, both parliamentary and non-parliamentary, especially the 48-strong Members of Parliament who continue to demonstrate the strength of the mandate given to them here in Government.

This support from Pangu and our coalition partners has been forcefully and unequivocally demonstrated on the Floor of Parliament today. Five times failed VONC attempts by the Opposition with today's absolute majority vote is recorded in the Hansard. Let it remain to remind generations to come, that

when one's heart is in the right place, one is properly guided, and can go on to achieve great things.

I thank our Coalition Partners and Pangu Pati Members for providing our government the stability needed for the economic growth of our country, for us to complete the mission we embarked upon in 2019. This is such a great relief and very much welcomed.

Mr Speaker,

When Pangu was preparing our people for Independence in the late 1960s and early '70s, our Founding Father, Sir Michael Somare, called for unity among our people. It was a very basic appeal, because our diverse peoples had to come together as one people to build one country.

That appeal remains as relevant and as important today, as it did then, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker,

We must take up Sir Michael's Call to Action again – to Work Together. But this time, to do it with greater earnestness and more urgency.

We are four days from our 49th Independence anniversary, and one year from our 50th one. Soon, we will begin on the next 50-year chapter.

Time is running. Our challenges have reset anew, and we notice a fragility that I am sure our forefathers have not foreseen.

Our problems are our own to deal with – not the Australian administration to sort out anymore, but ourselves. We must work together on solutions, whether as leaders in government, public servants in the workforce, businessman and women in the private sector, students in schools, or the bulk of our people in the villages.

We must think PNG First. We must put our country ahead of our own interests; we must learn to respect the Rule of Law by respecting the rights of our fellow Papua New Guineans; we must work to the best of our ability in whatever we do to build Papua New Guinea; and in everything we do, we must think of the kind of society we are leaving behind for our children and grandchildren because of our actions or lack thereof.

Mr Speaker,

The Pangu-led Coalition Government remains absolutely committed to the fight to better for this beautiful country of ours. I am more determined than ever to complete the work we have started.

I acknowledge the input we have received on areas of improvement. We will take them on board.

We will build. We will get better, become stronger, as we emerge from the economic and political storms of our country. As the saying goes “Smooth seas never made a skilled sailor.”

Mr Speaker,

I thank the beautiful people of Papua New Guinea, the majority of our people in the rural areas – the old woman who cried at seeing her village getting connected by road after nearly 50 years of Independence, or the group of coffee growers in the hinterland of Morobe who walked all the way to Lae to sell their coffee to make some money, or the women who can now get specialist health care in the country instead of looking around for money to go overseas for specialist medical attention .

They are the reason we keep doing what we are doing. They are the reason I will soldier on despite the arrows of insults and spears of words hurled at me time and again.

Mr Speaker,

As we head into our 49th Independence Anniversary next week Monday, I want to remind us all that the solution to rebuilding our country is in our individual hands. We are all – each and every one of us – capable of changing the circumstance and future of our country.

Let us UNITE and do our part wherever we are. Let us unite to move forward as one people. WALK TOGETHER. BUNG WANTAIM. RAKA HEBOU.

Our theme for the 49th anniversary is ‘Reconciliation and Unity’ as One People, One Country, One Nation. It is so important that we do this as we usher in our country’s 50th anniversary next year.

We must learn to live together within the laws of this country. It is the best contribution we can give to Papua New Guinea. And it comes at no cost to anyone.

This is the time to rise, to work, to lead. “O arise, all ye sons and daughters of this land...”

I call on the spirit of togetherness, and honour the legacy of Sir Michael and our Founding Fathers and Mothers as we head into our 49th Independence Anniversary next week.

Happy 49th Independence to our people far and wide. We have come far, and we will continue to grow, as we learn from our experiences – to become wiser, to do better and to remain strong.

God bless you all. May God bless Papua New Guinea.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.