



**Special Parliamentary Committee on  
2022 General Elections**

**MOMASE REGION CONSULTATIONS**

Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> April – Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Lae International Hotel, Lae, Morobe Province

**Committee Members (Present)**

Honourable Allan Bird (East Sepik) – Chairman)

Sir Puka Temu (Abau) – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri (Bogia) – Committee Member

**Committee Members (Not Present)**

Honourable Jacob Maki (Mul-Baiyer) Committee Member

Honourable Keith Iduhu (Hiri-Koiari) – Committee Member

Honourable Elias Kapavore (Pomio)– Committee Member

Honourable Saki Soloma – Committee Member

Honourable Charlie Benjamin (Manus) – Committee Member

Honourable Steven Steven Pim (Dei)– Committee Member

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## **DAY ONE**

**4<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### **Transcript**

Time: 10am

Venue: Lae International Hotel

#### In Attendance

##### Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

#### Witnesses

Mr Bruten Max -Provincial Administrator-Morobe)

Mr Kissu Lucas -Deputy Provincial Administrator) -Morobe

Mr Simon Soheke -Election Manager- Morobe

MR Jacob Singura -Provoincial Police Commander-Morobe

Mr Keteng Ondop -Returning Officer- -Kabwum

Ms Fredah Joses-Assistant Elelction Manager - Morobe

Mr Samson Torovi Provincial Administrator -East Sepik

Mr James Piapia -Election Manager- East Sepik

Mr Richard Kaiban -Assitant Election Manager- East Sepik

Mr Bamun Bange -Returning Officer-Nawae

Mr Don Sawong -Kabwum Open Candidate

Mr Ben Hipom -President-Morobe Disable Agency

Ms Idah Dail -Womens Rep- Morobe Disable Agency)

## **Opening Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good Morning everyone; welcome to the Special Parliamentary Committee Hearings on the 2022 National General Elections. We are here to look back on all the other Elections and figure out the things we can learn and improve on going forward beginning 2027, and also if we can bring some of these reforms into the LLG Elections.

This morning we have the Morobe and East Sepik Province. Just to recap for the participants at this Hearing today; this is a properly constituted parliamentary proceeding which means that all the evidence that you give here are protected by the Parliamentary Privilege Act. That means that if anyone tries to use your contributions here at this hearing for purposes against you or anything like that, you are protected under the Parliamentary Privileges Act, which means we can summon them and have them charged. That is to let you know your rights in these proceedings.

If you have watched the recent one up in the Highlands, there were many admissions that we did not expect and in fact we just found out that some of the Electoral Officers that were supposed to give evidence to the Committee up in the Highlands were threatened so they didn't turn up so we will be summoning them to Port Moresby.

We need to fix these processes for the benefit of our people. We all know that Morobe had some serious issues which we will dig into because these sorts of practices did or never were part of Morobe before, but they have happened in two of the elections in Morobe.

So, we will start with the Morobe provincial team; let's start with the Administrator.

## **MOROBE PROVINCE**

### **Morobe Provincial Administrator**

**Mr BRUTEN MAX** (Provincial Administrator Morobe) – Thank you Mr Chairman, Honourable Robert Naguri, Sir Puka Temu, Deputy Chairman and Member for Abau, let me take this time on behalf of the Honourable Luther Wenge, Governor for Morobe, I welcome your team to Morobe province.

I will introduce the team and perhaps ask my Deputy Administrator who has been the Chairman of the Election Committee to take us through in the 2022 general elections.

I had been in the office in the past seven months since my appointment as the administrative head of Morobe Province. There has been a huge challenge as Morobe is a country within a country. So, we have a lot of challenges engulfed in the election related issues and one of which you all have heard was the destruction of electoral ballots in Markham and

Kabwum. There was a lot of issues in that regard; the administration building up in Kabwum got burnt. My administration and a team would be visiting Kabwum very shortly to assess the destruction of those government properties over there. But insofar as the election is concern, last year the election was not run smoothly in Morobe because of the issues that were been going on around in the counting.

I will be asking my Deputy Administrator Mr Kissu Lucas to further explain on that but I have with me here in the team are:

1. Mr Simon Esage – Election Manager for Morobe Province,
2. PPC Singura – Overall security manager for election process in Morobe,
3. Mr Kindeng – Returning Officer for Morobe Province and
4. Mr Kissu Lucas, Deputy Administrator and Chairman of the election steering committee for Morobe province.

So, I would perhaps ask the Deputy Administrator who is also the Chairman to take us through all the issues that unfolded during the election process.

Thank you, Chairman.

### **Deputy Provincial Administrator-Morobe**

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** (Deputy Provincial Administrator) – Thank you Chairman and the Parliamentary Committee. Let me take this time to welcome the Committee to Morobe province, particularly in Lae.

I'll briefly go through the elections that occurred in Morobe province on behalf of the Election Steering Committee. The PPC Mr Singura is also a member of the Provincial Election Steering Committee and he is also in charge of the rural operation in the districts in Morobe province.

Chairman, Morobe has been collecting conducting elections over the years and the last election in 2022 was not the one that we have expected it to be. Unfortunately, we had issues with Markham and Kabwum districts like what you have already mentioned. We started off very well and then as the process went on during the counting, we had disgruntled voters attacking the polling booth at Markham and burnt the ballot papers. A similar incident happened in Kabwum district; we had issues in terms of election in Morobe Province for the first time in the history of the province. We have these two incidents happened in Markham and Kabwum so they go down in the records of Morobe Province. We will leave with you for the future elections coming forward and we will be very careful in how we conduct ourselves

but we thank you for the opportunity that Committee can come and listen to the issues that we have encountered during the elections in 2022.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sir while we have you and since you brought up those two specific elections. Could you recount for the Committee what actually happened? And have you done any investigations whether it be by the police or anyone else into what took place and what actions are you taking. So perhaps you could give us a run down on that now.

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – Thank you Chairman; like I mentioned earlier, we started off very well in all the districts until these incidents occurred in Markham

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What happened in Markham? Give us a blow by blow run down of what took place in Markham. Just remember that you are speaking and there are Papua New Guineans who are watching these proceedings, and who would be interested to know what took place and of course we as the Parliamentary Committee would like to understand what occurred out there.

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – The process like every other district in Morobe Province went well; during the process, when counting was done and the tallies were posted, people got upset with the results. The results showed the sitting member leading so...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Who got upset with the results?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – The voters within the Markham District.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why did they get upset with the result, was it because they felt that there was some issue with the counting? That the counting was not progressing fairly? What was the reason?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – They suspected that the counting may have gone in favor of the sitting member so from the result they were not happy

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What would give them the impression that the process was unfair? Did the counting officials conduct themselves in such a way that...

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – They may have observed some movement within the counting and so they got upset.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What was the movement?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – The process when you get the results and you post it on the tally sheet onto the main tally board. Because all of these officers are administration workers so they suspected that maybe the officers had something to do with it, in support of the sitting member. In their own mind, that's what they came up with.

**MR CHAIRMAN** – In previous elections, in the counting in Markham, were there similar suspicions cast on the counting officials or was it just on the last election?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – During the elections, we have had complaints but the electorate Markham was always okay. We didn't anticipate such a thing would happen. However, in the 2022 Election this happened. Past elections were conducted smoothly.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Lucas, just go back to the situation, we understand that in every counting venue all the scrutineers were allowed to be inside and the security provisions were that the counting chamber would be further away from the crowd. Describe the processes the day before the incident, any issues raised by the scrutineers or were the candidates allowed in the counting chamber? What actually started that led to the incident in burring the places down, how far was the crowd; just explain to us the situation the day before and the day of the incident.

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – Thank you Honourable Sir Puka Temu, I'll let the Election Manager Simon Soheke to come in to advise on that process and answer your question.

#### **Election Manager-Morobe**

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** (Election Manager- Morobe) – My name is Simon Soheke as the Election Manager for Morobe Province; before I answer my questions, can I do my presentation first if that is alright?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fine. If you have been watching the proceedings, a lot of things we have already accepted that are given, such as, issues with common roll and funding because it's experienced country wide. We would like to home in on the specific issues that were faced in Morobe Province so that we can add to our report. Do you understand what I am saying?

The things which are already given and we have accepted, you can skip that and later present to us in writing. Thank you.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I have my presentation here so can the secretary come and hand over the reports.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just run us through the specific things for Morobe Province. We are especially interested in the two seats that were almost declared as failed seats. We would like to understand what happened there. And also, thank you for your full report. If you could just guide us towards those areas that will add to our knowledge, generally with elections and particularly to do with Morobe Province to improve our understanding.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you, Mr Chairman Honourable Allan Bird, Deputy Chairman Honourable Sir Puka Temu and Committee Member Honourable Robert Naguri. I am honoured to be here to answer questions and to also present our case for Morobe. I have written a full report in regards to this manner. I suggest I will just go through it and you can later ask me questions.

Firstly, in order for us to understand the issues of elections as well as other service deliveries in Morobe Province, let me just give you the background of Morobe Province. It is a complex province to work with in regards to geography, population and socio-economic factors, just to name a few. There is a huge issue with overlapping of boundaries in Lae, Huon-Gulf and Nawae Opens. Morobe Province currently has ten districts. It was previously nine but with the inclusion of the new Wau-Waria Electorate, the total is now ten.

The total population census is around 674,810, that is from the 2011 population figures with the total voting population of 453,939. In this regard, Morobe being a huge province shares borders with Madang, Eastern Highlands, Gulf, Central and Oro Provinces making it susceptible to or prone to border crossing during voting.

Let me expound by saying that because of the rugged terrains, it makes it really hard for us to carry out service delivery. With due respect, Morobe being a huge province to deal with



in regards to elections, there are only two of us manning this office. That is myself and my Assistant Election Manager Frieda Joses.

I have also inputted a personal note on this that prior to joining PNG Electoral Commission, I was working with the Morobe Provincial Administration as an Agriculture Officer in Markham for 27 years. In my 27 years there, I have been engaged in the elections since 1997 as a polling official, presiding officer to be precise.

My presentation today will give us a whole lot of experience from my part. I have been appointed as the Election Manager in 2016. What I am trying to space out is, with my knowledge of being a presiding officer to the election manager, I can spell out what actually happens in the field and what needs to be done. This is why I provided my report so that the Committee can consider.

As the Chairman has mentioned, I am aware of the issues that have already been discussed but for the sake of this discussion this morning, may you allow me to just go through my report in regards to these terms of references to be discussed on. I do believe we all know that the Electoral Commission is mandated under Section 126 of the Constitution of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea and guided by the ORGANIC Law on National and Local Level Government to conduct national and parliamentary elections. One very important sub section I'm noticing is sub section 06 where it says the electoral commission is not subject to direction or control by any persons or authority. Can I expound Mr Chairman that this is very serious? If we have some form of direction or control from external forces, then we have a problem here starting with the roll up to declaration. So, this has to be really dealt with so that we can provide a free and fair election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could you define what you mean by external force?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Maybe control by some people.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Look, its no point you making a generalisation. If you are aware of a certain individual or organisation or whatever exerting an external influence on the elections, that you state it for the committee. If you aren't sure, I'd prefer you don't generalise. So sapos yu save stret, kolim, sapos nogat, maski.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you Chair. What I'm trying to say is that kain olsem when it comes to appointing returning officers.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That’s what I’m saying. So, you have issue with the appointment of returning officers in Morobe. Is that what you’re saying?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I’m trying to come to that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok define that. You said external forces and I wanted you to clarify what you mean by external forces. External forces could be anything. It could mean you know like there’s a special team from America here, they’re conducting operations. You have to be specific what you mean by external forces.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you Mr Chairman. Yes, when it comes to appointment of returning officers, we have our system in place. We call for expression of interest, I’m just giving an example. We call for expression of interest from individuals to apply or state their interest in becoming ROs so we get all the expression of interests and I bring it over to the PSC and then we do the recommendation. Recommendation goes to the Electoral Commission and they appoint. On the said note, we have for example, the Finschafen issue where PSC recommended and the sitting member put his own man. That’s what I’m trying to explain here. So, whether it be members of Parliament or certain individuals outside trying to control the Electoral Commission, I’m just trying to put that into perspective.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That’s fair enough and we want to get to the bottom of it. So, you are saying that there was an external influence in the selection of your returning officers in Morobe? For all seats or specific seats?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – That’s right, specific seats. For Finschhafen and Kabwum, beg your pardon, not Kabwum but Markham.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok. Can you clarify that for us? Tell us the full story, what happened?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – For Markham, we PSC recommended for Mr Pilailo, who was the RO but a certain candidate objected. But he was the best RO for Markham, best in the previous election in 2017.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Soheke what was the basis for the objections by the certain candidates?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – You know you have your officers in the district, for instance...

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What did they actually say was the disagreement?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – They didn't want Mr Pilailo to be the RO because they were assuming that he was working in collaboration with the current member. In his capacity as the Education Advisor in the district, we all know they have to work together with the current member. But they were seeing it the other way around.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Was he eventually changed because of the pressure?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – No.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So he remained?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – He remained and then...

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – As the Markham Retaining Officer? Coming back to the Markham issue; do you think that was one of the issues, that you didn't change the Retaining Officer upon request by the candidates and therefore they suspected as the sitting member was leading, they raised issues and eventually the incident took place?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you Deputy Chair, I am trying to go to that now. The day before the burning or two days before the burning, I actually requested for the Electoral Commission to let the RO to stand down so I took over as the Provincial Retaining Officer. I went and took over the counting in Markham. I went and fixed all the discrepancies' and we stated counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you say there were discrepancies?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – That’s what they were assuming but when I went across, the reports and the records were okay; it just that there were some changes on the tally board outside, but the tally inside the counting room and computer-generated reports were okay. Somebody must have changed the tally at the public tally center.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So what you are saying? Is that because you had different number on the public tally board outside and you had a different number inside on the actual records, and so that created a lot of confusions and suspicions?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes that’s correct, but I went and fixed that error.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – When you fixed that error, did you do that in full consultation of all the scrutineers? Were they aware of what you were doing? Were they in an agreement with what you are doing?

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – Yes, they did. Before doing that, I went and talk to the spokesman. We had a meeting at the police station at Markham and we agreed I should do that and that is what I did. What actually happened to us as my PSC Chairman was trying to explain was that, they were claiming that the base place where they were supposed to be getting votes the member was getting votes. So, they were assuming, he was using witchcraft and that is where it all happened.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are saying that the candidates who took part in the election were strong believers of witchcraft and they felt that had affected the outcome.

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – I’m not really saying that’s what they believe.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No, you just said it to the committee and I am using your own words.

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – That’s what they were saying. So, whether that is true I am not really sure but that’s what they believe happened.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is there a strong inclination in this particular community towards things like soccer? Ol igat strongpla bilip long sanguma na poisin long dispela hap? So, they think that is affecting the outcome of the election?

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – Yes. I do believe they have. I shall continue to roll updating or whether you already have it but with the roll we all know it is fundamental for running elections. When we have names on the roll, we shouldn't have any problems. Then again as I am saying we should not really put a blame on the Electoral Commission itself, everybody is to be blamed. Why I am saying that is because I was a presiding officer once and I was involved in enrolling people. Some people said why we should enroll, because the members are not delivering but when it comes to voting those same people who did not want to enroll are the ones complaining that their names are not on the roll. So that is part of the people themselves, the voters and then maybe we have...

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sori mi stopim yu pastem; are you aware that the law is quite specific in terms of registration of voters it's compulsory for people to be registered but it is not compulsory to actually vote?

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – I am pretty aware of that Mr Chairman.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did you inform the People that they have to be registered whether they want to vote or not and they still refuse?

**Mr SIMON SOHOKE** – Yes, I did and they still refused, that is a sad scenario. I can give one specific example; there is one location in Papua New Guinea, just imagine a ward would have 3000 to 4000, or maybe 5000 people per ward, but if a ward has 17,000 people there is something else so the base vote blo wanpla memba em 17,000, if you can see –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, just clarify that; are you saying that there are 17,000 people in a ward or there was no 17,000 people in a ward?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes, the ghost names.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Which ward did that happen in, and in which LLG area? You need to specify rather than generalize.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Somewhere in the Highlands.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – No, not in Morobe

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – No, we are asking about Morobe? Highlands is another issue, mipla deal wantaim ol pinis.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I am just giving a scenario here because of *Subsection 6*, “Electoral Commission should not be getting directions from outside.” So, I am just trying to get the point across. So, if a member is trying to protect his or her ward then this is something that we really need to address?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay Sir, we appreciate what you are trying to get across but you have to assume that you are talking to an intelligent Committee and our Secretariat is equally competent and intelligent. So, ino nid lo yu lo wokim ol generalization. We want to understand what happened in Morobe, olsem na mi tok be specific. Mipla olgeta skul man istap, noken ting mipla stap lo bush na kam.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I apologize for that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, please.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I will just ask you some specific questions on the roll that you put down in your report so you respond to those.

In paragraph 4, subsection 2 which is the process involved in the report that I am reading that you distributed, all the bullet points have problems but I am interested in bullet points 2 and 3. Point 2 reads, “The Electoral Roll of 2022 was somehow not printed to our expectations”, the first comment you will make on that. Point 3 reads, “We submitted names of eligible voters but many names were not printed”.

Explain to the Committee and the country, what happened. Was it at your level or in the headquarters? Why are you advising the Committee that the names you submitted did not get

printed and only 70 percent of your people registered and 30 percent did not, can you explain those?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman, we have done our best from the field to get all the names registered but there is a quota given by the Electoral Commission based on a 3 percent growth rate per year. We were only given 15 percent of the enrollment forms but we were supposed to be given 34 percent s 19 percent was outstanding.

And also, because we did the enrollment very late in November 2021, we had very limited time. So, the names that we submitted were not printed accordingly to what was submitted. That was one of the issues of the lateness of funds and I believe that the Electoral Headquarters staff are aware as we have discussed issues with them.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Okay, given those discrepancies in the polling update and names not given etcetera, how did you instruct the polling officials to handle those situations on polling day? Sapos ol inogat nem na ol ikam, how were you managing those? Were you sending everyone away or was there a process that you followed to vote or how was it handled? And was that one reason that there was a commotion in the counting room which ended up burnt down?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman. Yes, before any election we did training and we instructed the presiding officers to go by what the law says. If your name was on the roll, you vote and if it was not on, you could not vote so that is what happened in the rural areas in Lae because we had built up security personnel.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – People accepted no name ino ken vote they just walked away there were no burning of ballot boxes, fight and all that kind.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay Sir, I want you to go back to the two districts counting's where you had violence and of cause destruction of ballot material; that's Kabwum and Markham. What precipitated that? We have heard in the Markham case you where there. There was a lot of incompetencies in the way that the tallies were placed on the board outside so that led to a lot of suspicious, distrust and you know all of that accumulated and then you had that incident.

When that incident occurred, and I see PPC sitting next to you, and we might bring him in on this one. Were your intelligences aware that there might be these sorts of trouble in those two particular electorates.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you, Sir when we discuss this security issues respect to PPC, Markham and Kabwum were considered low risk areas but that didn't happen. It caught us by surprise.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Fair enough, your pre-election assessment yupela kam bek olsem low risk. Orait during the counting, were there any further security assessments or yupela wokim assessment long bipo long election tasol na taim counting i on yupela ino more wokim ol assessment.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Can I refer the question to PPC?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – PPC Singura you can respond long dispela.

#### **Provincial Police Commander -Morobe**

**MR JACOB SINGURA** (Provoincial Police Commander-Morobe) – Thank you Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Committee members. With security, I would want to be specific as to our concerns resulting in what transpired.

The problem we've faced was that we were not able to go out early to do awareness and gather intelligences, that's why we were not really certain to what was in the minds of the people. So, the failure falls back to the deployment of security personnel. The problem I would want to be specific on is funding. The funding has to be released earlier to enable security personnel to be deployed to do awareness and to gather intelligences. So, Chairman we were not able to do that in adequate time.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – PPC Singura from the brief by the Election Manager, Morobe Province used K9.6 million. How much of that was provided for security and we understand that security services have separate funding as well? How much were you given as a big province with many electorates? What was your security budget and how much were you given?



**MR JACOB SINGURA** – From Police Headquarter was given around K300,000. That is the funding support from the national police headquarter. And again, if this money was released in advance, it could have helped us to send our personnel's out on the ground and do awareness before the actual polling commenced.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – When did you actually received the K300 000?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – It came in by instalments on monthly-basis just prior to the conduct of polling.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So in April, May or June?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – It was around late June and that's when we were faced with the difficulty in getting out to do our assessment and awareness and gather intelligence on the ground in the districts particularly.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Out of that K9 million from the report, K5 million came from the Electoral Commission, K3.5 million from the Morobe Provincial Government and K900 000 from the district. How much was given to you out of that K9 million? Was it only K300 000?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – K1 million from the Morobe Provincial Government and Administration and again the process in releasing the funds to us was slow.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Slow process, did you have enough manpower? Because you manage to handle the big province well in terms of security apart from these two electorates.

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thankyou sir, with manpower, again we were able to seek the assistance from the PNG Defense Force establishment in Iguam and also from the Correctional Institutional Services at Buimo. So, with manpower we were okay.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Coming to the incident that happened in Markham and Kabum, as people were complaining and candidates were there and during the counting the

scrutineers are shouting and police personnel and combine security forces were there and tell us in those two or three days intelligence of the security forces; didn't you pick up that something was not right and people were upset and did you call an urgent security meeting on the security issues and eventually blew on your face and the country knew about? Tell us your position as some security personnel in charge of it and what were you discussing? Would you have prevented it, or you didn't have sufficient intelligence?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Again we were not really anticipating that and by the time it blew up it caught us all by surprise and that's why in those districts we had security on the ground but when you look at the population and the security forces on the ground were outnumbered.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That we understand but explain to us what actually happened from the security point of view that day when the place was in flame and you lost control and they burnt the ballot boxes?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Again, like I mentioned, we were caught by surprise and when they mobilized on the day.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** Who mobilized?

–

**MR JACOB SINGURA** –The supporters of the candidates.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – All the candidates or one particular candidates?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – It was a number of candidates' supporters.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So they had their own gathering and decided to mobilized and moved in and burnt the place down. Is that what you are saying?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Correct

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And you didn't pick it up

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – No! we didn't pick it up. Like I said this was something we never anticipated would happen in such a peaceful place like Morobe.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well it's obvious that Morobe is not so peaceful any more. Most parts of the country are not so peaceful any more. I think we all have to accept that.

