



31st PAPUA NEW GUINEA – AUSTRALIA BUSINESS FORUM

LAE INTERNATIONAL HOTEL

17 TO 19 MAY 2015

COMMUNIQUE

The 31st Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum and Trade Expo, with the theme “Bridging The Gap: Meeting Expectations”, which was held at Lae International Hotel, from the 17 to 19 May 2015, was attended by 423 participants including delegates, partners, speakers, media and trade booth exhibitors. The Trade Expo had the full capacity 26 booths.

The Forum was addressed by the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Hon Peter O’Neill MP, and the Trade and Investment Minister for Australia, the Hon Andrew Robb MP, the Hon Kelly Naru MP, Governor of Morobe Province, several Papua New Guinea Cabinet Ministers, and a range of experts on topics promoting collaboration between business, government and other stakeholders on inclusive economic participation for all. The Henry Kila Memorial Address was delivered by Professor Stephen Howes, Australian National University, Director Development Policy Centre, on the theme “Short-term economic and long-term fiscal challenges facing PNG and Australia”.

The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea Hon Peter O’Neill and the Hon Andrew Robb MP, Trade and Investment Minister of Australia, both discussed the economic transformation the region is undergoing and it is critical businesses must have the support of government to benefit from the opportunities they pose. They also acknowledged investments in skills and infrastructure is key in facilitating inclusive participation. These investments must also have an economic integration outlook where connectivity in infrastructure, institutions and people is the future of the relationship.

The Henry Kila Memorial Address cautioned and encouragement on the fiscal policies of both countries. Concluding that to bridge the gap in health, education and other social challenges, affordability and expenditure discipline was critical.

Key issues raised by speakers at the forum and endorsed by participants as measures on which governments should act include the following.

Partnerships with business, government civil society and development partners are critical in bridging the gap of accessing health and education services. Existing dialogue and partnership mechanisms must foster strong sustainable practices that ultimately improve livelihoods;

Innovation is reshaping the business landscape and this is indicative of new investments in agriculture, information communication technology and large industrial products. These are providing a new economy for many Papua New Guineans to participate in the exciting opportunities for businesses from both countries;

Emerging leaders voiced their desire to improve social conditions and create platforms on the internet to bridge the gap in discussing solutions to improve the livelihoods as well as financing the ideas. There was an acknowledgement that the relationship between Australia – PNG is evolving to a mature relationship and is different from post-independence;

They also emphasized the need to invest human capital and work in an integrated manner to eliminate the culture of violence and gender discrimination in PNG society;

A suitable trade and investment framework and the developments of PACER PLUS and North Australia White Paper will provide a strong foundation for predictable and stable rules for businesses to service markets in both countries;

There is a desire by businesses to invest in the agriculture sector, however the government must take leadership in formulating appropriate policies for land access and provide incentives for capital resources in the public and private sector, improve transport, infrastructure and supply power;

Public Private Partnership is essential in delivering the infrastructure needs for Papua New Guinea and therefore the framework must be established immediately;

Visas continue to be an impediment to business and businesses requested governments to amicably resolve differences in their immigration policies;

While commodity prices improve, readjustments on projects are expected that will ensure progressive implementation;

The 32nd Australia Papua New Guinea Business Forum will be held on 15 to 17 May 2016 in Cairns, Australia.

**LAE, MOROBE PROVINCE, PAPUA NEW GUINEA
19 MAY 2015**