Seeing that these people had organised themselves and you said they were the supporters of certain candidates. I would assume that those candidates would also be accomplices in making those arrangements. Are you able to identify all those people?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Mr Chairman, I sent an investigative team to Markham and our officers arrested 16 suspects after investigations particularly those involved in the destruction and damage to the Ballot boxes and the Government assets at Mutsin Station. The cases are still being continued in the Courts and it is not over and investigations, are still continuing because of the extent of the damage.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Looking forward and ahead, in terms of penalties, what sort of penalties would you be asking to punish the perpetrators in this case?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Mr Chairman, that is something that I would not say but we wish to see that they will have to be given the maximum penalty.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Are you aware what those penalties might be, the limits that are set in the law? What kind of penalties are we expecting? Is it a court fine, a prison term?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Normally it's a court fine with the destruction of properties but I would recommend imprisonment so that people would see the consequences of such actions in the future.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In those 16 that you have already arrested; are they supporters of a particular candidate and are those candidates being arrested too?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you Sir, these people are supporters of certain candidates, about four candidates in particular. The investigation had identified all these and

we know about that and our team of investigators are still working around to be able to provide facts to go down and arrest the candidates as well.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Its now nine months after the elections concluded. You are saying that the investigations are still ongoing. How long do you think it will take to conclude your own findings so that you can make the arrests? Does it need to take eight to nine months or one year?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you Chairman that is correct. We have certain time frames where we call it the summary offences and for criminal conducts where in some instances very serious of crime committed, there is no time limit unless we have facts we will go out and effect arrests.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So given that nine months has lapsed since these incidents have occurred. Do you think there is any real opportunity to find the perpetrators because it's taken too long? I would assume you are stuck with 16 suspects.

**Mr JACOB SINGURA** – That is correct at the moment we let the 16 to go through and we are at this stage now.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In previous elections, you have obviously been a policeman for some time now and you have been involved in some election's infringements; have you made some similar arrests in the past? Just to give us a bit of understanding on how these things are progressively getting worse.

**Mr JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you, Chairman. In my experience in the previous elections that I've been through, we arrest offenders for breach of just minor electoral offenses, but for this case in Morobe this is something that is of a higher degree of conduct during the election period so this is the major incident I would say in my experience in policing.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Simon Soheke, after the nominations took place, Eastern Highlands Province actually conducted an awareness with candidates and the scrutineers, did you have a change to do that or you didn't do that?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes, that is part of our activities so we have briefed the candidates and trained the scrutineers as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They all turned up?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – Not all of them but few of them turned up maybe close by because they were saying time for campaigning too short so they already went out and those who are present did turned up.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, that was not done?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – We did our trainings and briefings.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – For those scrutineers who turned up, what did you actually tell them?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – We brief them on the process of polling and counting and on what should be done, and what should not be done and other stuffs.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Penalties?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes, we gave them the electoral offences.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Given these incidents that have occurred for the first time in Morobe province, you would recommend a review of the penalties and impose stronger penalties against supporters and candidates who perpetrate these things? What's your view?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes, I believe we should do a review and those involved should not be contesting again in 2027. I think what the security personnel can do is to charge them under the criminal code. Also, we should be applying the electoral offenses which requires the commissioner to write an authority letter to arrest. So, it's with the Commissioner for Electoral Commission and the Commissioner for police. I've already talked with them.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So for the electoral offences, you mention that the Electoral Commissioner has to do what?

**MR SIMON SOHEKE** – The Electoral Commissioner has to give directives or authority to the Police Commissioner for arrest to be done.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In this instance, Mr Jacob Singura, has that been done; the requirements for electoral commission to request for or because it's a criminal offense you had to act?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman, that is a good point raised by our election manager and that problem arises when electoral officials are involved with a commission of an offense during the process of elections. That is where the electoral commission has to write to the Police Commissioner so that it gives us the okay to go ahead to make arrests on electoral officials and not the public.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, if the Electoral Commissioner does not write and although you observed the officials not following the law, you won't take action, is that what you're saying?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – That's correct, Sir; that is the problem there. You know, for us not to effect arrests on electron officials. We should have that authority from the Electoral Commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, during elections the electoral officials are immune from arrest. Is that what you are saying?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – That's right.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What is your opinion on that as a law enforcement official?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you Sir, we have an actual case that was down and it was thrown out by the courts here –

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Why? Because we did not seek that approval from the Electoral Commissioner.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is it a special constitutional requirement that during elections electoral officials are immune from arrest?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – It should be in the Electoral Commission Act or their powers. That is why the Court threw out the case.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I did not know that, so that means that you have no powers to arrest election officials if they commit the offences during an election process

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – That was the difficulty we faced and as a result one of our arrests being made in Finchhafen, that official's case got thrown out here at the District Court.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Have you and other senior police officials discussed this matter in your senior management meetings perhaps

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Yes, we did.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And what would be the recommendations of the RPNGC to the Committee? What do you think we should do, should we have that law changed so that everyone is subject to the same laws in effect? Removing the immunity of arrest of election officials?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you, Sir, that will give us the liberty and freedom to arrest any election officials when it comes to them breaching any laws. That was the clear case we faced in Lae, that's why I have to make that known

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – PPC Singura let me just ask you one question here. Because of funding constraints, lateness of funding coming in, everything was delayed, election was delayed. We all know it's the worst election ever in the history of Papua New Guinea. In Morobe Province when you were in charge, at previous elections also we had police operations during the elections and after the elections. Because of funding constraints, a lot of areas in

Papua New Guinea did not do pre-election operations. In Morobe province did you take it upon yourself to at least send the policemen out to do some election operations.

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Thank you, Sir, again looking at the isolation and the difficulties in reaching out to the districts, in some areas where we were able to do awareness we did. In certain districts because of the terrains and the difficulties it was difficult for us to send our troops out.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – In your intelligence gathering before the elections, were there certain areas in Morobe Province that were high risk areas that you know of?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – For Morobe if we had gone out earlier, it should have been better but generally there were no high-risk areas in the province

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Mr Soheke and Ms. Joses a few of these questions, I'd like to put to you. The first one, the one-day polling issue; in your expert opinion, did it work for Morobe Province? did it serve its purpose? Did you get the outcomes expected in the one-day polling or not?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you, one-day polling has always been done here in the urban areas of Morobe because its small. So, we can manage, but the issue is that we start early in the morning. Its manageable.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – So you have no issues at all with one-day polling? It worked out perfectly for you in Morobe Province

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – It should be okay

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – It's okay, no problems there. The Electoral Commission decided to have separate polling booths for male and females in the last elections. In Morobe province, how did that work out.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you sir, it worked out very well for us. we also had the fast lane which was invisible. There were two lines one for females and the other for males,



then we instructed our officials to create a fast lane for people with special needs; for example, if a pregnant woman shows up to vote, she does not have to follow the female line but goes directly and vote.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Well that is something new for us. Fast lane line besides the normal male and female. That is very good.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – The fast lane line is also for people with special needs.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – People with special needs like disables, pregnant women, people who are rushing to go to work

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – And the elderly people. The invisible lane is created for that.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you; for my last question, the electoral roll caused major discrepancies across the country. The electoral roll that you have in Morobe Province at that time was fully utilised.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes it was fully utilised. As you can see in my report, we tried our very best to enrolls as many people as much as possible. But the turnout during the voting was not expected. We can do as much as possible in trying to correct the roll but then again when it comes to voter turnout, it's something else.

We recommend strongly that the roll should be decentralised to the province. We will look after the roll here so that when any issues with voters arises, it can be corrected here.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Are there any other areas in Morobe Province where you had block-voting, wanbel-vote, split-voting or that kind of issues?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Not that I know of. For the rural areas in Morobe Province, they strictly go by the laws of elections. But it was only in a few areas around the city, people just follow the line to vote and finish off the ballot papers because of time.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Which specific areas in your province?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Within the city limits because of the one-day polling. It again depends on the timing of the polling officials to arrive. We insisted that the officials go early in the morning, so by 7.00 a.m to 8.00 a.m. they had already set up their booths for polling. That is why we have increased a few polling areas in the city to cater for the number of voter populations so we vote on time.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Mr Soheke. Finally, a lot of concerns and issues raised to the Committee is generally in regards to lawlessness and electoral abuses caused by leaders, sitting members and candidates. We have heard about issues of interference with sitting members. Were there any serious interferences during the 2022 National Elections in Morobe Province?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – In regards to the roll, I have no idea on that. I have not received any reports on sitting members trying to influence the common roll. The only concern I had was on the appointment of ROs. But again, I am not sure what happened in Port Moresby, especially when it comes to the roll. I do not allow candidates to bribe me to inflate the roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Soheke, from your report on the declarations, out of the 11 who contested, seven were declared under Section 175 and two were declared under Special Circumstances. Can you explain to the Committee, what was going through your mind when the whole country was watching, the ballot papers were gone, buildings were burning and then you were to make a declaration under Special Circumstances?

What do you understand about the laws on Special Circumstances, and in your view, your declaration under Special Circumstances? Was it in order?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you. I believe that because the case is still with the courts, I won't be able to answer that question. The declaration was made by the Electoral Commissioner and not us here in the province. So, the Commissioner was using the Section 175 on special circumstances. But we did our reports and then it was up to the Commissioner to make declaration.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did you submit for a special declaration in your report? In order for a declaration to be made?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes, we did. After the banning we had convened a special PSC meeting and based on the reports from the ROs, we wrote ok we do this recommendation to declare but then onus is upon the Commissioner upon reading our reports then he makes his decision.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – No what I'm saying is did you recommend that they be declared under special circumstances? Or did you not recommend?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – We recommended it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Just before we go to some final housekeeping matters, Mr Keteng you obviously come from one of the most popular provinces given this circumstances that occurred so, would you like to add anything? What happened in Kabwum? Pressim greenpla button na em nau. Statim nem blong yu.

#### **Returning Officer-Kabwum**

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** (Returning Officer-Kabwum) – Thank you Chairman, members and participants. As stating of my name, RO Kabwum Open. After the incident, it was a first of its kind for my electorate. All the reports I compiled and submitted to my provincial election manager. Then the election manager also compiled all the reports for the province and –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That's fair enough; we accept that formal reports were written. You are sitting before an inquiry so you tell us what happened? Forget about the reports. Someone will read it later. We want to get your version of events before the committee so that we can add to our report. You just summarise and tokim mipla,

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Yes, thank you. All process, the procedure of operation, we conducted it, mipla wokim orait, we conducted accordingly. Mipla go polling orait, mipla count nau, counting mipla statim orait, Day one, day two, day three nau igat ol candidate husait ilukluk stap, ol wok lukim olsem sitting member was leading. Ol sitting member was leading nau, ok Sunday em olsem incident kamap we mipla no expectim long em.

Taim hevi kamap long em, ol ino kukim displa ballot pepa tasol, ol kukim ballot pepa wantaem polis car, car bilong Administrator, RO car na even ol building tu ol wokim, out of our control. Na polis blo mipla ol bin stap at that time, our police were outnumbered by the

crowd. That's why we called the reinforcement from Lae husat bin go daun na rescued me wantaim wanwok.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok lo next election lo Kabwum and maybe even Markham too. Wanem tingting blo yu? Yu ting olsem ba wankain yet bai ol pipol blong Kabwum bai redim ol yet to kukim ol ballot box na kar na kaunting senta na displa ol samting o yu ting wanem?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – People are ok, it's the opportunists ol kisim displa opportunity long wokim bikos maybe oli trail lo election nau displa ikamap but my advice em olsem, ol security personnel sapos yumi bin full re-enforcement wantaim equipment, full set bin stap lo tamblo, em displa bai nonap kamap.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok last election before this one ol pipol lo Kabwaum ino bin kukim ballot box, ol no bin kukim polis kar, ol no bin kukim kaunting senta, em stret? And the election before that in 2012, ol kukim ballot box tu or nogat?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ok wai ol kukim ballot box lo displa taim? Sapos ol no mekim bifo na nau yu tok yumi needim more police, moa samting long stopim ol pipol bilong Kabum bikos nau skin bilong ol, ol ipilim olsem mipela nid long kukim ol ballot box nau. Is that what you are suggesting?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – No. May be ol lukim olsem sitting member em lid nau na ol i upset na ol i kukim ol ballot pepa.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Hau bai yumi stopim dispela kain pasin? Sapos ol pipol bilong Kambum, ol ino amamas long man em i winim eleksen. Yu tink wanem? Was it a fair process? Voting yu tok em i go gut na inogat man i bel hevi long dispela, kaunting na ol man i bel hevi.

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Thank you Chairman. In future sometimes we might bring the counting to a neutral venue. Now adays yumi ting olsem kaunting em orait tasol ol yangpela i kisim opportunity na kukim dispela ol balot pepa na ol strit propeti. In future we might move

counting venue to a central location we igat isi access lo ol polis na ol arapela long stopim kain samting long kamap ken.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Em democratic kantri yah na bai yumi usim gan na katres na olgeta samting long banisim ol ballot box na, ol counting officials is that what you are suggesting? Em yumi gat narapela kain democracy liklik nau yah. Mi laik askim yu sapos mipela identifyim ol dispela kendidet ol i sutim bel bilong ol sapota bilong ol na ol i go mekim dispela kain hevi i kamap long case bilong Kabum. Sapos mipela inap long identifyim ol na sapos dispela komiti em i senisim lo na em i rekomendim olsem mipela i senisim lo so yu usait kenidet or sapota o kain osem yu wokim dispela kain ol samting, Candidate for example, maybe we give you a fine of K100, 000, you go to prison for may be 10 years or something like that. Do you think that will improve our chances of better election outcome in Kabum?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Yes, dispela bai orait sapos yumi painim aut long kendidet na ol sapota i mekim olsem yumi mas mekim save long ol so long bihain eleksen em bai halivim. Bikos planti em ol sapota i mekim, ol i tin mipela ol wok man tu i passim tok wantaim na siting memba i win, but automatically mipela ol career public servant mi aplai long position biainim merits na ol i markim mi na mi ronim dispela eleksen na ol dispela kendidet assume olsem mi sapotim sitting member.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Na yu no sapotim siting memba?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – No mi sanap na wokim wok bilong mi.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, tasol why ol i ting olsem yu sapotim siting memba?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Em tingting bilong ol sapotas tasol.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sampela samting i kamap long givim ol dispela kain tingting o nogat?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Yupela ino pas wantaim siting memba o kalap long kar bilong em o go long wanpela lilik guest haus na drink wanpela bia o kain osem na ol man i harim o?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Mi lukim sampela lain noisim het long beksait, em yumi Papua Niu Gini ya; em taim bilong tok aut na tok stret. Man Sepik askim yu dispela kwesten. So nogat dispela kain samting i kamap?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Bikos mipela long Sepik em sapos ol lukim yu raun wantem memba long kar o yutupela memba i go stap wantaim long wanpela hotel rum o kain olsem, em mipela saspek pinis longtaim. Mipela lain bilong saspek quik ya. Yu sanap toktok tasol wantem man bai ol i tok tupela wokim sampela rong ya, mipela Sepik em olsem. Yupela Morobe tu wankain?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Bipo long eleksen em olsem em Chairman bilong DDA na mipela mekim wok em bai mipela ron wantaim sampela taim. Olsem memba em Chairman na mipela ol planti lain ronim eleksen em mipela ol public servants bilong tamblo na long sait bilong wok nau em bai mipela go kam kain olsem after eleksen em strictly lo em banisim mipela ya.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay fair enough; nau, antap long Goroka mipela bin askim ol Goroka electoral officers ol i tok olsem Eastern Highlands ol i bin i gat camera insait long ol counting room na dispela kain. Yupela i gat dispela kain ol camera tu o nogat?

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Nogat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sapos i gat kamera long kaunting rum bilong yupela long 2027 na mipela olgeta i ken lukim ol ballot pepa na lukim hau ol man wok na dispela kain. Yu ting ol pipol bilong Kabum bai wanbel long dispela na bai ino inap long kukim kar bilong gavaman na kukim ol kaunting senta na ol ballot pepa, yu tink wonem? Osem seim taim mi askim yu i stap, ol pipol bilong Kabum i harim i stap na mi askim yu dispela kwesten.

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – In future mipela setim ol kain samting olsem bai helpim mipela.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So think more transparency bai helvim ol pipol bilong Kabum long ol i noken saspek nating long yupela.

**Mr KETENG ONDOP** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Similar question Mr Ondop, displa wari mipla tu kisim. The Returning Officer, a public servant from the district where the DDA Chairman is always working alongside each other so disputes of these occur all the time but if we were to change the law and a public servant from Abau comes to Kabwum and you go to Abau as the Returning Officer that problem would have been automatically stopped.

Would that be in order if we changed the law and nobody from the district becomes a returning officer but someone from another district is the returning officer?

You are the Education Officer and everyone knows you work with all the other public servants, that is why they are suspecting you, because before the election, you go around together with the public servants at DDA Meetings etcetera. So, would that solve the problem of people accusing you of your association with the seating member? What is your view?

**Mr KETENG ONGONG** – Thank you; in the future, we can get people within the province but from a different district to manage the election in another district. That would help.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Mr Lucas, you are the Chairman of the Election Steering Committee, right?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – Yes.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Okay, in your post-election for Morobe Province meeting, what were your recommendations for both Markham and Kabwum in the 2027 Elections? How are you going to conduct your counting in those two electorates? Did you recommend anything to the Electoral Commissioner or the Police Commission? What were your recommendations?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – We did not get around to doing that but when we do come to it we will look at other options that we have discussed today, like installing cameras in the counting room and maybe relocating the counting venue to a nearby place from the district.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you; why I am saying this is because the PPC, Electoral Manager, and yourself as the Chairman, come 2027, and if the Government does not change anything the people of Markham, Kabwum, and other areas will start thinking of doing the same things they did. So, these are things that you have to seriously consider now and going forward in your election for 2027. Thank you, very much.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, last one; looking at your recommendations and I would like to thank you for a very comprehensive list. Just so you know your recommendations are consistent with other provinces who are recommending that they take up the Electoral Roll Update process and the maintenance in terms of running the elections. All of your recommendations are similar to what we are getting from a lot of provinces so that is consistent.

Mi gat wanpla askim tasol lo Mr Soheke, the National Government allocated a total of K600 million for the elections. I was curious because Morobe has the largest number of seats and the total amount of money that the Morobe Provincial Government allocated together with the district is K4.4 million and you received about K5 million for the Electoral Commission. And, I note from PPC Singura that he received K300 000 to run Morobe Police during the elections. Now, according to the documents that I have, the Electoral Commission received K311 million, and the RPNGC received K155 million.

So, Mr Singura, I will ask you first, when you met with all the other PPC at the headquarters at Kone, were all of you given an insight into how that K155 million would be spent? How ol bai burukim na sapotim yupla? Were you given an insight?

**MR JACOB SINGURA** – Yes, Sir we were given breakdown of various areas of spending.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Was most of the money spent? I am looking at Morobe because em wanpela bikpela electorate wantaim 11 seats. The money that Morobe Provincial put plus what you were given is roughly around K10 million to do the work here. So, K10 million out of potential K460 million which is the total amount that went to the RPNGC and am not even



counting what went to the Defence Force and all these other entities but just between RPNGC and the PNGEC there's a total of K460 million.

Na yupela long hia yupela kisim around K5.4 million tasol na sapos mi dividim amongst long 22 pela provinces, na sapos yupela olgeta looking at all the budget I think Morobe na NCD tupela i kisim largest which is around the same. So that's come to a total of about only K10 million yupela kisim to NCD and Morobe Province.

So am still wandering what happened to the other K450 million because olgeta province kisim liklik and I am still at the loss to understand olgeta money go we. Bikos mi kam long hia na mi ting olsem ol bai putim wanpela amount olsem Morobe kisim wanpela K20 million long conductim election bilong em out of this total of K460 million but I am seeing here only about K9 million and out of that Morobe Province contributed K4.4 million.

So next question bai mi kam long Mr Soheke but yu yet taim yu sindaun long Mosbi na yu lukim ol i katim dispela Budget i stap and you were going to get K300,000 to run the Morobe election; did you voice your concerns or did you ask what they were going to do with the rest of the money? Em yupela wokim wanem hirim car or allowance bilong ol policeman or what was it? Where did the bulk of the money go to?

**MR JACOB SINGURA**– Thank you Sir, because of our own system where funds are controlled by the police headquarter, we are only given how much was allocated. And when we ask for more, we could not get because they were looking at the country so whatever funding was allocated were going to make use of it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Looking at it here, you were given K300,000 by Police Headquarter and Morobe Provincial Government gave K1 million. So, am wandering what happen to all the money because this is a same story, we are getting from almost all the provinces. Morobe police ikisim K300,000, and I think in the case of East Sepik it was K174,000. So traipela moni em go long we. You are not sure?

**MR JACOB SINGURAn** – I am not sure, Sir.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright fair enough. Mi kam long yu Mr Soheke. Electoral Commission givim yupela total of K3 million looking at your report.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – K5.1 million.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay Electoral Commission givim K5.1 million na Morobe Provincial total is about K4.4 million. Edim olgeta K900,000 long district na K3.5 million kam long province.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Total of K9.5 million.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Orait recommendation bilong yu long hia which is again consistence with all the other provinces; yu recomen olsem yumi decentralisim. Mi tu olsem Governor bilong wanpela province na personal tinting bilong mi, mi laikim dispela i kamap. Na yu tingim wanem long dispela funding, yumi decentralisim funding wantaim behianim function na i go down.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Thank you Sir, I recommend that they must decentralized so that I take in charge.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So Morobe Provincial Government takes control; you and your colleagues sitting here take control of the electoral roll in Morobe.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Em business bilong yupela. Na yupela yet how yupela conductim election only ting is we swap the AROs.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – AROs we can swap but again em base long support we get from the Electoral Commission or from the government. But I think it works well in here we did a bit some changes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well I put it to you, it didn't work well, we had ballot boxes burnt in two electorates so.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – What I mean is that someone from here can work as a RO at the new electorate

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you can exchange with another RO for issues of fairness and so forth. No further questions from me.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Last two questions to Mr Soheke, you have an outstanding of K2, 244, 600 million so where will you get that money and when do you pay the outstanding?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – That’s a hard question to swallow sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How are you managing it?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I am being bombarded with when the outstanding will be paid to service providers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Where are you requesting to?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – to the Electoral Commission.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What is their answer?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – There is no money

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How are you going to handle the LLG election which is next year?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – that’s a great concern for me and I have tried to request to the Office of the Governor

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Have you done a formal request to the provincial government to take charge of the outstanding?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Yes! we have done that through our PSC meetings and with due respect to the Committee, I would really want this issue to be settled before any elections because it’s a burden to us and then its only two of us manning the office and when I am not

in the office my assistant looks after the office but she is bombarded and even harassed because of the outstanding payments.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We rightly saw because its outstanding which the job has been done. I also understand like every province you had a provincial lection trust account and have you done your returns on final report to finance already.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – I totally agree. We did submit the report already.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Have you got a copy of that?

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – We did and sent our report to our audit team and the copy of the financial report is with us.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Can we have an audited copy and we are requesting all the provincial election treasury reports to be submitted before June. So, you have done a very good job and congratulations on the reporting and copy can be sent to our Secretariat, thank you very much.

**Mr SIMON SOHEKE** – Sure thankyou shall be done.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ms Joses, do you want to add anything before I close the submissions for Morobe?

**Assistant Elelction Manager- Morobe**

**Ms FREDAH JOSES** (Assistant Elelction Manager- Morobe) – Thankyou very much sir and welcome again to Morobe. I would like to just reconfirm everything that our election manager PPC has stated verbally and also in our report and just on two things; firstly, we do need full decentralization of our financial powers to control our money on how much we get and spend and have that oversight of our funding.

Secondly is our electoral roll; again, everyone is aware of the issues around the electoral roll and I would like to stress that we would like to change and encourage the recommendation of the change of the electoral roll expanding on what we already have it for PNG.

Having a gender spilt roll by last name is a great step forward but we would like to recommend strongly to this committee to please enforce a biometric photo roll. Now a trial has already been done in Kupiano last year and proven successful and we would like to urge this committee to Parliament to please support this initiative and roll it out by 2027.

Additionally, again we would like full control of our roll and I myself apart from being the Assistant Election Manager for Morobe was also appointed as returning officer for Finschaffien, as you all have probably seen and heard in the news last year, there were a lot of issues that arose from that seat.

The underlining issues we have seen is the lack of information. When I went down to Finschaffien there was a lot of issues around the procedures of elections and who is responsible and how do we distribute sensitive materials and what the public needs to understand is that the mandated office is the PNGEC, we are given powers on how to and we are the custodians of the elections and elections are like.

**Ms FREDAH JOSES** – A sporting event, a soccer, rugby game the referees are electoral officials. The players are the candidates. Supporters would make everyone else. None tells a referee how to run and administer a game. We are governed by the laws of this country and we have our mandate and we know what to do. Yes, you have oversight of how to look at how we run the elections but when it comes to issues about how do you distribute materials, it is up to us to do that.

For Finchhafen for example, a lot of the issues that was not going for us is because we did not get materials straight to Gagidu which is the major town of Finchhafen and from there under the direct scrutiny of the scrutineers to distribute out. We had to utilise what was on the ground. Not just with funding but with time as well.

So, for example one of our LLG in Finchhafen was Burumkwat and there is a logistical issue from Gagidu to Burumkwat Pinju. The road is impenetrable; very difficult and it can take about 10 hours just to get from Gagidu to Bumkwat. We had to distribute our materials through Nadzab through to the headquarters in Bumkwat. And because there were no scrutineers of candidates in that process, they assumed automatically that some foul play was in place and that contributed to existing tensions that arose. I was late to commend a few people who stood by us apart from the PSE. I would also like to commend PNG Loop our media partners who stood with us to help disseminate information on electoral processes especially in regards to the roll. With the roll in specific, candidates and their supporters demanded that we use the 2012 and 2017 common roll. A lot of the harassment that we got came from that.

My advice, not just as an Assistant Provincial Returning Officer but as our Election Manager has said was stand on our mandate and utilize the 2022 Common Roll. Because the 2022 Roll is the Roll in existence ties in with the number of Ballot Papers that are distributed.

To ask and demand that we go outside of the law in the name of transparency inclusion, the candidates themselves were asking us to break the law in order to get everyone to vote. So because we stood on the 2022 Roll, it was assumed that we were aligning with specific candidates.

I was also threatened not just for myself and my own life but my ARO and the officer who was implicated by the PPC that was arrested, was from my LLG in Finchhafen. He is right here and it was purely on the basis of suspicion. Not on any facts. He was basically used as a scapegoat if I may say, because we would not allow the law to be broken.

I would like to thank everyone for their support but again if this Committee was to leave Morobe Province with any sort of concrete recommendation it would be;

(1) Allow us the PNG EC to utilise our mandate as the constitutional office to run elections. Give us the funding and resources that we need. Not just how much but in a timely manner over the five-year period and not just six or three months before the elections.

(2) The Common Roll should be given great attention. Please properly fund the Roll using the biometric voter roll expending with what we have with the gender split.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you for that contribution. That is very much in line with the way we are thinking and we also asked the Electoral Commission why a Photo Roll was not developed. We didn't get a satisfactory answer so hence, we would want to come up with a long-lasting solution. So that we can make elections –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In the interests of time, we are going to move to East Sepik but before we do, in the afternoon session for those of you whom we have requested including some of the participants and ROs, candidates and scrutineers who would like to speak before the committee, we will allow them in the afternoon session. So, those who are watching us around Morobe, if you're in town and you would like to come and speak before the committee, you're quite welcome to do so, but that would be in the afternoon session.

We now have my own province, East Sepik given that these are people I work with I will excuse myself and allow my deputy, Sir Puka Temu to take over the proceedings. Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Chairman and I thank the Morobe team for your presentations, particularly for the recommendations. On behalf of the Chairman, myself and the committee members, I want to welcome the East Sepik team to Morobe on this Special Parliamentary Committee on elections on our regional consultations. Thank you very much for coming.

We've got two heads for provincial administrators so welcome Mr Torobi, you are the Provincial Administrator. We also have Mr Wapia. Mr Kaiban and Mr Ascia, welcome. When did you come here from East Sepik?

## **EAST SEPIK PROVINCE**

### **Provincial Administrator -East Sepik**

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** (Provincial Administrator – East Sepik) – Thank you so much, Sir. Mipela i kam lo aste lo late apinun tru. I'm in a civilian because my baggage didn't come so forgive me.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Okay, will have to blame Air Niugini for that; but I welcome you; you've been hearing the interactions between us and the Morobe team and you will obviously understand the issues that have been raised. Therefore, the reason for Parliament to establish the Special Parliamentary Committee to review 2022 elections but also other elections and the lessons that we must learn in order to make the 2027 election better than the 2022. So, we thank you for responding to our invitation to come to Morobe.

East Sepik is a very big province and there are many challenges in terms of logistics but your political history is much different from all other provinces because the father of our nation the Late Grand Chief Sir Michael Thomas Somare is from the East Sepik. So his own dreams of our country been united and in his dreams of us adopting the West Minister democratic system ended up with establishing the Electoral Commission and the laws that govern the provincial and local level governments.

Our observation as Parliament is that the 2022 Election was much to be desired, but there are certain parts of the country where the performance of the election management and its administration were excellent. For us as the Committee, we want to also tell those stories too, not only the issues that we had been talking about in other provinces where the ballot boxes were burnt and etcetera but we also want to tell a good story because those are the lessons that the country must learn in order to cement those good practices that amount to successful elections.

Being around myself, this is my fifth term in Parliament, I want to say that we as a nation actually have never failed any elections. Although, we are saying that the 2022 Election was the worst but as a young democratic country, we actually have never failed every election and thanks to the leadership of the Grand Chief and a culture that we have created –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – in order to be transparent, honest, bihainim law na bihainim process. The Committee wants to hear the East Sepik experience, the Committee wants to hear the East Sepik story in relation to the issues of the common roll, funding, security, candidates' nomination, campaigning structures, big loads of trucks going around campaigning etcetera and people now using bribery or kaikai. As we have heard and we were reminded by our Police Commissioner and the Major General that 2027 Election is most likely going to be worst then the 2022 Election.

So, we want to hear the East Sepik story and at the end of the day what are the recommendations that you would give to the Committee so that we package it as part of our report to go to Parliament. We want to present our report by June or July so that it gives the country sufficient time to change the laws if we can to establish a new Electoral Commission etcetera and to do awareness and to prepare four years ahead of the 2027 Elections.

So Mr Torovi and your team thank you for coming. You begin, as we have been saying introduce yourself and advise the Committee if you have a prepared submission to submit then submit that to us and speak around it and you can then introduce your team and allow them to also share the East Sepik story for the 2022 General Election.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Thank you Deputy Chairman and Chairman and members of this Special Parliamentary Committee on the Elections. Thank you so much for the introduction and for welcoming us. In the interest of time, we will try to be as short as possible, the way we'd like to do our thing would be to put a short presentation in the form of a PowerPoint if that's possible. If that's possible bai yumi lukluk lo wanem yah but if the PowerPoint is there it will help us also bring out some issues that we need to discuss as we can go ahead.

Firstly, East Sepik wankain olsem ol narapla province tasol, same level of resources same issues, everything is just the same it's the way that we organize, it's the way that we interact with various institutions that determines the outcome and success. Lo Sepik em stori blo mipla em go osem.

We are also a large province like Morobe, mipla gat bus, wara, graun olgeta hap so the remotest area is also about 10 to 15 days away. Mostly, the mode of transport is by chopper,



boats na road na wokabaut tu; so mipla bikpla tu. And the struggle reaching the voters is also there as well.

We are of the view that election is everybody's business. Taim yumi gat disla overall tingting it's not only the Electoral Commission, its everybody's business and for us in the Government, it's our business because we are closest to the people. We understand the system of Government right down from the national na i go down lo ol liklik man na meri.

And I'd like to say the success of the election depends very much on how the Electoral Commission is organized at its level or headquarters. If you people up there are organized in terms of the way you do your programs, distribution of your materials na ol disla because the legislative framework or law blo ranim election i stap wantem yupla.

We are just another arm of Government down at that level trying to implement what you throw down at us. So, the success very much depends on the people up there. if you are slow, if you are not on time, if your method of distribution of materials are not there, you will fail all of us; because at the end of the day, we are the recipients right down to the ol liklik man meri long graun.

So, lo province we are saying that we know the people best, we can run it too. Em pipol blo yumi, like Morobe, like everywhere yu go.

We know our strengths, our weaknesses, the psychology of the people there, the thinking, we are with them every step of the way for 365 days. I would like to think that planti senis na rifom mas kamap antap long hetkuatas bilong Ilektorol Komisen. The level of competency up there is also a lot to be desired. Your failures up there trickled right down to us at the provincial level and all the way down. That is where most of the problem occurs right around the country.

Mipela raitim tamblo tu olsem mipla mas take charge long common roll, that is agreed so I will not go into that. Wanpela samting tasol mi laik toktok long em em olsem, mi lukim olsem mipela igat ol ples rekods pinis. Dispela ol teblet yupela wok long karim raun ya, why don't you put 300 or 675 of them to my wards every year and you will get the full updates. Em samting mi bai lusim long ol lain long antap to develop that system maybe with photos and all those, but that tablet must go down to the village recorders. The system is already there, let us utilise it.

Electoral process em olgeta istap antap. Mipela lukim pinis olsem stat long komon rol update and then we can decide who takes what. Electoral Commission yu ba kisim wanem na mipela bai kisim wanem. At the end of the day, we have to confirm to our legislative framework that gives the authenticity insait long ileksen. Na husait em i bos bilong dispela, em bai ilektorol komisen.

Bat long wokim wok, larim ol narapela lain i wokim wok na u jas supavais tasol. The way you are doing things, you want to do everything by yourself thus stuffing down on all of us at the last minute. And in the process, there is a lot of confusion about who does what because there is no proper communication that goes down. So olgeta proses istap antap long hia, we can talk about it later and you can ask us about the way we are going, so I won't go right into it.

Coming back to the way we are organised, at the national level yupela igat IDEC which is the high level inter-departmental thing with the police and the defence force na olgeta stakeholders. IDEC may have some certain level of responsibilities and powers, mi nonap long save. Bat taim i kamdaun long provins, all of us have a Provincial Election Steering Committee.

In my view, this committee has no powers because we do not run the elections or interfere with the decisions of the elections. Ileksens em i wok bilong ol Ilektorol Komisen. We are a coordinating body that organize and also, we try to bring every stakeholder in our provinces and districts together running in the same direction to achieve that result within that given timeframe.

So, what are the powers of the Provincial Election Steering Committee? Mi tu no save bikos I was just taken to court in Angoram for an accusation that mi influensim autkam bilong ileksen. I'd like to think that the provincial administrators and their deputies bilong ol narapela provins, as chairman of the steering committee, our job is just to coordinate and also make the environment conducive so that the election can run. Igat sampela hevi istap.

For the selections of the returning officers, we know that these officials are under contract to the Electoral Commission. We recommend by way of advertisement going out and then a person comes in with their CVs and everything and then the committee looks at it. Based on their experience we submit the names of the shortlisted candidates to the Electoral Commissioner. Our recommendations are based on the right person for the job. Ilekterol Komisina wokim disisen na makim ol.

In my case, two out of the recommendations ol ino laikim na Electoral Commission in its own wisdom ol i makim narapela man.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Level or?

**Mr SAMSON TORONI** – For the returning officer. So, when they bring the gazette down, mi tokim tupela meri ya olsen don't use the Provincial Election Steering Committee as a rubber stamp otherwise I will refrain from doing that activity. If you respect our committee,

whatever names mipela igivim yu, yu ba kisim na makim ol because we its our business on the ground and that's your failure that yu gat Morobe yu gat na every other way because people go in and appoint people that ino rait ol man tu. So that process has to be fixed.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Would you have any idea what made the Electoral Commission to change the names of those two or three that you recommended?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – No idea.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – No idea.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – I even asked them, give us some reasons why the returning officer for Maprik, example, was changed at the last minute. And that's the matter istap lo court nau so yumi noken toktok long en. But these are the kind of issues.

So, what are our powers? We don't have any special powers. We don't go and decide because the returning office is contracted. He is an agent of the Electoral Commission. He makes the final decision on the counting, the venue and everything. Our job is to facilitate and make sure that those venues have lightings. They have securities. They have things that are conducive so that he can do his job. Planti ol samting ba yumi nid lo toktok na lukluk lo displa if we want to transfer the functions or some of the things down to the provincial level.

With finances, we have a submission that will be submitting to the committee and that's with advice from our finance people. I won't really go into details here because em bai longpla tumas but we are recommending that the trust account, the Trust Account in Moresby that every time an appropriation is given to the Electoral Commission should be abolished. What they're doing is as soon as Parliament makes an appropriation, it goes straight into the Electoral Commission's trust account and through that trust account, they make decisions and they disburse funds.

So, if you're saying that some number of millions is in that trust account and they've already decided, however they use it, ino sa kam gut lo mipla. We are recommending that we abolish that trust account as soon as appropriation goes down, give it straight to all the 22 provinces.

Secondly, we are also proposing that the money for the security force, yu ken go lo ol but salim kam lo province stap lo FMS. You can have the financial delegate but distributed in the province, not in Waigani and up there you can see the sources of funding that we received.

Like for instance, in our province, our budget was K7.3 million. The actual amount given was only K5 million. Provincial Government pledged K1.5 million support under the MOU that we signed. We paid full K1.5 million to run it. Additionally, we also paid K100, 000 to look after all the security forces. Now security forces, ol kisim budget but we did not see the funding. Fifty percent of the security operations were funded by the East Sepik Provincial Government in my province and we have all the records to prove that we ran the elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – For Morobe, PA, they are saying that the funds came very late. And in your instance?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – In our instance, the PPC kept on saying that they had no funds so I said, ok we'll run it through our province so I'm not sure what they got but perhaps he got less than K100, 000, I believe, later on we will get his records. But we funded a total of about K800, 000; K500, 000 went straight to the Defence contingent in Moem because they were not utilised in the national level so we decided to utilize the whole company and also the CS. So, we ran the entire security forces from the provincial government to support. Apart from that only two districts came in with support. Angoram district came with about K6-7000, 000. One LLG from Angoram came with K150, 000. Ambunti district came with K150, 000 so the other districts didn't come.

We are proposing that in the future, when the province signs an MOU, the DDAs must also sign MOUs in partnership with the Electoral Commission. Alright, let's speed up. I'll just talk about what we did and sampela failures i kamap long mipela. Wampela pat yumi putim long hia is about correct and relevant data, but that one I think we have covered it all the way so I won't go through it.

**Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER** – That one is important as well so for East Sepik. Tell us your own setting and how did you handle it; that's the problem throughout the country but specifically how did you handle that, in terms of data and common roll update etc.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Alright I'll start with the Common roll update; it was done very late about two or three months before long issue of writs ah? Em i stret? We counter funded with the electoral Commission because the funding was also very late so we decided to step in and use our local level government budgets and our own provincial funds to help to get the common roll.

Like I said in the beginning we thought that election is every body's business ino wok bilong Electoral Commission tasol. Wanwan provins yu noken wait, because you are also trying to get a best leader from your province and whatever funding is there usim pastem and that is the view that we took so taim mipela lukim olsem ol bai late mi tokim olgeta LLG lain bilong mipela, direction i go aut, take ownership work with the Electoral Commission and let's come in with the data quickly.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What is your system of ward recorder in East Sepik?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – The technical people will answer this because I gave the direction and they started. This is James Piapia, he is our election manager and his assistant is Richard.

#### **Election Manager- East Speik**

**Mr JAMES PIAPIA** (Election Manager- East Sepik) – Thank you Deputy Chairman; we have the recorders and we have the ward committee members in each of the wards that we have in the province. The ward committee members comprise of the ward member who is the Chairman of the Ward and the ward recorder is taken care of by the ward member in the ward, he works with the councilor in those particular wards.

So that is how we interact with them to get our data to the provincial headquarters. We enter all our data at the provincial headquarter and we send the information down to the headquarters to get the roll printed. In fact, as we have said people have said our roll were not done properly most of the names were missed out. I don't really know why most of the names were eliminated from the roll. All our public servants in towns, some of their names were not there and all the eligible voters in the wards in the province most of them their names were not on the roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But you did submit them in the initial stages of the data collection and you use the ward record as at the ward development committee level but then they fell out of the way between the provincial election manager and the headquarters or what is your experience? Our experience was that some provinces are saying the problem was in the headquarters at the IT level. What was your experience?

**Mr JAMES PIAPIA** – I'll let Richard answer that because he was the technical man in charge of the data.

**Assitant Election Manager- East Sepik**

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** (Assitant Election Manager- East Sepik) – Thank you Chairman and Deputy Chairman. For East Sepik I believe Electoral Commission has a process to do the roll update. Going back to the actual roll update we have five officials involved in doing the actual roll update. The ward counselor was taken as a contact person to actually do the roll update. When the actual roll update happened to all the other four members, the enrollment agents report to the ward counselor on what is actually happening in the wards.

Okay, they were given a maximum of five days to complete the roll update exercise in the ward and then the raw data are brought to the ARO; for that particular event we do not have the AROs instead we have the coordinators who were coordinating the enrollment exercise.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – AROs were not appointed yet?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – Yes, AROs were not appointed yet; the coordinators were the LLG managers so after they did the enrollment exercise at the ward level, they brought the data to the coordinators and then they brought them to our provincial office where the data entry was done on the tablet.

Okay, going back to the tablet, the system on the tablet was designed in a way that it can go down to the ward level to actually do the roll update. It also has an online and offline mode so where there is no network connectivity it will still be able to work offline and when we have a network connection it will automatically update the Electoral Roll system at the headquarters.

Due to the timing and the lateness of the funding we did not actually do the roll update at the ward level but we only captured the data from the ward level and did the entry at the provincial office.

There is a process in the system where the RO or the Election Manager has to approve the data so it will appear on the final roll. There is also a criteria involved in doing the enrollment so if some of the mandatory fields are not filled in properly he has to reject that particular voter and that is where the names will not appear on the roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – As the person responsible, everybody has said that they were not satisfied with the Common Roll at the provincial level. Can you advise the Committee if you are satisfied with the process that you managed with the East Sepik Common Roll?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – Okay, for East Sepik, we are satisfied with the outcome of the roll, especially with the data that we captured because from the provincial perspective, I believe that we did our part to enter all the data that was captured.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What percentage do you think our voting population was enrolled in your Common Roll?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – Okay, for our case, I believe that 82 percent of the population was enrolled but due to the growth rate that is happening throughout the country there might have been some people who missed out. Just like the Morobe Election Manager mentioned, we were supposed to be given 34 percent but 19 percent of the forms were not given based on our request. There was a request form that we submitted but maybe due to the timing etcetera, those requests were not entertained.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You are telling the Committee that you are satisfied because close to 80 percent but the Election News stated something happened in East Sepik. Some people were not satisfied and they burnt or broke some of the ballot boxes, so can you tell the Committee what actually happened in that situation?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – I believe that particular incident happened in Boikin LLG and also in Ambunti I believe.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Two areas and what happened?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – For Boikin case it wasn't related to the common roll, it was due to the influence of alcohol and then the supporters of different candidates arguing among themselves and then that incident happened. And while the polling team was there, they just came in and destroyed the ballot boxes and all those things. So, that is what happened in Boikin.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But you managed to control that, how did you do it?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – The Defence Force were based at Sowom not far from the incident. So, they managed to get there and rescue the polling team and all those people.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And everybody went back to normal. And the other place?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – For Ambunti I am not sure what actually happened in the polling place and that incident came up but also, we had the Defence Force there so they assisted with the situation. We had the Alpha Company remained in the province and they had 120 men so they divided 30 each to those hotspot areas that based on the report, we get from the PPC and the team. So, they were centered around those hotspot area so they assisted with the situations.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – It wasn't related to people getting upset because their names were not on the common roll.

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – Sometimes it maybe but as I've said these people a lot of them consumed homebrew. It started during the eve of the election especially, around the polling areas. So, when things like that happen, that's something that we might not control.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But you are strategically placed your security teams to respond at the earliest possible time so when these two-incident happened you were able to contain them and everything when back to normal again.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We formed the Provincial Election Steering Committee before the actual elections took place and am not sure the funding came from the headquarters of police or from us but we also supported our policemen to do pre-intelligence round up and identified each hotspot.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Please tell us about your pre-intelligence.



**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We identified Bewat because of the border and aggressiveness of the people and the arms coming down. We also identified Karowari, Boikin and Dakua area where there's a lot of arms build up and all those. And some parts of Angoram.

Unfortunately, didn't turn out that way, it was a hotspot and it was submitted to the RPNGC, but in their own wisdom thought that East Sepik was not a hotspot so they withdraw the funding that was supposed to be given to our security forces, but they were all concentrating up in the highlands. So, we decided to take it our own and internally fund our own police people to do our own assessments and try to strategically place its policemen. We were also fortunate because for some reason the one full company of the army in Moem were not deployed in the National General Elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They were at your disposal?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – They were sort of unhappy that they would be missing out on their allowance, the perks and things that their other counterparts were going to get. And so, they came and saw us and we said no you are part of the government you will be involved and the provincial government will look after you. So, we decided that we would fund them and then we also asked our counterparts in Sundaun as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, you combined?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Yes, so if you have other funding, you put them aside so we can utilise this full company of men because they are well equipped so that's how we were able to minimize all the election related violence.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That's all your initiative. There was no instruction from Commissioner, it was your own administrative initiative?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – The policemen that came late to join us had no allowances so we had to look after them by funding them with our own money, in fact we had two contingents of policemen yet to be paid and we are looking for money to pay them. The other issue was, we had two major districts, like Maprik is an advance district as well so we decided to stage the operation in two strategic locations. And in Wewak we decided that we will look after Angoram and parts of Wewak and coming into this arrangement.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – This is a security arrangement

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Security and all the polling arrangements as well. In Maprik because it's a well-established district, we positioned a lot of our logistics up there so that they will look after Wosera, Dreikikier and Ambunti as well so we sort of divided ourselves into that and we were able to be successful and am please to say that we went on time in terms of dateline of writs and so forth. The other success was it again depends on the type of people we engaged them

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who did you engage?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We engaged the returning officers on shift for instances, we swapped the returning officer for Ambunti/Dreikikier who was run by Paise who is from Wewak Island and although some of the candidates wanted their own men but we disagreed on that and it was very interesting.

The interesting case was from Ambunti and that really tested the powers and responsibilities of the Provincial Elections Steering Committee because what actually happened was that when the counting was going on and they had no venues to go and air their grievances the candidates came straight to the Provincial Steering Committee so all the petitions were addressed to me as the chairman.

When we looked at each petition and we advised them that we were not the appropriate people to make a final decision. For instances, in the case of Ambunti where the current member comes from was his home grown and the three wards were his base voters and they all agreed to vote for him and because of time constrain they appointed one person to mark all the papers and pack them into the boxes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So what you are saying is in such circumstances could we provide through legislation for the peculiar circumstances like what you have experienced. Because we are saying that wanpela man makim vote ya em illegal because the law says that em wan man, wan meri and wan vote. So, your experience is suggesting to me that we may relook at the law.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Sir as soon as this happened one candidate prepared a petition and they brought them over and the member who won also brought his petition to the steering committee. So, when we deliberated, we explained to them in writing that we have no powers to decide on those petitions and the counting process must be complete and if you aggrieve then take it to court. So, the current member won I advise him that we will not entertain your petitions to count those boxes but reject those boxes because it's not fair and its bad impression upon other candidates as well. It was actually one block vote only so we set aside those three boxes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They were block voters?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Yes, after finish counting, he was declared the winner without these block votes so he cried and he thanked God for it.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That's a good experience to share because we are looking at how we can amend the laws in order to bring our culture etcetera and not to declare everything illegal, you know what I mean because of our Melanesian ways, olem mipela bai campaign na kilim pik na kaikai and they are saying no you are buying votes and these sorts of issues.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – In many ways the candidates and everyone look at the provincial election steering committee or the chairman or whoever as people with powers to make decisions but we don't.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In the beginning you did say that Electoral Commission igat planti pawa istap. Why can't you delegate? You also told us that the Provincial Steering Committee em powerless. So, you asking the Committee to recognise and delegate these important powers of decision making on the ground?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We will be putting forward a written submission to assist this issue to the committee.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Have you got that submission with you?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We are drafting it. It will not be ready in time but we will submit this by the time all enquiries are finished. Most of all our talk and recommendations will be in a written submission.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Ok; please proceed.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We had our fair share of the common roll issue. But a lot of us missed out and as the Chairman, I also missed out and never voted; and that includes many of us here. Displating to giving 3 percent threshold because there wasn't any national census too and also the Electoral Commission was working on a guess work. If there wasn't any census, we were going to be working on a threshold; three percent in one year so when you add up to five years that would be 15 percent threshold plus immortality and mortality rate.

The enrolment forms were given on that basis. So, when you try to balance everything, you try to make sure that everybody is fitted in and I am sure a couple of villages came in the last minute and there were a lot of complaints of missing out and not enough enrolment forms and we just told them through my chairmanship that we had closed the doors and we would proceed onto elections but hopefully we will improve the next time.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – PA, how much awareness did your team undertake before the 2022 Elections? Was your awareness the reason why you're managing the elections in the province better than other provinces?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – To be honest I don't think we did that much awareness. Can one of your officers answer to that?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – In fact we did awareness in collaboration with the PNG Defence Force. We went to Angoram, to Maprik, before the elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What month was that?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – It was in 2021 around October through to November.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who was involved in that awareness team apart from the Defence Force?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – We reactivated the Provincial Awareness Committee and we also included the PNG Defence force to help us out.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – It is a vast province so what percentage of the province did that awareness exercise cover?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – Due to funding issues we went to the hot spot areas.

**MR DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – When you say hotspot PA, what were the contributing issues designating an area as a hotspot area? Identify your criteria.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Hotspot areas depends; like every district you have the characters of people. In Morobe you all know who is most aggressive. It's the Kabwums or I don't think the Markhams are aggressive; the Buangs up there are a bit aggressive.

In Sepik we did identify the Biwat people as very aggressive and the people in Maprik between Waikarkum –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How about issues like guns?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Like I was saying, those are the aggressive people with guns and wire catapel and all those with missles. Not single but now they have about 10 in one. When you press the trigger 10 arrows will go out at one time.

So, they have upgraded. Na also ol sait blong Dagua tu and mipla identifaim ol dispela hotspot and because we are very fortunate to have the Defence Force and half of the time, they are idle so we decided to engage them in a lot of civic activities in order to build a very good partnership; so, we told them that come join us for with their own intelligence in the army as well. So, they came with us and help us long ronim dispela pre-election awareness.

About the hot sports, em guns and the general characteristics of the people and their behaviours in elections. From previous elections, yumi save wanem ol areas ol i gat dispela pasin nogut. Yongarus ol no man bilong harim tok, Maprik ol gutpela man, sampela Wasara em nogut tru, so we know all these spots so mipela save traim putim ol extra man. So, the kind of people we select are the people who can make peace.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That's why you are saying it is better for the decentralization of the powers and responsibilities of this important event to the hands of the provincial government. In your recommendations to that and when you submit, please specify some of the specific areas that you believe that the provincial government has a greater advantage over the headquarters of our electoral commission.

From the Morobe side, we have the power and the Electoral Commission has the powers. It allows us to exercise our powers over the common rolls, polling, etcetera because the law is there, but we know that the inefficiency as you initially stated in your statement of the electoral commission's efficiency is much to be desired.

Therefore, there is a thinking at the presentations that maybe we shouldn't have one Electoral Commissioner because the powers of one citizen through the electoral commission is too much like their special declaration that we were talking about that is before that court.

With a lot of initiatives that you have initiated in the last election, what's your view and you complain about the electoral commission structure? Some of them you will do it in writing and present it. What is your overall view of the restructuring of the electoral commission including the possibility of having not one commission but two or three like the Ombudsman Commission?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – In my view, the election is a law in itself. Therefore, they must be responsible for the legal framework only and must be responsible for the perimeters under which a member is elected so that it's fairly and properly in line with the constitution. Em work bilong ol. Long raunim election, givim lo narapela man husait i gat more save na experience and who is on the ground and knows the terrain, the people and he'll run it for him while he will come in and make the declarations, em business bilong em.

Right now, he is trying to be the man himself, making a decision himself and then he is going to run it again and that is why time em kisim ol partners, sampela time em no respectim ol partners bilong em.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One argument that critics of that thinking will make, further politicize the Electoral Commission process by giving the responsibility to the provincial governments. What is your view?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Well I’ve just mentioned that they should look at the legal framework em i stap wantaim ol. Lo declaration na narapela ol samtin em work bilong ol, we only running it for them.

In terms of politicizing, let me put it in a practical example, a DDA sitting member comes in to give support to the election and there is some critics and some arguments saying that we should stop exercising DDA funds a year before the election or kind olsem. I alluded to the fact that we can do an MOU na tok olsem if you suspend the DDA, you don’t suspend the DDA at the time of the election but you allow them to run the elections but you suspend the decision-making power of the Member himself so that Member inoken directly involve lo putim money I go inside. The money must be funded straight into the Electoral Commission transfer into the province.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – One way of doing it is to avoid the conflict of interest for the Ombudsman Commission through his instructions to allocate half a million for election purposes in that province. Those types of provisions rather than DDA making a decision to give it to the provincial election committee.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – You must have certain threshold on how DDAs use these funds during the election time, whether it be one year or six months before, em samting bilong lukluk but we are interested in each district also putting in the resources. In the East Sepik case, districts like Wosera-Gawi and Angoram funded the police; they actually utilized their district funds to fund the police and maybe to an extent somebody might say that em Member is behind it but long mi ino lukim olsem memba i influence em. The more people become educated about these issues I am sure we can get over that line but I think the provinces should be given that and, in my view, we are the next government closer to the people.

We can run it better for them and they can come and supervise them and they have their own legal team so kam lukluk long how mipela mekim na mekim declaration, em business bilong yu and we don’t want to involve in it but let us do your common roll and other things.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – For the LLG elections, how are you preparing in terms of the issues that we experienced in 2022; in terms of the common roll, preparedness because we also want the recommendations of the committee to also influence the LLG elections as well. So as the Administrator in a province, next year is not far away, how are you preparing for LLG elections in terms of the issues that we need to manage?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Okay we already have an existing common roll em stap nau. Whether em gutpela o nogut needs now to be revisited and edited kain olsem. Already we have tablets here and I really love it. mipela gat ol village recorder pinis i stap so long sait bilong mi, we have a total of 667 wards so I would like 667 tablets and if the Electoral Commission can't find it then we will find money in the province to fund it because dispela mas slip wantaim village recorder nau yet long stat long putim data igo as we progress towards next year.

If we have it this year em bai orait. Once we have it then the others are okay; they are easy for us now to look at the logisticts behind and the costing, i gat historic data i stap pinis long kisim tasol na tailorim around that. Ol liklik disisin tasol bai kam long Electoral Commission, na perhaps long Parliament is the election of the presidents na ol dispela kain samting which I am sure we will come to that but in terms of the election if we can get our data fixed right now, I don't see us having problems, we can sail through easily.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We need to improve now

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – We need to immediately start now so if we had the money, we would now get our tablets right down to our people and start running the training long ol na tokim ol usim now because not only that we can also use that with our things long helpim ward profiling as well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much does that one tablet cost?

**Mr RICHARD KAIBAN** – I'm not sure it about the cost but we can check with the HQ team to get the costings of the tablets.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – There is a software already so the officers engaged in it to look at doing it properly to.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We need something practical so it's done across the country.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Tablets should be about K300 to K400 per tablets plus the software.



**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Probably K800 to K900?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – It may cost a lot but once it's with the district mi biliv olsem bai yumi ken bringim data kam stret.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you Deputy Chairman, Mr Torovi, can you go back on your presentations to the page where you have the issues that you highlighted. I am interested in your point number three and four. There were restrictions placed on all our financial powers, governors and the open members just before the eve of elections. When you had those restrictions placed, how did you manage to get the money to support your provincial election programs?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – For this, I would like to thank the people in our finance division especially our Provincial Finance Manager. The process was so long and covered some months but they also issued special financial instructions lo alawim ol ileksen metas tasol long approved.

The process was that all your claims would have to be badged together to be taken down to Port Moresby long Ombudsman Commission and Finance na pinis na ba kambek. They also issued financial instructions to make exemptions for election related matters. But in most cases, em ba stil go long Omdusmen na stap long hap.

What we did was, we came in onboard because although we were quarantine to use our funds, we managed to get the provincial funds to run those things and then we asked the Electoral Trust Account to reimburse the funds. I recalled calling the Provincial Election Steering Committee meeting every time and telling them that we have a budget requirement of K400,000 from the security forces. We asked them to help us if they have any funds in their trust account to pay to us.

The trust accounts were exempted by the Ombudsman Commission, correct me if I am wrong; so, they were able to pay out from there. We work together just to climb over that period and when that period was over, there was a lot of accounting to do to put back the money that was taken out.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – That brings me to your point three about your outstanding liabilities.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – These outstanding liabilities were incurred long bipo yet ikam. Em sik bilong Electoral Commission. They are not good in paying their outstanding liabilities. These are the experiences you probably heard from many other areas that you have gone to. For our case, it's the same.

What we have done was, long sait bilong mipla long provins, in order for the process to go on, we started paying when we came in. But as I am speaking, our outstanding liabilities from 2012 and up is totalled at K2.5 million. The liabilities are for outboard motor transport K1.1 million, fuel K400,000, accommodation K300,000, allowance K43,000, and advanced and stationaries. The outstanding liabilities are still there and I would like us to do a special appropriation right around the country so we clean this mess up.

Otherwise, it will be left for each province to work with the election people to decide what needs to be done. If we can take a decision and then look at the entire outstanding right across the country, we can clean this mess up because very time when we go into elections, this comes back and hurts the process itself.

Bilong mipela, we were able to because most of the things we also paid. From this year and onwards, mipela igat K1.2 million istap. That is the exact amount the Electoral Commission owes us. They promised K7 million but gave only K5 million. Planti ol komitmen mipela iwokim bihananim dispela bajet but they don't come good with us.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Mr Toropi. Finally, in regards to security, generally, in East Sepik province, you had a very successful election besides those two isolated cases. Why is security an issue for you?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – In terms of funding, the National Government and Electoral Commission never come good with the police men. Mi ting em nationwide issue ya. And because the provincial government is the next government on the ground, many of them turn to us again and we have no choice but to pay them because they are with us so that's the big issue.

In our separate submission, we are submitting that the separate trust account they have at the national level be abolished. If it is security money, it is divided equally among the headquarters and the province because Police headquarters are never reliable. They spend 90 percent of the money on admin costs like advertising and transportation and they don't give.

Olsem na sapos yumi controlim lo antap, katim daun displa trust account stap antap lo national level ya, get your admin out and divide to 22 provinces na givim kam daun.

Doesn't mean I am the financial delegate; the Commissioner will be the financial delegate. The money is in our IFMS in our province and there is visibility there so we know exactly what is there and when they plan, they can get money from what is in there. Most of them are operating blindly on the promise that the headquarters will come good and when the headquarters don't come good, the province picks up the bill.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you very much Samson.

**Mr DEPUT CHAIRMAN** – I'll allow the chairman although he said that he would not say anything much but because he is the chairman, I also want to allow him to ask a few questions and make his comments.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. I think this question is something that all provinces will be interested in and I think because you've responded to it in a round-about way, mi laik olsem fokas long liklik response blo yu. When you mentioned that all of the functions of the Electoral Commission bai stap wantaim ol, particularly the legal aspects and then the elections are run by the provinces and then now you are talking about this funding aspect of the elections. I just wanted you to clarify that in your own thoughts.

What do you mean by that? Do you mean that, for example, in this last elections K600 million was allocated by the National Government, so mipla lo komiti, we still trying to quantify what every province contributed as counterpart funding and you've given a very succinct enumeration of how much money province i spendim pinis we yu providim na mipla lukim tu lo Morobe na every province too is similar.

Nau sapos displa K600 million, let's get to the technical aspects of it, you mentioned this trust account in Port Moresby that needs to be closed obviously, because we are having the same problem as a committee, we do not have visibility on these national agencies have spent the money. Obviously, the impacted areas should be the provinces where a lot of the elections are being conducted but checkim East Sepik K5 million, Morobe K5 million, you know some other provinces got K2,3,4 million. When you add all of that up, the amount of money that actually got to the provinces for the elections is very small. Na yu yet nau yu tok planti moni em pinis nating lo Moresby na liklik tasol wok lo kam daun.

So, let's get to the crux of it; would it help, for example, those sorts of logistical activities like elections, those ones were delegated to the provinces? Like common roll updates. And then province i ranim. Already East Sepik obviously we got those plans to do it from the ward up. But sapos let's say the next elections is going to be another K600 million. Ok ol bikpla province, NCD, Morobe, Madang, whichever, East Sepik, the agreement is that yupla kisim K10 million stret. The smaller provinces based on the number of districts or some other formula that we come up with. The funding for the elections then goes straight to the province, yupla holim lo displa trust account, obviously the provincial level, displa elections steering committee em yu stap, PPC stap, election manager stap, all the relevant people on the ground, you are all on that committee already.

So obviously you're not making spending decisions on your own, you're making it as part of a team, so there's greater transparency around the expenditure. So sapos mipla mekim recommendation olsem lets change this formula. Again, it's consistent with whole of Government approach, funding follows functions, so you guys take over the function so yumi katim daun. Yu just mentioned that taim yupela askim long mani ol tok olgeta mani ol i spendim long Highlands. So that was the explanation ol i givim yupela. It ends up that you have to fund the significant portions of the elections.

We looked at the Highlands one's last week and we noticed that there was very small contribution to a lot of their funding in their Provinces and we cannot get the visibility of where the money was going or who was actually getting the largest slice of that.

Coming back to it the report we got from Treasury was allocations were released for the elections. Na yupela ol provins yupela ino lukim planti bilong em. So, would it help? Have a think around it and I think Morobe Administrator is also listening, other Administrators are listening in; if the committee was to make a recommendation as to how we restructure the finance because all of you are section 32 delicate under Finance or the PFMA anyway. So, you are accountable officers so, sapos yumi senisim budget structure antap na dispela mani em i kam daun stret long yupela based on some formula. How would you suggest we do that?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – Firstly we structure the funding, the financial delegate i stap wantem ol yet. We are not saying that we remove the money from the Commissioner, financial delegate bilong Commissioner long province em PPC i stap. Instead, long kipim moni long trust account long hap, yu burukim stret na putim stret long ol provins olsem insait long IFMS system i stap pinis. They are doing it outside na i nogat way long acquitim tru andanit long

IFMS system. There are no print outs, the manual trust accounts that they have em ol raitim cheques long han yah na planti i nogat way long acquitim.

All we are saying is that if it is kept in the IFMS system, there is visibility on those funds. Everyone knows that K100 million em bilong police, security na army operations bilong East Sepik em i stap insait long em. Long wokim decision, provincial Election Steering Committee sindaun makim disin pinis na long sekuriti, PPC i wokim sight bilong em pinis em moni bilong yu, yu kisim go bek long headquarters na Commissioner bilong yu bai i approvim.

We are not saying we are controlling it directly. This is your fund but all we are saying is that putim long hia so yumi olgeta i gat provincial approach long lukim dispela moni. There is a lot of unfairnesses.

Currently when they send people in, they don't send them with raisins and everything. We fund them; the province funds them from its own budget that we supposed to be using it for other things. Na planti taim mipela i diplitim administration's advance pinis, mipela misappropriate long ol sampela moni ken and if the Audits catch up with us, we will all justify that, no, em election ya but mi rong pinis.

So, all we are saying is, structure the funding. Take what is there at the headquarters but then they also have the you know; their budget is very expensive because they have air leave extraction igo ikam na long emergency so we understand that. Minus all of that and if you think it is for the province putim long han bilong provins stret. Don't keep it again at the headquarters; live it in the IFMS so that the provincial finance manager will have visibility and we all will also have visibility in that budget.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well let me give it to you like this; the police received a K155 million; that was the police budget. The Electoral Commission receive K311 million, so about a total of K460 million em go long dispela tupela entity tasol and out of all that, East Sepik got K5 million? Morobe, you got what K5 million? So, you see the quandary that we are in; again, we do not have visibility.

Sapos yumi tok olsem, orait Electoral Commission bai kisim K300 million. Let's just take a hypothetical situation; they keep K100 million and they do whatever they want with it ol ken haitim o go party who cares, but the other K2 million is sent straight to the provinces under this arrangement that we are talking about. Sem wantem polis, they can use the money even if they were sent K1 million down for the police and they did that in every province that is only K20 million they can still keep the other K130 million and do whatever they want with it or whatever they normally do with it.

That is what I am suggesting and I am using actual numbers here. Mipela singautim Treasury na em i givim mipela dispela ol number nau mi givim long yupela, Na mipela ino kam long haitim wanpela samting. We want to make sure that if the National Government is going to allocate, Morobe yupela ting wanem? PA East Sepik mi stopim yu na mi lukim PA blo Morobe, iwoklo laik toktok yet so wanem tingting blo yupla?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – Mr Chairman, on behalf of Team Morobe, I would like to agree with my colleague PA East Sepik that in the future monies that are allocated for election purposes must be sent to the central offices. We must manage those monies in line with our activities and plans.

So, like my colleague PA for East Sepik said, they can be functional delegates but we have the election managers in the province to manage those funds through the IMFS System.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Em gutpla, so K600 million in total na sapos East Sepik kisim K10 million, Morobe kisim K10 million and that still leaves K580 million for whatever everyone wants to do; buy cars or hire cars constantly or whatever, mi lukim budget blo yupla wantem nau.

So, if you had K10 million, you would be able to run the elections without any problems?

**Mr KISSU LUCAS** – Yes.

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – I will pay off all my outstanding.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – And that will go for all the other provinces too?

**Mr SAMSON TOROVI** – So, we start off on a clean slate.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So, if every province receives K10 million, even though in Manus they have only one district so maybe they get less, bihaim bai yumi stori. But, let's take a hypothetical situation, if every province got K10 million, that will be K220 million and that still leaves K380 million for national agencies to do whatever they normally do with it.

To me, it's mindboggling, that traippla moni stret igo na liklik tru woklo kam daun lo yupla. I am just doing simple mathematics here in my head and I am shocked that we have got outstanding bills all over the place and you are given on a small amount to run the elections.

It looks like we will have to call everyone back in and get some accountability on these. Mi nogat mo toktok; tenk yu, lo yu tupla wantaim, we have gone through lunch.

Mr Deputy Chairman, you have something to say.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Team East Sepik, firstly for your performance in the 2022 Elections; some very good initiatives that you yourselves have taken and have shared with the committee but we look forward to the actual written recommendations because we want to attach that to documents that we are going to take to Parliament.

So, I strongly recommend that the East Sepik report and recommendation can be submitted to us by the end of this month, we will really appreciate it.

But I truly appreciate the input today and I wish you a safe trip back to the province, and we will look forward to having a better election in 2027.

And, also thank you to Team Morobe for coming and we appreciate your input; two very big provinces in the country but you have done extremely well given the circumstances, late delivery of funds in security and election management; very remote areas, and problems with common roll everywhere; but you have managed to administer despite whatever circumstances you were in and your provinces hosted successful elections.

For those of you who are listening around the country, the Committee is wishing to find a solution, and some of you in the provinces as we are doing the regional consultations are not present here in the avenues that we have nominated like here in Lae City.

But, please make use of the opportunity and do your submissions in writing to the Secretariat so that we can at least engage with the majority of our people because we all have agreed that we need a freer and safer election in 2027.

So, please do not hesitate to continue to do your submissions at the earliest time possible and my recommendation is before the end of May because we are beginning to use the National Research Institute to start to do the early framing of the report so that we can then finalize it to bring it to Parliament in the June sitting and also the committee is not going to stop at the end of this process.

We will be making a very strong position to Parliament for the Special Parliamentary Committee to continue particularly to oversee the implementation of the recommendations that we have gathered around the country because some of them are very informative and smart.

We really need to make a commitment to take ownership and I want to echo Mr Torovi's statement, 'Election is everyone's responsibility,' I think that's the bottom line and I want all citizens, as you are listening, to go back and agree with us on that. Not just the Electoral

Commission and the officials, our security forces or the public servants but the voters and the candidates will also have to behave and follow the law. Allow the returning officers to play their role in the counting room rather than go and interfere with them and all those things.

Myself as Deputy Chairman and Chairman have made a lot of statements in the media already. We believe that we will be very practical and make recommendations to Parliament that has deliverable, particularly focusing on the 2027 elections.

So, this morning's occasion, Morobe Provincial Administration and East Sepik, thank you very much for coming, please continue the good work. Noken stop, continue to build institutional processes in making sure that the next election is better. It hasn't had to be a recommendation from the committee because you have your peculiar provincial specifics that you are able to handle. And so, even if we don't include the recommendations for your case as administrators you need to continue to be vigilant and smart.

And for those of you listening out there, thank you for tuning in and we are going to suspend for lunch and resume at 2.00 p.m. As the Chairman has said, for those of you who want to be here for the afternoon session, either individually or as groups, we will be here so please come and present your views on the 2022 elections. We now suspend interview for lunch.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Welcome back to the afternoon session of our first day inquiry into the Elections by the Special Parliamentary Committee. We heard this morning from the Morobe Provincial Administration team and the East Sepik Provincial Administration team who gave us a very rich contribution. We now have this afternoon an opportunity for just civil society in general to come and speak before the Committee and to give evidence where they feel necessary.

This afternoon we have the returning officer for Nawae, he wants to be before committee so we will give him an opportunity, the former Judge, Don Sawong who contested the election and he wants to contribute and we welcome you sir. And of course, we have our friends from the Morobe Disable Agency, the President, Mr Hipom and women and youth disability representative in Morobe PEC, Ms Hidadal. So, we will start on our left and Mr Bamun Bange, Returning Officer Nawae, then go to our right. Sir you have the floor.



## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

### **Returning Officer-Nawae**

**Mr BAMUN BANGE** (Returning Officer-Nawae) – Thankyou Chairman, I am Bamun Bange, the Returning Officer for Nawae, Morobe Province, thank you for this opportunity to express my view regarding the recent election. As a returning officer, the last election was very challenging for all of us including the other provinces and electorates as a whole. We went through a lot and during this election there were two main issues that we faced.

Firstly, as mentioned earlier by our Provincial Election Manager regarding the release of funding on time; we saw that if the funds were released on time, then we would be prepared to execute the election. As our colleague from East Sepik has mentioned, election is everybody's business and we as public servants and officers on the ground saw that it's a vital service for us to provide. We raised our hands up to conduct this election to make it a successful election.

Yes, the funding was not released on time and that put us on a lot of stress and pressure. We had pressure from the candidates as they keep on asking when we would start. And also, the material for public awareness on elections came in late. The other pressing issue was the common roll updates, which we worked on late and so most of our voters were not enrolled and that contributed enormously to the smooth running of the election.

We had issues at our polling areas where people said that they had given their names but why is it that their names were not on the common roll. Therefore, we went through a lot by coming up with reasons to calm them down. We advised them that if their names were not found in the common roll then they must not vote but if their names were on then they were allowed to vote.

**Mr CAHIRMAN** – Thank you sir, most of the things that you have undertaken are all concerns that we have all recorded and this committee has heard all the issues and they are rhetoric and if you have any other issue apart from the same concerns, please come forward. If not than we will proceed to have our former Judge, His worship Mr Don Sawong to present his submissions.

### **Candidate – Kabwum Open**

**Mr DON SAWONG** (Kabwum Open Candidate) – Thank you Chairman, it is an honour and privilege to be present in front of a Parliamentary Committee in addressing the election issues. As a former Judge and Ambassador, it is a great privilege to be present in this inquiry.

We have never had this and it is the first of its kind and what an honour and privilege to be here. The Government has so far made good decisions so far.

Mr Chairman, I will speak to the Committee as a former candidate of my electorate Kabwum Open and I will begin by raising the issue of the Common Roll.

In the 2022 Elections for example in my electorate people turned up to vote and to find their names were not on the common roll, felt agitated and behaviours turned unlawful and abusive. We now know that there was a computer glitch which derailed the enrolment and even at that stage people were dissatisfied and in my own home village they started behaving anti-socially because their names were not on the common roll.

Mr Chairman, I strongly suggest and recommend that next year in 2024, the country should have a national census and from there we should update our eligible voters in the common roll and update that roll on a progressive manner –

The second point I want to make in respect of that is; everybody is talking about an electronic or biometric voting, with respect, this won't happen so let's face it. We don't have the capacity, the manpower and the technical knowledge so it is not going to happen. If we are going to rush this with those kinds of methodologies, we are going to fail.

So, my suggestion, Mr Chairman, with respect is that, we maintain the old system that is, update the common roll as I have suggested and then work towards maybe another two or three elections to go into biometric and electronic voting. That will give us time. That's my comments in regards to the common roll because I am sure you've heard it all over the country.

As a candidate, the conduct of an elections being successful depended on how our public servants were appointed to be polling officials. The polling officials were appointed from the districts where they are serving and naturally, they had come into close contact with sitting Members of Parliament.

The actual biasness, perceived biasness, perceptions of conflict of interests, and actual conflict of interest are true. How do we overcome that? My practical suggestion is this, never mind legal suggestion. I have seen and experienced it and praying for a practical solution. For instance, for Kabwum Open Electorate, the appointment of the returning officer, the assistant returning officers and the polling officials for Kabwum should come from say, Finchhafen Open Electorate. We swap the public servants thereby we avoid the issues of conflict of interests, perceived otherwise. Avoid the issues of conflict of interest, biasness between the saving Member, candidates and the polling officials. It has happened in Kabwum.

The third point is the counting place; in the last election, it was decided that counting would take place in separate LLG areas. Some were conducted at the district headquarters. For

instance, in my district, the polling boxes were kept about 1.5 kilometres from the counting took place; and there were issues, real and an imaginary. There were suspicions of tampering during the transportation with ballot boxes during counting process as they were being transported back and so forth.

In the past, counting happened at one place and that did not create issues, it was open and transparent. However, when we changed that methodology of counting, that created all sorts of issues, suspicions, prejudices, conflict of interests and so forth.

My suggestion is to make sure the counting happens in one transparent building. Otherwise, we will continue to have this kind of problems again and again. My second point is; there is no respect for the security agents or police personnel or the soldiers or the CIS officers.

These people play a critical role, they are not polling officials but security personnel. They are not entitled to go into the counting place nor are they entitled to enter polling place. They are to provide security, and providing security does not mean that you go and physically stand with high powered firearms inside the counting centers or in the polling place.

You are supposed to provide security outside of those places. Only authorized polling officials by law are supposed to stand inside the counting area and where the polling takes place. It is critical and I've observed this and I suggest that we make it clear to our soldiers, and security personnel that in future, they do not go in there. They stay out and let the people exercise their right to vote.

Now turning to law, under the *Organic Law* or ating yumi go bek one moa step. The founding fathers when they drafted the *Constitution*, never revisits a process of what is now known as special circumstances. If the founding fathers thought that it would be the case, they would have stated it out in the *Constitution* when they drafted it. They left it silent, meaning that they did not envision that kind of event happening in the future, by operation of law under the *Organic Law*, we created the special circumstances. The *Organic Law* does not define what the Special Circumstances are, and what amounts to special circumstances. That particular issue was raised in the Supreme Court in the Southern Highlands case. The Supreme Court tried to define it, but leaves a lot to define it but leaves a lot to be decided. That subject is still probably subjected to judicial proceedings. This is a dangerous provision because if you have the Electoral Commissioner who is not going to exercise its powers properly within the operational law, we are going to have problems.

Imagine if we have one ballot box counted and supporters destroy the rest of it. Are we going to declare the person who leads on the one count on one box. Are we going to declare

him as an elected member under special circumstances? That's how drastic the ill meaning and effect of this particular provision is. So, it is my suggestion to this Committee that Parliamentarians really look at this provision and I recommend it be repealed; otherwise, Mr Chairman and members, I foresee a terrible future.

With Election Petition reviews; it's the members of Parliament through their legislative powers and the Court who created an election review process. The *Organic Law* under *Section 220* did not say anything about reviews. It said the decision of the National Court is final, there is no appeals, it did not say there were no reviews. The word *review* does not appear in *Section 220* and so what happened with the imagination of lawyers and losing candidates and judges, we went to *Section 152(b)* of the *Constitution* by way of the judicial review to review a *Judicial Act* of the National Court. That is how we created that provision. It is provided to be a disaster; we have now gone in being simplistic to review after review.

I am speaking from experience because I have known a candidate that went for review after review, and it took the whole four to five years. It is a potential of derailing the electoral process as it happened.

And so, my recommendation is that the *Organic Law* be amended to include that there shall be no appeals and no reviews or whatever description. It should be final. Time must move on as that is demanded by the public policy that electoral processes must be completed and move on. Candidates are elected as they are chosen and it must move on, the people have made their choice whether it be done rightly or wrongly.

Finally, I want to make a radical suggestion; many times, when we have a member who dies after they are elected, is found guilty of a criminal conduct or is dismissed by the Leadership Tribunal and such like. If it is confirmed that the judicial process is completed, appealing all the way to the Supreme Court, we go for by-elections.

By-elections as you know costs a lot of money and logistical problems. My suggestion is this, that maybe it is time to look at an alternative way. One of them is to say, if any of these events happened, then the runner-up should be declared the member and takes the seat.

The *Organic Law* is not created by God but by men. Members of Parliament have the power and authority to make the necessary amendments. Mr Chairman, those are my comments and thank you for hearing me.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, sir. It is our privilege to listen to a man who has sat on the bench and as you so rightly put it, this is a special committee. We haven't had one since independence looking into elections. We ourselves are privileged and fortunate that we have

been afforded such an opportunity to do a service to our country and to have someone such as yourself, in a way has sat on both sides. Your contributions have been quite significant.

I hadn't thought of that and I wanted to bounce something off you in terms of the appeal process. I note your suggestions and I was thinking to myself, what if we made it easier for the appeals process. Right now, you have to go to court to have the court to order a recount. A lot of times when you are taken to court, those that feel aggrieved and take you to court, they think that they are entitled but they also forget that the person that won the seat is also feeling aggrieved.

For instance, when I was taken to court, they were questioning my integrity. And for myself, it was quite upsetting. It makes me to reflect on myself and I thought, if the process was easier and if people had a genuine disagreement and feel that they were hard done by the counting officials and wanting a recount. Personally, for me given my own circumstances, I would love to see a recount as well because it goes back to the whole question of the legitimacy of your election.

My privately held views are, if people want a recount, why don't we give them one. It comes back to the issue of trust. Do people trust the electoral process? Do they trust the counting officials? You alluded to that when we were talking about this perceived or actual bias based on association.

So, like you have the East Sepik administrator here; and even for me in my case when the Provincial Election Steering Committee selected all these people, they were selected by the Electoral Commissioner. And the provincial returning officer, someone I had known by name but never had an association with, I asked the Administrator, I said look, is that person an honest and impartial person? And the Administrator said yes, he is.

So it was on that basis that I had a bit of comfort for myself but I'm a sitting member of Parliament. What about the candidates who were challenging me? Would they also have certain doubts about the person who is sitting there? I think we all have those sorts of thoughts. So, what is your opinion on that? Given that our legal framework is pretty much defined in a lot of places and there may be some issues like such you suggested, to do with some special circumstances and so on but in the democratic process of selecting a representative, do you think having that appeals process is a little bit more than just, not the way that we abuse it at the moment. I think its abused. It's abused by candidates, lawyers and everybody else.

The Government lawyers are going to make K75 million out of this so it's very lucrative if you ask me. So obviously people have an interest in perpetuating this but what about the bulk of our people who are the electors, all of those sorts of people who might want to feel that they

can trust the process. I'm asking about something intangible, the issue of trust. In your own case, did you trust the process? Did you feel that it was fair to you as a candidate?

**Mr DON SAWONG** – Thank you Chairman. You've raised two points; first was recount; the organic law provides for recounts. One of the things that has happened is this, our returning officers should be aware of those so that when a candidate asks for a recount, they should urgently do a recount. They should really do a recount. It's when they don't exercise that power, then the losing candidate feels aggrieved. So, what he does, he runs to the court seeking a recount. So, the first adversary point is the power that the returning officer has. The organic law has authorised that.

So, where a candidate or candidates ask, whether its orally or its written, it doesn't matter. The fact is that somebody wants a recount. They should order a recount and then that puts it to rest any issues about discrepancies that may arise in the total votes that's been cast and declarations made. That, of course, stops hopefully any issues going to the court. As to the second point, yes, when I was preparing to contest and I had my people on the ground who told me information about certain polling officials, their conducts, their associations, etcetera. So, I wrote formally to the election manager here; I said, I don't want this people and I set out the grounds why I didn't want them to be appointed.

He didn't tell me but I found out later that he accepted some of my recommendations and some of those people were not appointed as polling officials or to take part in the election process. But some we didn't touch, that therein lies the problems. And one particular way as I said is to swap them around. You are from Kabwum, you go to Finschafen, yu blo Finschafen yu kam long Kabwum. Yupla Nawaeb go lo Tewai/Siasi. That way you avoid the issue of bias and prejudice and closeness of working relationships with sitting MPs and all sorts of things. Sir, I have answered your questions.

**Mr. CHAIRMAN** – Yes, thank you Sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The ambassador and the former Judge, thank you for coming and we share our experiences. I was particularly interested in your recommendation of the biometric and you suggested that we should improve the current common roll processes and funding on time etc. And using the ward levels right up and make sure we have a census every five or ten years.

So, all those institutional processes must be entrenched and for us you recommended at least two or three more elections time. My view given the digital age, I think it is time for us to try some of these options available to us, but I was very keen on the timing. Obviously, what we need to recommend is to make sure that the 2027 elections have all the issues manageable. But for the actual biometric we need IT infrastructure around the country, proper manpower training etc. My thinking was, we need to do that earlier because our efforts to do the common roll update, has high cost of security, logistics challenges that are all catching up with us and we need to harness IT.

So perhaps we could start with a photo ID system. Consistent valid and consistent ID will verify voters to vote. It may have its own failures but we can start slowly over time and I thought not three or two elections but after the next elections which is in 2032. We must move to biometrics and make sure that our IT infrastructure covers the whole country. So once everyone voted, counting is already up and there is no need for ballot boxes, ballot papers, security cost etc. in that way we resolve the issue. That was my own thinking.

On the recounts, I thought my understanding was recount is only for a percentage of difference not a big margin but a small margin and that it must be requested there and then the candidate has to pay for the recount immediately that provision is made. But because say in Mr Marat's case, with small margin he went to court and he won the case that was one of the areas.

But I fully support no provision for special circumstances I think that is very clear to the committee. We will also be looking at rather than having one Electoral Commissioner, we will have three or four directors like the ombudsman, so no one person makes the decision. There is consultation with five or three commissioners and they make a collective decision to push on that provision by law for special circumstances.

I am very keen on the appeal review process that you recommended and my strong view and as the Chairman has alluded to is that, the declared winner has been mandated and any process of court EP processes, my view is to protect that, that people have spoken and so whether it is bribery or whatever you have to prove it. Olsem dispela man i wokim dispela samting. You don't have to bring nonsense provisions otherwise the people's choice which is the mandate by law has been derail through the EP process.

I agree truly that and perhaps we need to relook at it. I was going to ask a question under the current EP requirements, the first respondent doesn't have evidence against the petitioner, not allowed by law. Because the first respondent knows that, "Ol giaman yah", they are the ones that throw the money around and they are taking me to court but the law doesn't allow the respondent to put before the court the evidence that he has so if you have clean hands, "Yu

sutim rotten egg,”. So, what are your thoughts about that, in terms of changing the laws on EP cases?

**Mr DON SAWONG** – It is very complex and it is not easy as it reflects in this country; a small country with complex issues. I raised a number of points, biometrics for instance in some parts of the country did not work and we have achieved mixed results.

In Morobe, for instance, Morobe is a big province in population and physical geography of the province. To put it bluntly, the NID has not worked successfully in Morobe, I haven't seen it work and I live here. For instance, we have only one NID registration in Morobe, which is at Lae down here and I think there is one or two in the districts but in the rest of the province, we do not have it.

So, in Kabwum, one of the remotest parts of the electorate is up in the mountains of Sarowhagi Range, a village called, 'Nokopo', right on the fringes. Now the economics of a person traveling from Nokopo to Lae to register is prohibitive, in other words, he does not have the money to come here to get registered. So, therein lies the fundamental logistical problem therefore unless we bring this system right down to the local level areas it is not going to work. It has not worked so far.

We are not thinking hard enough, no criticism of the members of Parliament but I am just looking at it in terms of how we manage those things we have by saying you go down there, “Go lo Kabwum na yupla registerim man”, then we might succeed.

At the moment it is not working, with respect to the Chairman, it is the same. I used to be a judge in charge of East Sepik and Madang too so I have a fairly good idea of how remote some places are. So that is why when I said the timing, we have to give ourselves the time to put in place that necessary technical infrastructure, the personnel, the equipment to bring it right down to the district level, and it might work in two or three elections.

I hope, I answered that aspect, Sir Puka. In terms of making a place or filing evidence against a petitioner, the whole process is that you are challenging the return of the first respondent, the successful candidate and it is not about the petition. And, so that is why the law has been drafted in such a way. For instance, if we had the law saying that we must come with clean hands, we are going to have all manner of review after review so forth, and so on because the petitioner is not the winning candidate. His candidacy is not being challenged it is only the first respondent who is –



**Mr DEPTUY CHAIRMAN** – No! On the issue of appeals and review we agreed. I think the winner’s declaration by law must be secured in any process to remove that person must take into account the mandate given.

**Mr DON SAWONG** – When I was the judge of Supreme Court, we had established that people have spoken rightly or wrongly so, if you want to displace that trust and mandate given by the people, then you have to come with cogent and strong evidence to displace that mandate given by thousands of voters. That’s why the grounds of disputes, if you want to allege for bribery you come with very strong convincing evidence; that he gave K20 to the voter to vote for his candidate or if he gave him to buy smoke or whatever that may not necessarily amount to bribery. That’s why we put it that way and the Supreme Court has maintained that consistently. So, we are protecting the integrity not only of the candidate but by the voters, who have voted for this particular candidate.

**Mr DEPTUY CHAIRMAN** – The last one which I didn’t mention but just going through your recommendation’s. The runner up in the case of by election or death that’s an interesting one. But my experience is that the dynamics always change most of the time because the number of candidates does change in the bi-election, if you have 34 but only 5 will stand those types of circumstances so automatically providing by law, the runner up to be declared, I have bit of issue with.

**Mr DON SAWONG** –The rationale behind it is this, the people have decided who is there first preferred candidate and they have also chosen who is to be the second preference, so they have demonstrated that leadership during the particular time at the polling period.

Secondly, for cost wise, the Electoral Commission, security, all of these things we are going to save money. That’s the rationale behind that proposition because I think yesterday’s newspaper headlines was something that Electoral Commission is waiting for funds to run the bi-elections. Where to get the money, I don’t know. So, I thought maybe looking outside of the box and somethings for this committee to take onboard and with the technical guys. Have a look at how we can do this as a nation and as a people.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Sir, I think it’s very stimulating when someone actually takes a time to analyses what has occurred during the elections and then to sort of look at the whole length of the process and the different aspects and then to suggest solutions. We don’t

spend enough time thinking; so, on behalf of the committee, I think we appreciate that and perhaps that's something we could adopt too.

It's been 47 years since these elections were being conducted and perhaps its time that we took a dive into some of these matters and have a think through before we start. In terms of our recommendations, we might keep them broad in some of the more technical areas. And then perhaps we can continue to work on them because that's one of the things this committee will do; and that is, to continue to have a life after the recommendations are presented to the Parliament for adoption.

We will recommend that the committee be kept to oversee the recommendations so it might be something we could do after the report is filed to say look let's get some smart and maybe wise people around the country and people, like yourselves, put them all together in a room and let's take another rethink at this because as Sir Puka was saying it earlier, some of the cultural aspects. Should we legislate for some of this or what do we do?

And this is about finding solutions ourselves perhaps a little more thinking and we got people like NRI who are providing the Secretariat for this. So, we are not expecting that but it's going to be one piece of work that solves all of the issues. But we will home in, focus, like everyone has already quite rightly pointed out. The electoral role is critical to the entire process and you heard my own administrator for East Sepik, I am lucky as far as Governors are concerned, I have got a really good team and you heard them this morning.

I am on their nerves because they don't really need me around and I have a really good team and they solve problems and they are always thinking outside of the box and there are some provincial governments that are like that.

We met Eastern Highlands the other day, very competent bunch of public servants and so you have got these pockets of civil servants who are allowed to work well and to think and solve problems as it comes through. So, we are noting all of that and perhaps you know at some point we need to do some thinking first before we start doing the legislation or amendments. So, I want to thank you for that Sir, you can stay on we will come back to you. We will be asking for your written submission to be handed in, that's what Member for Bogia was whispering to me.

**Mr DON SAWONG** – I didn't finish it but I will definitely finish it and forward it to you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thankyou we welcome that and look, your contributions have been priceless and we appreciate that so please remain. I now move to our special people, people with disability, President for Morobe Disable Agency, Mr Hipom, I now give you the opportunity to speak before the Committees, sir.

**President-Morobe Disable Agency**

**Mr BEN HIPOM** (President-Morobe Disable Agency) – Thank you, Honourable Governor and Chairman, the Parliamentary Committee Members, Deputy Chairman, sorry I am not good in English so I will speak in pidgin.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Yu ken tok pisin yumi gat tri official tokples, English, tokpisin na motu. Sapos yu givim motu wanpela stap hia em bai helpim yumi.

**Mr BEN HIPOM** – Sori mi kam unprepared long dispela miting, but I was actually next door long wanpela consultation tu long ol lain bilong Public Solicitors long lukluk long ol situation bilong ol pipol with disability long access ol services insait long kantri bilong yumi. During lunch ol kam toktok so it is an honor long mipela kam sindaun, mi wantaim co-member bilong mi, mipela makim maus bilong ol pipol with disability long Morobe, we are affiliated with PNG Assembly of Disable Persons, we undanit long policy bilong gavaman mipela pila namba wan long toktok long rights na ol wanem bilong ol pipol with disabilities.

Mipela gat plenti toktok but we are here for the elections. Personally, mi hamamas olsem mi take part long elections not only the last elections but the two previous elections have been very inclusive because we have raised our concerns with the officers of the electoral office in Lae na ol harim mipela but a lot of issues need to be looked at but one of the things that we need to seriously consider is to include people with disabilities to cast their vote.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Mipela harim ol toktok long moning, sori yu stap long hapsait na ol i tok wanpela interesting samting na ol i tok ol i putim fast lane long ol mama i gat bel na people with disabilities.

**Mr BEN HIPOM** – That’s one of the recommendations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** –Ol ibin mekim ha?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – East Sepik, I think there's a few other provinces that are well-advanced so they got better data than ol lain lo Moresby. Na lo case bilong electoral roll, like dispela committee ipain aut olsem wanpela problem bin i stap em lo last election, ol ibin hairim wanpla IT compaly na i bin igat sampela asua bin kamap namel lo dispela IT company na ol information bin kam in.

So, there was a computer problem and a lot of people were thrown off the voter roll. Mipela olgeta ino save. We only found out when we were interviewing the Gulf and NCD. So, bigman bilong Gulf itok olsem I'm retiring anyway so me no bisi, me tok aut tasol. Ol rausim me lo work, ol ken rausim me lo work. So that's what he did and then when we asked the NCD guy, he reluctant but em I konfemim olsem em itru olsem dispel hevi ibin kamap.

So, we are finding some issues but to be honest with you, I'm one of those people that believes that dispela ol activities bilong gavaman, they cost too much money and I'm one of those people that believes that indecent inflated prices, some people are taking profits illegally. Mi save igat dispela kain bilif.

So based on that belief, me no save, yupela no bin stap but mipela toktok wantaim Morobe na East Sepik, for example. Mi yet believe olsem we can actually collect data in the provinces without the need for national census. Just to explain to you, national census collects all the data stat lo pikinini na go lo ol lapun. For the voter roll, we only need those that are 18 years and above so it's a different set of data again.

We all know the difficulties with NID. I think the problem arose when we bought an overpriced deal with Chinese. Yumi lock lo dispela dil na em ihat lo kam aut. I'm even told that we might have the NID people come and speak to us at some point but from information I have received, for example, they can't even buy the printer. Printer em yu mas kisim long China. The printer costs like \$5 million or something like that so they lock themselves into a crazy contract but there are other easier ways to do lo kisim record bilong ol man. Olsem nau tasol East Sepik Provincial Administrator tok ya, there's a tablet that ol i yusim lo kolektim data na dispela tablet ol iken kisim photo bilong yu. Em iwankain olsem phone. They can get your photo and fingerprints.

So, in the case of East Sepik, we have 667 wards and East Sepik provincial government is going to buy 667 tablets so we will collect our own data because I think mipela olgeta provinces have been waiting for the National Government for 47 years and it's not working.

You know, the government spend K600 million on the last election, you won't believe it, but if you look at the amount of money that actually went to the provinces, olgeta provinces, you start to ask a question. Where did the rest of the money go? I think those are genuine

queries so just to assure you that this committee is looking at everything. We want to get to the bottom of this because even we don't understand. Plenty ol memba bilong Palamen tu, they don't understand what's going on. So, we want to fix it.

In terms of data, coming back to what the former Judge toktok long en, there are simple technologies out there. It will not cost us K300-K600 million or whatever it is to register the people. I think what he did is, mipela ol Papua New Guineans mipela ol lain belong katim ol dil ya. Mipela save wokim ol side dil na kainkain nambaut. We are just too good at that and over many decades of perfecting it em nau, kantri em safa na stap.

However, there are some of us who want to see things change so I just want to assure you but ol lain bilong yupla lo Morobe ol ikamap wantaim wanpela gutpela idea lo fast trekim yupela ol special lain. I mean, mama igat bel na em iklostu bai karim, how bai yumi larim em sanap stap. So, gutpela pasin yumi kam putim ol tru but these are things that we can work on but I just want to clarify because ol Papua New Guineans are watching us on EMTV right now and I don't want them to think that the census is the one that's going to solve this problem, nogat. Census em bai kolektim general household data.

So mipela inid lo figarim aut wanpela way lo stretim dispela electoral roll tasol. I think a lot of the provinces are now asking that they take over that responsibility, but we need a way of tying it so it's a centralized data system na olgeta man na meri igat wanpela record tasol.

Ino olsem nau we manmeri na ol tok pik dok, three species they are all registered as voters. Even Elvis and Bob Marley they are voting in some of our electorates. These are the sort of things that have been going on for a while and nobody has fixed it. Well. This Committee intends to see that it gets fixed. So, mi laik jas asurim yu tasol wanem displa and to kind of give you a recap. We have been doing this work now for a number of months. So yu kam lo klostu blo arere blo em, so em orait, wanbel.

Madam if I can bring you in, please state your name and you may contribute to the committee.

### **Womens Rep-Morobe Disable Agency**

**Ms IDAH DAIL** (Womens Rep- Morobe Disable Agency) – Thank you, Idah Dail, I'm the Women with disability Rep with the Morobe Disable Agency. I would like to take this time to thank the Chairman and the Committee for giving me the opportunity to speak for women with disability. Planti ol meri i atendum eleksins na ol ivot but planti nogat. Like our Chair has mentioned, because of the Census planti meibi ol i kautim ol but their disability in all forms.

For my case mi can wokabout, I have an artificial limb where I can walk na ol man bai nonap luksave lo mi olsem mi disable. So, like taim mi go sanap lo polling booth they will think that I'm an able body so they won't consider me. I can stand for ages. Ating wanpla taim mi go sanap sanap go and I couldn't stand anymore so mi lusim na mi go back na mi no vote.

But kain osem ol lain stap lo polling booth, unless and until they know us in person, we are living with disability ol iken helpim mipla lo go na vot and its also our rights as a person to vote so inap yupla disainim wanpla wei we emi can cater for includim types of disability we have so kain osem wheel chair lain ol go they will be recognized including people walking with crutches. Kain osem maus pas go how bai em save osem kain osem, hearing impaired and vision impaired. This is my suggestion for consideration to at least come up with a form that can include our types of disabilities so we can participate in the elections. Thank you

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Your welcome, I think it's a fair request and we are considering some technological improvements to the election. For example, whatever is practical like getting a voter card. You know you have an NID card, maybe getting a voter card if its faster produce, easier to produce. You just walk in and take 5 minutes, get it done, so we are investigating those sorts of things.

So, if you get a voter card and for example yupla ol lain i gat special needs sapos card blo yu i red em green; you know we can do these sorts of things. This is the first time we've come out to a province and hearing from the disability. And then hearing at the same time the Morobe Elections Committee provaidim fast lane blo ol. So, we will be able to combine the two and we are thinking all of this is recorded this is going to form part of the proceedings. Recommendation blo yupla bai mipla i teikim on board it's a practical issue. It's not an unreasonable request long mipela luksave long yupela long wanem kain hevi yupela igat so mipela iken putim yupela igo insait long dispela proses long mekim isi long yupela. I want to assure you and thank you for that contribution. Members do you have anything to say?

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I have a few questions to ask Mr Ben Hipom; at this stage you have shared with us the election process, the difficulties with polling, etc. One area that we haven't discussed is persons living with disabilities representation on the Floor of Parliament.

It's the same issue as women have been contesting elections until now, we have only two women on the Floor of Parliament. At one stage in time, it was only Dame Carol Kidu. We

have those issues of women and the disabled. There is constitutional provision for non-elected persons and then the disabled and women.

The Ambassador will agree because there is specific provision in the constitution for a certain number. I wonder in your discussions in the association whether you could make a representation to look at that constitutional provision for non-elected member numbers to be increased whether it's at the Parliament level, provincial assembly level or local level government.

We need to have disabled people sitting in those assemblies. There must be provision in the LLGs and the assembly to allow a non-elected person with disability. There is a provision in the Constitution for the Parliament too but we haven't invoked those provisions. Nobody has discussed those; we were only talking about those election process and the difficulties that we have faced.

How do we get more women on the Floor of Parliament? How do we have persons living with disabilities voice on the floor of Parliament? What provisions in these review process should we engage in? We should go back to the constitutional provision.

The Constitution says that women are having difficulties, 20 must be women non-elected or elected. We have to create positions for a representative from each province. Allow it in the law until such a time that our maturity comes and we have equal numbers of gender issues on the Floor of Parliament.

We haven't discussed those matters so I would request that for the bit of time for you, we don't have to discuss it now but maybe in your Morobe Disable Agency, you could discuss and do a recommendation to the Committee. I want to mention that so that we can allow for those voices to be on the Floor. The election process in PNG em hat ya. We have women finding it hard, even in the matrilineal societies, women don't vote for their womenfolk's. We have a difficulty in this country.

I personally believe that the more balance we have at the legislator level, we will create an environment where everybody is represented, including persons with disabilities. Those are my comments.

**Mr BEN HIPOU** – There is a little comment to add on to what you allude to in there. Long Morobe Province, bipo taim nau Gavana ibin stap lo posisen, emi kirapim dispela Agency mipela igat mausman bilong dispela agency istap wantaim mipela long Assembly. Taim niupela gavman ikam, ol i rausim igo.

Nau em kam bek na em laik strongim na enfosim so we are currently working wantaim em bikos lo disla bai ken adjastim. Planti ol isius we mipla gat long em. Ting bai mipla tok tenk yu lo Gavana blo mipla lo Morobe lo disla ol kain. Emi olsem seim, bihain em toktok olsem yu tok, but around that disability circle, planti wok lo toktok tu olsem National Parliament imas gat disla but how do we do it?

Wanpla samting mipla wok lo pusim yet at the moment is the Disability Bill. Number of years mipla wok lo toktok long en igo but ino kam thru lo Parliament yet so mipla wok lo painim em, em stap lo wer? So those are the things we bai probably givim moa weight long mipla long pushim moa recognition bai kamap lo disla sake. Thank you.

### **Closing Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Well, I think that should conclude our afternoon session, unless there are any other participants in the audience that want to come forward and give evidence or contribute in some way. Yupla sampla istap o? Now there are some that want to speak to us off camera so what I will do is, if there's no one else who wishes to come forward and contribute to the committee in camera, then we will do the off-camera stuff after I suspend the hearings on air.

But having said that, I want to appeal again to the people of Morobe and if there are people in Madang who are listening in or even in the Eastern Highlands, if you are around Lae and would like to contribute to the committee tomorrow, because in the morning we have Madang and West Sepik so once we are finished with them in the afternoon, we will be free to hear submissions from anyone from the public.

Don't come and try and sell us a car or something like that, I will not allow you to do that on this committee. We had a few in Port Moresby, they weren't selling cars, they were trying to sell something else. In any case, so, mi just putim toksave olsem yu husait yu stap whether yu woman leader or church leader, yupla laik kam tumora afternoon, after lunch, we will have time for those who want to contribute so emi luk olsem nogat so I now suspend the proceedings until tomorrow. Ol lain laik toktok lo mipla off camera, you can remain but everyone else I want to thank you for your contributions to the committee this day. The proceedings are now suspended until tomorrow morning 10am. Thank you very much.



## **DAY TWO**

**5<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

### **Transcript**

Time: 10am

Venue: Lae International Hotel

#### In Attendance

##### Committee Members

Honourable Allan Bird – Chairman

Sir Puka Temu – Deputy Chairman

Honourable Robert Naguri

##### Witnesses

Mr Sponsa Navi -Election Manager-Madang

Mr Conrad Tilau -Provincial Administrator -West Sepik

Ms Salote Kai -Election Manager -West Sepik

Ms Alewee Michael -President–Morobe Council of Women

Ms Debbie Kais -Former Candidate-Huon-Gulf

Ms Nellie Mclay -Community Leader –Lae

Ms Carol Yawing -Former Ward 2 Councillor -Lae

Mr Tae Gwambelele -Candidate -Bulolo Open

Mr Steven Mol -Luthern –Rep

## **Opening Remarks**

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Good morning everyone and welcome to the Special Parliamentary Committee hearing into the conduct of the elections in Papua New Guinea. We are in Momase and today we have the West Sepik Provincial Administration and the election team and we have Madang. Today's session will be headed by the Deputy Chairman Sir Puka Temu. I will hand over to him to take the proceedings. Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Chairman and good morning everyone. I welcome the teams from West Sepik and Madang to this regional consultation. And also to those of you who are tuning in throughout the country.

I welcome you all once again to this very important session. We are in Momase region and today we will be concluding our regional consultations in the Momase region and the last region to visit will be the New Guinea Islands region.

As you all are aware the Parliament in its wisdom decided to set up this Special Parliamentary Committee particularly to look at the issues that affected our 2022 National Elections and in our efforts to perform better for the 2027 Elections. The Parliament decided to establish this committee to review, assess and going forward come up with recommendations on the issues that we have identified.

We are now coming to the conclusions of our consultation and as we have announced, we hope that by June or July we will present the parliamentary report to the Parliament. After that we are committed and we are calling upon all stakeholders, the Electoral Commission, Police, Defence, government institutions, provincial governments and their administrations and more importantly our citizens throughout the country to take ownership. We were reminded by the good Provincial Administrator of East Sepik yesterday that election is everyone's responsibility and so this morning I have the pleasure of reminding us once again as we tune in to the experiences in West Sepik and also Madang. I strongly feel and think we have agreed that we have identified, issues of funding amounts, funding delays, issues of security, issues of ballot paper integrity and processes that we've been managing including the common roll. Some other issues include behavior of candidates and their supporters and all those issues are very clear.

Our undertaking is to identify the solutions particularly realistic deliverable solutions so that we can then guarantee at very early on that the 2027 elections will be free, fair and safe that's the bottom line.

As the Deputy Chairman of this parliamentary committee, I'm calling upon all our citizens throughout the length and breadth of this beautiful country to take ownership. Sapos yu les long go regista, taim bilong registration kam you must make it your responsibility long go na regista so that when you turn up on that polling day your name is actually there rather than arguing with the polling officials at the last minute.

Because the national elections is event that takes place every five years and it is about electing our leaders in this country, I believe that it is every citizen's honourable responsibility to participate in the choosing of leaders in the national general elections and also the local level government elections which will be coming next year.

So, it is the committee's privilege today to welcome the officials from West Sepik and Madang provinces. Thank you very much for making the effort to come.

We want to hear your story but particularly of your vast experience with managing many elections as civil servants. I have been a former civil servant and I know how hard some of you public servants work in some difficult circumstances. We will value your input today, particularly recommendations. Yesterday, we had some very smart recommendations and we were really privileged to be given those opportunities.

We will start with Madang and allow Mr Sponsa Navi, the Election Manager for Madang Province to tell the committee how he administered and managed the 2022 Elections because we believe that this election was one of the most difficult ones. How did Madang manage this? Over to you Mr Navi.

## **MADANG PROVINCE**

### **Election Manager – Madang**

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** (Election Manager-Madang) – Thank you Chairman Honourable Allan Bird, Deputy Chairman Sir Puka Temu, Honourable Robert Naguri, Member for Bogia, and the other committee members for giving me this privilege to sit here before this committee to talk about the experiences of Madang Province during the 2022 General Elections.

Okay, I will not go through everything that is placed in my report but I will just go through it briefly.

I know that the other provinces have already highlighted the issues that we faced during the nation elections so I will just cover areas from the enrollment, the funding, logistical support that was coming from our head office, nominations, voting, and then the declarations.

For Madang, the enrollment exercise for enrolling the voters started in late November of 2021 which I think was the same in other provinces and the issue was the funding. The exercise

should have started two years prior to the issue of writs and it would have really helped us in updating and getting it ready for use but it didn't happen that way, we were rushed to do that.

Also, we should change the way we enroll by introducing new systems to be used as Morobe mentioned, a bio-photo roll that will really help in future elections. I will emphasize that we look at changing the way we enroll our citizens in voting and we should start now in preparation for the LLG elections.

But just for certain LLGs in the country, we can identify and do a trial with this new system, if we have the machines and the money to keep these machines on board in preparation for the 2027 National General Elections.

The funding part of it, I think Morobe and East Sepik has already mentioned, yes, we really need to have money that we are requesting. Like for Madang, I requested for K8.5 million to run the elections and I was only given K3.6 million. The provincial government assisted with some money, they committed K2 million but we only used K1.1 million and K900 000 was taken back. The money wasn't just used for the election purposes as well, it was used by themselves. However, we managed to conduct the elections. I don't have an assistant as well in my office; it was just myself with the assistance of our four casuals with all the returning officers and assistant returning officers. The senior officers in each of the districts also assisted us in conducting the elections.

Madang is one of those hardest provinces as well in running elections because there are no proper roads leading into all these outer LLGs. Middle Ramu and Rai Coast don't have roadlinks so it's very difficult, we only use helicopter to assist us and it's very expensive. The polling was good and there weren't any major issues except the usual complaint from people not being on the common roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Navi, in regard to the helicopter, was it available on time or did you have difficulties with the helicopter.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** –Sir, the helicopter arrived about few days after the polling commenced. I think it was also helping Central and Morobe provinces as well. So, during the period of polling, Bogia district went ahead to be the first ones to start counting. They have three separate counting centers for each of the LLGs. Our senior management wanted us to count in the LLGs so that was well coordinated and they started their counting. The others came in later like Sumkar and Usino-Bundi. The only two districts that conducted counting in their respective areas were Bogia and Usino-Bundi because they had better facilities there to

do their counting. The other four districts had to be done in Madang town where we identified the locations and setup the counting areas. This was for Middle Ramu, Rai Coast, Sumkar, and Madang itself, the regional town centre.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Were there security issues?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, security was provided by Police and Defence personnel from Igam Barracks and they arrived a week before polling to do pre-election operations for a week before the polling so it was alright and there weren't too many problems during polling but only in certain areas like in Madang District.

Transgogol area is one of those hotspots which police identified and they did some operations there as well as in Rai Coast District, Hetwara area, which required us to send Police and Defence personnel to go in there earlier. But regarding their funding I am not sure whether they were given money for their operations but they had to run back to me to assist them – Police and Defense.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They had to come to you for funding assistance because they didn't get theirs. They were separately funded by Electoral Commission but you are saying that the security forces had to come back to you for some logistics and allowances and so forth?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, Sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did they ask for?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – They came in on several occasions and so I had to assist them with K50 000 first and then I paid for their fuel, accommodation and the police personnel that went to Middle Ramu and Rai Coast, I paid for their belongings.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How much did you spend on the security requests?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – About K150, 000.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – K150, 000 that's very interesting okay. Any major issues that you want to let the committee know apart from the funding amounts and funding delays,

and you have just advised us that the security force didn't receive any support from the headquarters? How about the voter and candidate behavior, campaigning, polling areas and the counting chambers and any issues faced by Madang?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, we had during voting time like people not having their names on the roll.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did you manage those people whose names were not on the common roll but were present at the polling?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We just told them that their names are not on the roll so they can't vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did they behave?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Well they were not happy but I maintained our stand.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They didn't resort to violence or disruption of the polling?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Throughout the entire province they didn't resort to any violence?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Very good. Did you do a lot of awareness to achieve that type of outcome before the elections?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did you organise your awareness?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We did several awareness in town, normally every Fridays and Saturdays when a lot of people come to do shopping and marketing and also along the highway going to Bogia, North Coast road and going to Lae-Madang highway. It was just around the main areas, we can't go further than that because of funding limitations.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And on the common roll, what percentage of the voters in Madang were actually enrolled? Give us an estimate.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We had about 354,000 people that were enrolled and the number of voters were almost 150,000.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So about 50 per cent of those who had enrolled came and voted?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Why? What happened and the other 50 per cent did not turn up?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I am not sure about that. Their names are on the roll but they must have decided not to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That is interesting because in other provinces they all wanted to vote but their names were not on the common roll and some issues came up because of that. But for your case, you have majority enrolled but they did not turn up to vote.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Give us a reason why they did not turn up. Is it because the people of Madang just don't want to vote or do they have problems with politics? What is your observation as a manager there?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – From my observation, I think they are not interested in voting because of lack of service delivery. That was what they were saying when we went to enrol

them. One of the villagers at Anob LLG asked us why he should be enrolled. He said, gavman no givim mi wanpela samting, mi stap long bus we nogat rot ikam long peles, mi stap klostu tasol long Madang taun. I am closer to Madang town but there is no access to road.

That is one of the examples I have encountered personally.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – This was also expressed by other officials when we went around.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – The other issue we encountered during the voting time was, voters must have been threatened not to vote for certain candidates. That was why they did not turn up to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Were there any incidences of threats or intimidation in Madang? I do not want you to guess. Give us some specific examples of where voters were intimidated and could not vote. Are there any examples in Madang?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – It is only hearsay but it might be because of that and some other reasons as well that contributed to people not turning up to vote.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How many polling sites did you have? Do you have polling sites nominated to closest places as possible? Was it because of distance that people did not turn up?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We had closer polling locations within walking distance.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Very good. You chose to have counting in the district headquarters for Bogia and Usino-Bundi but you decided to bring the others to Madang because of logistic issues?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – That is correct, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – During the counting process for Usino-Bundi and Bogia, were there any issues that arose? Are there any differences that you noticed in the local counting as opposed to the centralised counting? Do you have any views or experiences of things going



bad in the local counting as opposed to in a more centralised areas? What are your recommendations?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – In centralised, counting was okay, it worked well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You managed well in Madang town?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How about those in Usino-Bundi and Bogia? How did your team manage?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – They went well because there was enough space and lighting so there weren't any problems with those two.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did you do primary counting in the LLG areas or you brought all the boxes into Bogia before counting started?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, the primary counting was at their district headquarters, especially for Bogia and Usino-Bundi.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But all the boxes were brought in from different LLGs into Bogia and Usino-Bundi districts for counting.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, they did the primary count and then they shifted the boxes to Madang town for the regional count.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did your counting start and finish on time?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, Sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What happened?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Because of delay in polling we were late but I think Bogia was okay. One or two areas for Usino-Bundi but mainly Rai Coast and Middle Ramu was very difficult.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– Because the helicopters came late?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir. So we had to ask the commissioner to extend the polling period for a week again.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– So, your declarations were within time?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – No problems with the timing on declarations?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, a day before the 19<sup>th</sup> of August to return the writs.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, overall you are telling the committee that 2022 Elections in Madang worked out fairly well despite the shortages in funding, logistic delays, and in overall as election manager you are telling the committee that you didn't experience much of the problems that other provinces had.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, Sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What's the reasons for you managing to have a good election in 2022. Tell us why that happened?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Maybe it's because of the support from the PSC and the administrator himself with his deputy administrator and members of the committee. They had really helped me because I did not have an assistant election manager helping me so they had to appoint a senior officer from there as well to assist me as assistant provincial returning officer. So the returning officers and the assistant returning officers that were appointed to conduct the elections are well qualified. They have planned several elections already and with their experience they helped me a lot.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But you had a very good administrator through the steering community. You had good support.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You were having regular meetings and that was very good. How about the overall attitude of the Madang people? I believe in Madang people and I always say that Madang is beautiful and people are very good. Maybe that contributed to people been law abiding and they behave well unlike other places where when they are not happy they burn the boxes down and start fights, et cetera. What's different about Madang people?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I'm not sure because there are a lot of problems in Madang. As I speak, there are a lot of problems, especially killings happening every now and then.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But it didn't affect the elections?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, but there were one or two incidents of killings up there in Transgogol area but when the police arrived, they stopped fighting.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Was that killing election related?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, they have their ongoing problem.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But even those that happened in the election, as you are the Election Manager, you are telling is that you are happy the elections went very well in Madang.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, it went well

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And we are trying to find out why it worked out well in Madang. Despite not having enough policemen and all those issues but in Madang you didn't have all the money and logistics support but you managed to pull off a successful election and

we want to flag those reasons. What's different in Madang that other provinces must learn about?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Maybe it's the way we managed the whole election. I think the officers that I worked with are just too good and they worked very well, they listened to my instructions and carried out their duties as required.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How long have you been an election manager?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Sir, I have been with the commission for 33 years now

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That's a long time, and how long in Madang?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – This is my fourth year.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Where were you before?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I was in Western Province before going across to Manus and then came here. But I have been an election manager for five national elections already.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you have a lot of experience. And you even responded to the request by the security personnel. How did you get the money and give it to them? What process did you go through in your administration to listen to the request of your security forces?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I had to consult our PESC Chairman and we were there to assist them

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did they agree that they should help?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And you did. I'm just going through your recommendations; four of them. You don't have your document there but I want you to

concentrate on the recommendations. The first recommendation that you made was the need to use technology. Can you expand on that?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Well, we just need to change how we do the enrolment or voter ID.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Use IT?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We use IT systems to improve our voter enrollment and including identifying voters.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did you use the ward level updates? Have you got ward recorders? How did you process your updates at the ward level when you came to update the 2022 common roll?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – We released the roll to the wards and they go through the roll that is printed and given to them. So whoever has passed on or has gone away, they have to indicate that on the roll and return it back to us

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That was successfully done throughout the province?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So your ward level input was universal and was done very well. You were able to register as many new voters or remove those who died, et cetera.

At the same time, you are recommending the use of IT.

Your third recommendation was the issue of the Electoral Commission, and you have served the organization for over thirty years. Your recommendation is relation to the integrity of the Electoral Commission. Expand on that, would you recommend any changes in the structure right now? Tell us the shortfalls of the Electoral Commission and going forward, what would you recommend to the Committee inasfar as making some changes to this important constitutional office?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – The integrity and the impartiality of the Office of the Electoral Commissioner. Morobe or East Sepik may have mentioned that we really need to have integrity and impartiality brought back to the Electoral Commission so that the outside forces don't come in and try to push our chief Electoral Commissioner to make decisions on certain issues that arise.

I have to be frank here because during the last 2022 National Elections, there were rumours going around that that was what happened thus causing people to compare our current commissioner to his predecessor. We were changing dates every now and then. It will be better when we have a set timing and we do not change it, but work towards that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We heard the same measures from Morobe Province. The important thing is scrutineers, voters and candidates must know the functions, powers and responsibilities of election officers and respect them. That can be done through good awareness and education. Did you have a workshop for scrutineers and candidates like what they did in Goroka?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You did not. And your last recommendation was in human resources for Electoral Commission. Can you further highlight that? Because at this stage, we are thinking that to protect the integrity of this constitutional office, maybe instead of one Chief Electoral Commissioner, there can be three people like the Ombudsman Commission. So when it comes to special circumstance of decision making, there are three people rather than one. And with pressure coming from everybody to the Electoral Commissioner, at least two others are cushioning the pressure. What is your thought on that having worked there for 30 years?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – That would be a very good way forward for the Electoral Commission. We need about three commissioners so that we can be able to conduct and do elections well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You would agree with that?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – I will allow the Honourable Robert Naguri to ask some questions given that it is his own province.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman and a good morning to Mr Navi, Mr Conrad, Ms Kai and the public. Mr Chairman and Deputy Chairman, with your concurrence, I have some issues that I want to raise with Mr Navi through this committee. I haven't personally met Mr Navi or spoken to him in his four years in Madang. We spoke over the phone only during the elections but I would like to get answers for some issues that arose in my electorate.

Mr Navi, throughout the course of this inquiry, I have discovered through your other colleagues that the kind of elections conducted in Bogia using one ballot box for both regional and electorate papers was a first of its kind. This has never happened before in any other electorate but it happened in Bogia. In my past election experiences in Bogia, this has also never happened.

In the 2022 National Elections, the people of Bogia voted using only one ballot box. Both the regional and the electorate papers were stuffed into one ballot box. That created a lot of issues but I had to step in for the election to continue. If we had argued and continued on, the elections would be delayed for another two weeks or so.

So Mr Navi, I would like you to be honest in your answers to inform the committee about what happened.

How did you come up with this decision of making people of Bogia voting using only one box? You are protected under the Parliamentary privileges in this committee. Whatever you say will be held in this committee. Noone is going to take it against you. So, thank you Mr Navi, that is my first question.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Thank you, honourable member. During the distribution of the ballot boxes – actually the boxes arrived late. The number of boxes for distribution was (*inaudible*) and the ship arrived later with the next lot of boxes. But during that time, polling was starting so the returning officer and myself said, that's okay, you get the boxes that are available now and you go and start your polling because about two days of polling date have gone already. So, he had to leave with only one box per team to conduct the elections. But the ship arrived and we had to send the next lot of boxes to Bogia.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you Mr Navi. So that decision was based purely on the shortage of boxes?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, that's right.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Apparently all your other colleagues never had those experiences? No other district had shortage of boxes, only Bogia. You had shortage of boxes in Bogia, that's your answer? You had no other influences? No outside influences? No political influences in the election? Nothing?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you. My other issue, Mr Navi, is that after polling when all those boxes were locked up in my district headquarters in the container, now we had the issue of the counting venues. Since independence, Bogia elections were all counted in Bogia district headquarters. There was no counting done anywhere else. The 2022 Elections was the first time that I hear counting was going to be conducted in Madang town. Now, we were waiting for almost a week and a half to start counting.

I prepared the counting venues myself. I spent money from my own pocket to make sure the boards were up, the lightings were done, the generators were there, the fuel was there and we had to wait another week and a half for the provincial election steering committee to decide on the counting venue.

Here I learnt that the steering committee had no powers, they had no authority. They are there to help you and your returning officers to conduct the elections and when to conduct the elections. They're not there to decide on counting venues. So why do we have to wait for another week and a half for Madang Provincial Steering Committee to decide on the counting venues in town. Mipela pulim taitim, I did not allow that to happen until you guys decided to come down to Bogia and do your counting. Why did that happen? Can you explain please?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Thank you. We were pressured to move the counting to Madang but I strongly went against the PESC for pushing to have the counting done in Madang. I said, no they have the facilities there, they will need to do counting there. So, I never went with them. I did not agree with them to move the counting to Madang town.



**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Mr Navi, in your 30 years of experience in conducting elections, you should've known better. They have no authority. You have the authority and your returning officer. You make the calls, not the provincial election steering committee. You shouldn't have waited for them. You should have made the call. Why didn't you make the call?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I did make the call to the returning officer to start the counting.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – After one and a half weeks of waiting?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, I think it relates to the counting centres.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I intervene? You indicated that there was pressure for the counting to be done in Madang. Where was that that pressure coming from?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – It came from the previous governor

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you are saying that the previous governor was interfering with the elections in Madang?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, well let's dig into that. We understand that in 2012 there was an invasion of the counting room by certain individuals that changed the results of the counting in Madang. Do you have any knowledge of that? Can you expound for the committee?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I'm not familiar with that, Chair, because I wasn't there.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – But you were saying that in the recent election the former governor was interfering. Was it just Bogia or all other districts?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Just Bogia.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – It's interesting to note that you are the only one present and none of the provincial election steering committee members are here, PPC is not here, nobody from the

provincial administration is here. Can you tell the committee if that is deliberate on their part not to be here?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I can't say anything on that because –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I assume that the letter from the committee which was signed by myself went to you, the provincial administration and the election steering committee and I would have expected to see a full bench in front of the committee but I do not. Do you have any idea why they are not here?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright, I think the committee will specifically summon the provincial administration to be here because listening to the other provinces, the public servants in the other provinces did everything possible to run elections in a way that public servants are expected to do. But somehow in Madang it would appear on the face of it that the public servants were behaving differently, the people were behaving differently and there was undue influence in the conduct of the elections in Madang which you are just admitting now. Is that correct?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir, I will not. I think it's only in Bogia.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Why Bogia?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – I have no idea, sir.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright, well we'll reserve those questions. We will be summoning the administration to come before us and if they are watching from Madang then we are here to make sure that the people of Madang and for that matter people of Papua New Guinea are able to vote in an election in a free and fair manner. It seems the administration in many provinces went out of their way to make it happen and in Madang it seems that you were fighting against the administration to make it happen so we would like to understand why one provincial administration behaved differently contrary to the conduct of public servants in other

parts of the country. Anyway, those are my comments, obviously, you can't answer them. Thank you.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you very much, Mr Navi.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. My last question. Mr Navi, with your vast experience obviously you were having political pressure like in the case of counting site in Bogia. It took one and half weeks to decide. I'm sure you were having a lot pressure. If the law was such that you would disclose those pressures during that time, would that give you more armamentarium to go to the media and say, 'dispela man em pressurim mi, I am the legally appointed authority to decide where the counting is.' If the law was sufficient to protect you, would you have made a public statement in the media and say dispela candidate pressurim mi long movim dispela counting site i go long Madang. Would that have helped?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, I believe so.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You don't have it now? The law does not provide for you?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – No, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you are exposed to political pressure and everything? Do you think that that is one thing around the country that is making elections not as democratic as they should be?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, I believe so.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The officials are receiving too much pressure by the candidates, their supporters, sitting members, security officers and et cetera?

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Yes, sir.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Navi, for representing Madang to the committee and all the best in your personal endeavors as a public servant and on behalf of the

committee I thank you for your services. Thank you also for turning up yourself even though we asked others to come but we appreciate your presence and insight in successfully managing the elections in 2022.

**Mr SPONSA NAVI** – Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – We will now go to West Sepik Province. Tenk yu long yupela kam, Mr CONRAD TILAU, Provincial Administrator na Ms Salote Kai, the election manageress from Sandaun, we welcome you.

You have seen the dynamics of our questions, et cetera.

Sorry, thank you, Mr Navi, for the written submission, we really appreciate it and well done.

And, thank you, Mr Tilan, for also doing a submission for the committee, it really helps a lot. We will now give you the opportunity to share your story. What happened in the 2022 Elections?

## **WEST SEPIK PROVINCE**

### **Provincial Administrator-West Sepik**

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** (Provincial Administrator -West Sepik) – Thank you, Committee Chairman Honourable Allan Bird, Deputy Chairman Sir Puka Temu, Honourable Robert Naguri, and other committee members for giving us the privilege to share our experiences in the 2022 Elections. We have given you a submission and I will just briefly touch on the issue.

The elections in West Sepik went fairly smoothly and we did not experience any major hiccups. We had 164 000 voters who enrolled and out of that 138 000 actually cast their votes, 26 000 didn't vote which is about 16 percent so I think the election was alright.

The issues that we encountered in the province were related to enrolment, it did not happen throughout the province but in certain areas only so it caused a few hiccups, however, it was managed. I think that one of the ways that we can address this is to ensure that our public servants can do the enrolments. In our administrative structure, we have ward development officers and they can do the enrolments for us in consultation with the ward recorders. If we can get this done now we do not face so many issues with that later on.

We are also in the process of rolling out our ward recorder books so, hopefully, come 2027 we should have updated information on the people in the ward.

The other issue that we encountered was in relation to security personnel deployment. I believe the coordination of security personnel deployment was not good because in some of our polling booths, there were no security personnel on the ground.

We also had issues of security forces who were paid directly from the headquarters but some of them never turned up for the actual deployment to the polling areas. So, these are internal issues that I think the security forces themselves should try to address but it should be in consultation with the provincial election steering committee.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – In your view, Mr Tilan, why didn't they turn up?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – I am not really sure because they were mostly handled by the security force headquarters themselves.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But they were not part of the election steering committee?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – They were part of it, the PPC was part of the steering committee including the Defence Force and CS but they gave all sorts of reasons. They only selected certain number of personnel and others were left out. I think it was an internal issue of the security forces themselves.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Continue.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Okay, the other issues that we did not have much difficulties was with logistics. In many parts of West Sepik where there's no road links, for instance remote areas like Telefomin district and some parts of Nuku, we had to wait for the chopper to fly in and move the boxes around. At one stage we had to keep the regional ballot boxes in Telefomin and Nuku for some time.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – The chairman would like to ask you a question.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Administrator. I'm just being consistent with some of the questions we've asked other provincial administrations in relation to the issue of payment to the security forces by Waigani, and we just heard from Madang. Madang and East Sepik,

had to pay the Security Forces directly. In fact, we are hearing different things from different administrations so obviously there's no consistency.

In your opinion, if you as the head of the province, a section 32 officer, if you had the money in your accounts and you were paying the security force personnel directly, do you think that would have changed the way they were behaving in terms of how they provide security in the polling places?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Chair, I agree; if we had the money I think we could have managed it properly.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, so that would also go for logistics. You would take care of logistics yourself instead of waiting for someone else to come in and assist with the logistics. So, in both instances, if the money was remitted from consolidated accounts in Waigani directly to West Sepik Provincial Government and it was in your trust account where you and the provincial election steering committee would decide on how those funds were to be expended, do you think that would make a difference in these particular areas that you are highlighting?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Chair, it totally would make a difference, that's correct.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, please proceed.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – The other issues that I think that need to be addressed are the roles and responsibilities of the steering committee. I think they need to be given a bit more authority dealing with these things we are talking about in terms of making sure that we make a decision on how the money is spent.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Obviously, the same request was made by East Sepik and Morobe and these was made by almost every other provincial election steering committee. However, we just heard from Madang and it is the first time we hearing from a provincial administration that the provincial election steering committee was being influenced by someone from outside, in fact a sitting governor. If the committee was to recommend that the powers are given to the provincial election steering committee, how do we insulate the provincial elections steering committee from political influence, particularly from the sitting members? How do we do that?

And then we've got Administrator for East Sepik sitting there and we haven't got Madang but, Morobe is listening.

We got someone from Morobe here so they will take this into consideration because as a committee we are inclined to give more powers to the provincial elections committee. However, we need to safeguard the provincial elections steering committee from incidents such as what we have just heard from Madang, so perhaps continue to do your presentation.

In the case of East Sepik, I have got a very strong provincial administrator so in fact he won't listen to any politician including myself which is a good thing. But we need to figure out how we can in terms of structurally protecting the integrity of the provincial election steering committee. I am just putting it out there and if there are other provincial administrators who are watching these proceedings from around the country, please provide us some written ways forward. We would like to and we are inclined to empower the provincial election steering committee in our recommendations. However, given the revelations from Madang it gives cause to pause for a minute and have another think. But yupela helpim mipela, yupela gat sampela tingting? Provincial administrator, West Sepik, sapos yu yet gat sampela tingting, Madang, Morobe i sindaun stap and the others from around the country who are listening in, please provide us some feedback.

Thank you, you may continue.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you Chair, what I am referring to is something to do with logistics and all that, maybe certain powers can be still maintained by the Electoral Commission so –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If I may, you mentioned that the security forces for whatever reasons did not turn up at certain polling places. Sapos sampela man i peim, i no yu na provincial election steering committee bilong yu but ol narapela man i peim allowances bilong ol na ol tokim ol no ken go long dispela hap, don't provide security here and there but provide extra security over here, em olsem – I am just thinking out loud. Yu save man em laik bagarapim election long laik bilong em na i gat sampela kain control we em i ken extertim through long – I am just sort of hinting at that to help you think because our role here is try to ensure that future elections are conducted in a way that our people will have confidence in the outcomes, hence our inquiry into the conduct of the elections.

You have just provided an interesting new insight that I am interested in so first of all, sapos control bilong payment bilong ol allowances bilong security forces em stap wantaim yu then that gives you some control over where they are deployed and how they respond because they know you are paying their allowances and not some guy in Moresby. That leads us to the next question; how do we ensure that you and your provincial election steering committee are the only ones that have control over the conduct of the elections and not outside influence? So, you just think about that and you may proceed.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you Chair, yes, it’s a very interesting issue but it depends on the people who are in the system to make sure that we don’t listen to outside influence. In our case we didn’t have any issues with outside influence and the committee was left to do its job. It can happen as long as we get the right people to manage the office and don’t listen to other people because we believe that when the candidates approach us, we shouldn’t align ourselves to them but rather conduct the election for them in a more impartial way then we will see good outcome and result.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Tilan, when going through your report you have a very good set of recommendations beginning with a conclusion. May I ask you to share your recommendations and the conclusion with the committee and the country because some of them are very good? I will allow you to focus on your conclusions and recommendations. Please proceed.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I will start with the conclusion. Without electoral integrity, leaders and officials lack accountability to the public, confidence in the election results is weak and the Government lacks necessary legitimacy.

Integrity depends on public confidence in electoral and political processes. It is not enough to reform institutions, citizens and to be convinced that changes are real and deserve their confidence. To ensure that elections have integrity, other factors outside of the electoral institution’s terms need to be taken into account and strengthened.

On behalf of the West Sepik Administration, I commend the Special Parliamentary Committee on Election-related matters for creating avenue for the voice of the key players of elections to be heard.

I wish the Committee a successful review and look forward to certain changes in the election process and procedures.



I have stated a few recommendations below for the Committee and there are as follows;

(1.1) Post Election Period. – Development of strategies must be through collaboration where all stakeholders need to be working together to develop strategies.

(1.2) Reforms like boundary review should be done a year before and not in the year of the elections.

(1.3) Review of each election activity must be done after every activity and it must be ongoing exercise.

(2.1) Planning, budget and funding must be done accordingly and funds to be sent directly to the provinces. The elections recurrent budget must be gazetted and should not be captured to any changes to avoid inconvenience. That is things like the nomination dates and so forth. This is some of the things that can affect the conduct of elections.

Operational work plan must be monitored by an external partner to ensure that budgeted items are expended accordingly and that is very important to us. Somebody must be observant to check we are spending money correctly.

(2.2) Training – candidates should make it their business to train their scrutineers on the election process and procedures. One issue that appears regularly is that scrutineers sometimes don't know their job so they unnecessarily cause a lot of hiccups.

(2.3) Information on pre-election period – voters information to be made a pre-requisite activity with timely funding.

This must be done through the PAC and for each registration, Form 11 should be reviewed since the current is like a test of literacy so this can be reviewed to make it simpler.

The election managers to be appointed permanent returning officers for the election common roll update exercise annually so that the centralized database systems can be developed locally and should be a thing for the NID for verification. Village record books should be used as a main document for the verification and the enrolment cycle must be complemented in spite of any factors. So, basically these are something that we can improve on.

For the election period, recommendations and nomination, we should set a nomination quota.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What do you mean?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – I mean there should be some kind of a criteria on the candidates because right now we are saying it's free for anybody to nominate so many people from different works of life try to nominate to become a leader.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How many candidates did you have in the last election, Ms Kai?

**Election Manager- West Sepik**

**Ms SALOTE KAI** (Election Manager – West Sepik) – Thank you Chairman. For the provincial seat we had 53 candidates.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How about the other seats?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – We had 29 candidates for Vanimo-Green, 14 candidates for Nuku and about the same for Telefomin so, most were below 20 candidates and the provincial was the highest with 53 candidates.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Would you have an analysis as to why there were so many candidates for the regional seat?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – For most, they saw it as an opportunity to contest and it was something that they could afford so it has always been the case for the West Sepik where we have most candidates contesting for the provincial seat than the open electorates. In 2012, we had 32 candidates and then in 2017, we had 42 candidates and in 2022, we had 53 candidates, so it keeps going up every election.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – From our information, I think in Oro province some of the seats went over or close to 100 candidates so I think you've got similar concerns. Thank you, Madam.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Tilan, continue on the election nomination.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you, Sir. A review on the nomination forms, I think we can also look at. That is something that the Electoral Commission can do. The nomination requirements should be supported with documents of reference.

So, what we are saying here is that if they are nominees then we need to see some supporting documents attached.

For polling, the rates for the polling officials needs to be reviewed and increased. I think this is something that we can try and do to avoid the issue of bribery and other corrupt practices that happened during elections.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Do you think they're very low at the moment? What is the rate today?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – The presiding officers are paid K97 per day compared to the counting officials who were paid K16 per hour. Polling officials are more lowly paid then the temporary election workers.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN**– Why is that different?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – It's because we are following their DPM approved rates. The rates are approved by the Department of Personnel Management.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That's part of the job description (JD) process where certain officials were paid a different rate. You're recommending a review upwards.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – If the counting officials are paid on an hourly rate, would it not be in their interest to extend and prolong counting as long as possible, Ms Kai?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Obviously they can do that.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Obviously? In your experience has that occurred?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Not really, if the supervisors were in control then it's on the call of the supervisors to decide how long the counting should go.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – In some of the instances in West Sepik, how long did the counting go on for.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – I believe the only electorate that went beyond the return of writs date was the provincial seat.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How many days was that?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Almost 21 days.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you had 21 days of total counting. How many hours were they counting for, was it ten, twelve hours?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Mostly it was eight hours with two shifts. One shift finishes after eight hours and then the others takes over after the other shift is over

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So sixteen hours a day counting for twenty-one days. Thank you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Ms Kai, what are your outstanding commitments with regards to officials' allowances, are there any outstanding or have you cleared them all?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – The outstanding we have is the polling allowances. We're currently doing them, those are the ones with bank rejects and no account numbers so we are referring them back to the bank to get their accounts sorted out and we are sorting them out through the Kundupe system that we have. So it's progressing well.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Who is providing the funding, the Electoral Commission or the Provincial Administration?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – The Electoral Commission.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Continue, Mr Tilan

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you, Chair. The polling locations should be given GPS locations so we can plot those locations accurately and monitor what's happening there.

The counting period should be maintained on 21 days, a system to be developed to capture the election cycle where electronic records of all status of elections are captured from start to finish.

The other recommendation is the funding of security personnel be given to the respective PPCs. It was a sad situation when PPC had no money to provide logistics for his policemen.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did the Sandaun provincial government provide any funding for security to the police? During your budget deliberations, prior here.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Chair, yes we were able to provide – not a big budget, but some money was provided to assist.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How many days of polling did you have per polling site?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – We had 14 polling days for the rural LLG's and for the urban LLG's we had one-day polling. However, it didn't work well for my team because of the population, we had more registered voters in those urban wards so we had to proceed onto the next day.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did you request for an extra day?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, I did.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – And that was allowed. So on average, how many days would you recommend for urban based polling?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Seven days would be sufficient for them

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you Mr Tilan. I think that concludes the recommendations that you had. So, in terms of the common roll and enrollment, you are telling the community that you are satisfied that the number of people who enrolled and voted was quite high. When compared with others, they enrolled only 50 per cent. In West Sepik Province, you had a higher enrolment and turn up. What made people to take ownership to go and vote?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Generally, majority of people in West Sepik Province are peace-loving and they listened to government programmes and tried to precipitate. That is one of the reasons for the high turnout during polling. Another reason was the accessibility of polling places.

There were also two other issues that I want to highlight here in relation to awareness. In previous elections, most of the awareness is transmitted through the local news stations, especially NBC. During this election period, NBC did not broadcast into the rural areas. We believe that there was some money given to NBC to undertake that. Most of the awareness were conducted through the Karai Service, they never assisted the local stations to –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – NBC was given K10 million by the government. You were right about that. What you are saying is that they did not operate in West Sepik Province?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – That is correct, Mr Chairman. They never tried to help the provincial stations to establish their transmitters in the districts so that we can get the message across to the people in the districts. That was an issue that we tried to raise with NBC but they never responded to it. Awareness about the government programs and elections did not reach many people in the rural areas because the only way we can reach them is through radio.

Another issue we faced was the interference from candidates. Many candidates were writing petitions to stop counting when it was happening. In our province, we never listen to them so we allowed counting to continue.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you told the candidates that you were not subject to listen to their directives and you used your legal powers to continue on. In what areas particularly were they interfering with?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – It was about the administration and the conduct of the elections and counting venues. It was also about their own internal issues.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Any problems on the appointment of returning officers, especially with candidates who were not happy with the returning officer in Vanimo-Green or Aitape-Lumi or Nuku?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Not really. We did not have any problems.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How did you appoint returning officers in West Sepik Province? In other places there were bitter complaints because returning officers were aligned with candidates. Were these concerns not raised in West Sepik?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Not really. We did not experience much issue with the appointment of returning officers. All of the returning officers were recommended by the steering committee to the Electoral Commission.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did you conduct workshops for the candidates and their scrutineers like what was done in Goroka? In your recommendation, you recommend that the candidate should be responsible for educating their scrutineers, whereas some people wanted the Electoral Commission to provide pamphlets, regulations and rules.

Some candidates had no idea about the rules and you are recommending that candidates should be responsible for educating their scrutineers? How was it done in West Sepik Province?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – We had workshops for the scrutineers to try to get to know and understand their roles and responsibilities.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – But they didn't turn up?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – They did.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – They did?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Yes. We had workshops there so they were able to be given the rundown on what is the responsibility when it comes to casting votes and all that so they don't have to interfere too much.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you had the workshops in each of the district headquarters?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Yes.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So there was access for them to come?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – That’s correct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So overall, apart from the recommendations that you have highlighted, overall you are saying that West Sepik election went smoothly. What do you think is the reason? Because we are a diverse population with different cultures, languages and so the question is maybe we don’t have to have a blanket solution for the whole country. We may have to vary some of these policies, regulations and the laws because of the diversity that we have. Therefore, the question for West Sepik, what made it successful in your view as a chair of the Provincial Election Steering Committee? And Ms Kai you can come in too with your view.

What made your job easier in 2022 and therefore the success of the election?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you, Deputy Chairman. I put it down to, firstly, the people in West Sepik. Many people live in the remote areas so with limitation in road networks and all that, they don’t get much outside influence so it’s best to mobilise people to get involved in all sorts of issues so simply that’s one of the reasons why. People keep to themselves so you don’t find a lot of election-related issues and not much influence from the people in town over those in the rural areas. That’s one of the reasons why we didn’t see this kind of thing happening. Maybe later on as we open the roads, we may encounter this kind of problems.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So you’re saying that the West Sepik culture is pretty much intact because of the isolation from outside influence so people are still hanging onto their cultural values and those are good values essentially and that translates into the election. That’s what you’re saying?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – I guess so, yes, that is my view and also, I think one other reason is people were given the opportunity to cast their votes. If they didn’t then there would have been a lot of problems. So, I think these are the two issues, but Ms Kai can also maybe highlight some of the issues or some of the things that she encountered during her time as election manager.



**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Ms Kai, how long have you been election manager?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Deputy Chairman, this is my first election as an election manager but I've been with the commission since 2011 as an assistant election manager.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Very good. You've heard Chairman and the PA on the issues and I'm sure you both have put together the recommendations. Can you advise the committee on some of your observations as the election manager on a very difficult election throughout the country last time? Also from the gender side, your observations on how did you manage the female voting? Did you have special lines or did you have fast lanes? Can you comment on some of those observations and your experiences?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Thank you. I should acknowledge that the beauty of our success is team work and collaboration. So, from the start, as an election manager, I took the lead in ensuring that the PESC is up and running and we should know what we are there to do as a team, and all committee members need to know what our role is towards this important event that is coming up. I had a good response from my team as a manager and former officer to PESC. The team leader was always there for the team, the chairman and I also had a good PPC, the former PPC was very responsive to our team.

So information was power to the team and we felt that if we took charge from the start we will deliver a successful election for West Sepik. PESC has approved that PPC and the team should go ahead so PPC plus my returning officers, the field officers, went ahead and did awareness and we did inform the people that not everybody that are enrolled will be on the roll.

Ballot papers are distributed as per the voter population so if you don't have your name on the roll we can't do much and you don't vote on the polling day. Those information went ahead and the assistant returning officers took the lead to ensure this is conducted at the LLG level.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – How far did you go with the awareness by the ROs?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – I should say it went as far as the LLG level, like the PA had mentioned we've got the ward development officers that are part of the team as well so they were able to inform their respective wards as well.

During the enrolment update we were engaging ward councillors as ward enrolment committee, so they were also informed that these are some of the likely challenges that we will encounter in the coming election.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Your observations on gender issues, how did you manage them? You say that PPC was very collaborative but his policemen never turned up to some of the sites which our chairman was complaining about.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, to decide where to go is his responsibility so I don't have much to say but we do identify the hotspot areas which we emphasized is very much under that there should be more concentration on those areas because we are likely to have disturbance if we don't have enough manpower there.

From my records I believe most of the hotspot areas were covered so that was one of the reasons why we did not have a lot of election violence.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What were your hotspot criteria and why did you label this as a hotspot?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Mainly it is from previous election observations where we had confrontation with polling officials, people were harassed and also with the assessment of current events that's happening around the wards. If we had more homebrew issues in that area then we beef up security there so we were more like depending on the LLG managers who were mostly our assistant returning officers to give us most of those information so we based our planning on that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Very good, continue.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – I'd like to bring to the attention of the committee that one of the reason why we didn't have a good enrolment update was because the enrolment cycle was incomplete. As per my submission to the committee you'll realize that my discussion is centred on the election cycle. An election is a cyclical event, it's not just one-off. So obviously if we miss out on one stage of the cycle it will definitely affect the output.

My recommendations on some of the areas, I believe most of them have been mentioned by my colleagues, but there's one particular one. I've suggested that we should have a system in place, a management tool, which we should utilize for the planning stage until the conclusion of the election. If there are reviews and reports that we are to produce for our superiors and the Parliament then that should be the tool we utilize to extract information to support our recommendations.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Can I just get some clarification because from some of your colleagues from other provinces, we did encounter similar responses. Now, obviously in every election, you produce reports to your superiors and the impression we got was that they sort of die a natural death. So internally within the Electoral Commission, what sort of process do you have where valuable feedback such as what you have just given to the Committee is fed into your system and is actually utilized to review and improve your processes and procedure? How much of that has actually happened in the past?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – We have observed gradual change I should say and we have done reporting on areas that need changes and attention.

One of the improvements would be the gender-split roll that we are now using, where in the past we were using one roll where males and females all go to the same poll clerk and get their names checked off to vote. So, we have decided to make it more convenient by setting the gender split roll to have women's data separately done from the men's data.

I should say that most of our reporting is done manually as it is, of which we have reviews after every election where our superiors take note of some recommendations –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Which superiors in particular take carriage of these recommendations from yourself and your colleague members around the country?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – We mainly report to the director of operations and in all the reviews we have the senior management present which is led by the commissioner, deputy commissioner, and all the directors.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The issues around the electoral roll, that has been in existence for a number of decades, has that been fed through to this particular process that you are describing now?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, we have been informing them.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Has there been any feedback in terms of trying to fix the electoral roll?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes. Previously all the enrolment was collected manually and then we sent all the enrolment forms down to the headquarters to be processed by DPOs in Port Moresby. From our recommendations, they have been considered so now all the processing is done in the province and no longer in the headquarters. Some of these are recommendations and ways forward that we have suggested to the team from the reviews.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We have heard from some of your colleague managers in other provinces that they did what you are just describing now, they submitted the electronic record down to Port Moresby, and somewhere in between the information from the province did not get to the central registry for the electoral roll. Did you experience anything similar for West Sepik? Did you see gaps in your voter roll registration that you submitted down to Port Moresby?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – I believe some of the issues in particular was the gender split roll that we had because some data on the enrolment did not have gender. So there was no gender for the eligible voter when the roll was printed.

I would recommend we keep the base roll which is the 2022 roll and then we work from there because we have already 167,000 registered voters in West Sepik. So, if we have to do a completely new roll that would be just too much for West Sepik given the geographical setting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So we don't throw the baby out with the bath water; we just improve it.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – I would suggest we improve the current roll that we have.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay, fair enough.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Tilan, what was your budget? How much did you use to conduct the election?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Well according to information, the amount given by the Electoral Commission is K2 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What was your actual budget requested? Ms Kai, you can come in as well.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Thank you Deputy Chairman, our budget was K8.3 million and we were given K2.6 million.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That’s a big cut.

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – That’s a tremendous cut for a province like this.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – That’s from the Electoral Commission, and any support from the provincial government?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, we got a total of K150,000 and that amount was used for logistic support and also security, mainly the auxiliary police because they were not budgeted in the National Budget so, the province had to take that onboard and pay their allowances.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** –Did the the DDAs give some funding?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – I think so Chair, Nuku and Telefomin gave a lot of money.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** –How much did the two districts give?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Below K1 million. Maybe they were looking at about K500,000.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So, probably your total budget is about K5 million and you have requested for K8.5 million but others shifted in and was probably K5 million. And all that money was parked in the provincial election trust account?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – No, Chair. I think from the districts they expended as and when there was a need.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – You allow the CEO's to –

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – That's correct.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – What were the areas that CEO's expended in because the committee is asking for the financial reports from all the elections trust accounts throughout the country by end of this month. We want all the reports. Have you submitted your report to the Electoral Commission yet?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, we have submitted the report.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Can we have a copy of that because we are urging all the election mangers and chairmen of the steering committees to complete their reports because funding of the election is a very expensive process and accountability is very important. And so, you say that the DDAs provided funding but the CEO and the team expended it in their districts. Is that what you are saying?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – That's correct, I think they spent more on logistics and also looking after the security personnel and paying extra allowances for keeping them.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Do you think that should be allowed in the future or all the funds should be coming under the trust account and the trust instrument decides how to expend the funds?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Chair, for accountability purposes I think everything should go to one account so that it is easier to manage, control and report on.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – This question will go to Ms Kai and Mr Navi, you obviously have been listening in. The Electoral Commission receives K311 million for this election and you know all the provinces were funded parts of it. In the construction of the election budget by the Electoral Commission this K311 million that they received, did you have any input Ms. Kai into that budget formulation?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Thank you, Chair. Yes, I have been submitting the budget to my operations manager.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay I should have clarified, my apologies. When you submitted your request for funding and then the total budget was put together, did you and the other managers have a look at the total budget to understand what it was all used for?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – No.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So that was formulated without your knowledge. Who actually sits down and adds the number and comes up with say K400 million and they go to National Government and NEC cuts them back to say K311 million? Who does the prioritizing of what happens to that K311 million?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – That’s normally done at the headquarters. The operations managers and the directors do that and so after our budget is submitted, we don’t have any more input in it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So your head office gave you K2.5 million. Did they pay for anything else?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, they did

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – What did they pay for?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – The returning officers and the assistant returning officers vehicles engaged for the entire election period.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Those were hired vehicles; how many vehicles were hired during these days for the elections?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – A total of 23 were assigned to ROs and the AROs in West Sepik excluding the polling and the counting.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – The Electoral Commission hired 23 vehicles in West Sepik so that means for the country as a whole they hired 400 vehicles for that period. We are just assuming it is 20 vehicles per province. So, 400 vehicles were hired during that period approximately. How many days were these vehicles engaged for, is it the entire election period?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Not the entire election period but returning officers were given 90 days, which is –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Ninety days which is three months, so three months hire for 20 vehicles

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – For the returning officers would be five because we have five electorates in West Sepik. So five vehicles for 90 days and for the AROs there are 19 of them so it would be almost 60 days which is two months for the –

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sixty days, 20 vehicles and how much per day is it? K1000 per day?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – The DPM approved rate is K800 per day.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Does the Electoral Commission pay K800 per day?

**Ms SALOTE KAI** – Yes, we pay K800.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So K800 per day is K1600 per day for 60 days. Is that normal and does the Electoral Commission do all that? What about the provincial government, Mr Tilau. Do you assign any of the existing provincial government vehicles? Because I assume that when



an election happens most of the public servants stop work and they are engaged in the election period. Am I correct?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Sir that's correct. We allocated the district vehicles to the returning officers but unfortunately the CEOs and the district administrators have not been looking after the vehicles well and many of them were not road worthy. But in actual fact, I understand that the vehicles allocated by the provincial and district must be used by the returning officers so we cut down on the cost. But unfortunately, the vehicles were not in working conditions so the Electoral Commission had to hire.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – So if the money was provided directly to you, you would have some control over firstly, how many vehicles are engaged because you would be looking at the full number of vehicles and not someone from Moresby determining it.

Secondly, the allowances; would it be possible that you paid some allowances to security personnel and then the security personnel get a second lot of allowances for the same period paid by say Waigani, does that happen? They can receive two lots of allowances?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Chairman, that could have happened too because what was paid from Port Moresby is through their salary to the bank accounts.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – You have no visibility?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – No visibility.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Mr Tilan, how many hire-vehicle companies are in West Sepik?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – We have about three or four, not many.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So all those vehicles that were hired would be spread out or one particular company managed to win the bid? How did you manage the process of the procurement of the many hired vehicles? What was the process?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – We have three or four but they don't have many vehicles so naturally it will be hired from all companies. One company does not have all the vehicles so you may get four from the other one and three from the other one, so something like that.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So how do you process it in terms of the procurement requirements?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – It was done through the Electoral Commission. So I think they got outstations and sent it to the Electoral Commission to pay for the hire of those vehicles.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Did the Police also have hired vehicles as well apart from the returning officers?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – I think they had some hired vehicles.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Do you know how many?

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – No, but we assisted them with one vehicle from the administration to help the Police to do their job.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – So you agree that there are areas that we really haven't got much control over and the process prescribed through the Public Finance Management Act are not fully complied with; herefore, the issues of credibility, integrity, transparency and accountability are in question?

You did say in your conclusion, and that is why I asked you to read your conclusion and recommendations that electoral integrity is key to the entire process. Integrity istap, credibility long leadership government bai istap. Sapos integrity ino stap long olgeta process bilong yumi to manage the elections from planning to all the stages, em bai yumi popaia along the way.

As experienced public servants in managing elections, the set of recommendations that you have set are acceptable. I want to come back to the both of you.

Overall, Ms Kai and Mr Tilan, if there were three things that West Sepik would strongly recommend to the committee so that the 2027 Elections will be better in West Sepik than what you had experienced, what would those be? So that in 2027, you can come back to the committee and say because of these improvements, we did much better than 2022.

**Mr CONRAD TILAU** – Thank you Chair. I would recommend the following; (1) We need good awareness. We need to get our radio network up and running properly so awareness must go to our people in the rural areas; (2) We must get the ward rolls updated correctly and properly; (3) the security personnel need to be coordinated well so that we can ensure –

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Tilan. I am actually very keen on your ward roll update recommendation.

Yesterday, the Provisional Administrator for East Sepik told us something that was special to me as a member of the committee and that is, they are already taking action. I think they have already recommended and maybe already purchased. Em igat computer. They are going to go down and start working on it. I think they've got 186 wards and he is going to buy 667 of those assets to start with.

Can you collaborate with the East Sepik Provincial Administrator so that the greater Sepik in the country is doing something special at the ward level with ward recording?

Let's create a system with integrity and start next year so you convince provincial governments to budget because somebody must take the leadership in this country. I'm really impressed with the presentation of East Sepik Provisional Administrator and his team that he's doing something active already while we are just talking and planning and time pinis. Let's do those things that are doable and let's not wait for the Electoral Commission because they got too many big things to worry about.

With the powers and experiences that you have as provincial administrators, please go and convince your governors to provide for us to look at the bottom line approach to data cleansing and let our data systems in the country to talk to each other.

The population census is going to come next year. That's for the big picture as to how big the population is in the country, what is the budget that we must prepare and what policies. But for this election committee, how many 18 years old plus the integrity of the common roll is first priority.

So if there is a provincial administration like what the East Sepik administrator has done to just take the lead role going back to ward level, integrity of the ward recorder, allow positions of ward recorder in your administration, put them on the payroll, give them the infrastructure to do the updating because people are dying every day and people are being born every day and they are turning 18 years every day. You know, they don't die every five years so the ward

updates must be a living phenomenon and the administrator takes the leadership, em government bai sapotim yu.

Mr Tilan, PA, my recommendation is to work with your counterpart in East Sepik and the greater Sepik. You got a good leadership in the provinces. I look for a place in this country where leadership is provided and I think we have an opportunity.

As the Deputy Chairman, my greater interest is the common roll issue. We've been talking about this for a long time. Some of us are getting old now. So the two PAs, East Sepik and West Sepik, yu tupela ino young more, we are on the sunset side so while you are there, please, do something. Time bilong toktok em pinis ya. Inap long toktok. We know what can be done.

So I strongly recommend that before he recommends this report to the Parliament there are two provinces in the country that are really taking the bull by the horn and addressing the core issue of the integrity of the of the common roll. That would be my strong recommendation today while we have an administrator who has taken action. Because you two PAs are close together, I am recommending that you should do it together and then we tell your story. Not many good stories in this country anymore, not many good songs are being sung in this country anymore. I want to tell a good story in this country.

I want to see somebody pick it up. As a Deputy Chairman coming in and sitting together with all the experience and professionals, I support the public service. I'm a fully-bred public servant and I'm still a public servant. I thought I was a politician but I'm still a public servant and we need more of that. I believe in the integrity of the public service, politics bagarapim planti samting.

If we can through the leadership of the public service like what the East Sepik Provincial Administrator has done and I know his governor will support him. I know many governors here will support their provincial administrators and I will also recommend to my governor after I go back tonight. I will also sit down with my governor and we will look at getting the infrastructure right because it's an IT era now. Taim bilong filim form na – PA yu tok dispela form it's like a literature training program, planti question istap, planti samting even our voters can't understand. Sometimes I don't even understand those questions.

I look forward to a time –myself and Chairman were sharing a story at breakfast – where I will walk in, push my ID and the electoral ballot paper will come out in front of me, because it reads that that's Puka Temu, one person, one vote. Push it in, ballot paper comes out, I press 1, 2 and 3 and it goes back. If another person pretends to be Puka Temu, the computer won't allow the ballot paper to come out. I think that technology is available. I make this statement

because I'm seeing the light at the end of the tunnel and because of the actions some of your public servant leaders are taking in the frontline.

I also support the call for provincial governments to take charge and we define by law the powers and responsibilities and functions in this electoral process, and what goes to the provincial governments and what should remain at Waigani level. I wanted to make those comments because I want to excite some of you to be proud.

Remove your hat, Mr Tilan, as a Provincial Administrator, Ms Kai, remove your hat as an election manager, and put on your hat as a Papua New Guinean citizen. And I call upon every citizen, if you are CEO, provincial administrator or MD of a statutory body, planti taim yumi abiusim positions but humbly put in your hat as a citizen of this country then I think our stars will align as a nation.

I look forward to your continued input in the process but don't stop today, Mr Navi, Ms Kai, you are in charge of this important process and I couldn't agree more with your conclusion that integrity of the election process is key. How do we arrive there? That's what we are striving for because everything falls on line with integrity of the election process. We can stand up in the global arena and paitim boros because we came out of the process that recognizes that.

So in conclusion, I want to thank you. I really appreciate your input and also thank you for your contribution in participating in our young nation. Thank you for coming to this regional consultation and I urge you not to stop, keep on managing the processes that you have been obliged to manage.

I will allow the Chairman to make additional comments and then we will conclude and suspend for lunch.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Mr Chairman, can I make a comment before you conclude?

This is just a general comment to the committee and also to the general public. Our committee is trying to give more administrative and financial powers to the provincial election steering committees in the future. We are working to decentralize more powers down to the province so that you can manage on your own. We know that you all can do it at the provincial level.

One way of doing this is to be confident that the provincial election steering committees are independent and free from political influences or any other outside influences. We all know that provincial administrators are the chairperson of the provincial election steering committees. Some provincial administrators are very professional in how they do their jobs. They work with their governors and they know their boundaries. It is just a few that do not.

As to why we have this problem in Madang, during the eve of the elections, about two or three months before the elections, our provincial administrator was appointed permanently. This is the type of situation we need to avoid.

In our recommendation, we would like to see that in the year leading up to elections, we should not be doing unnecessary changes to the administrative heads of the provinces. To avoid political influences, we also need somebody on the ground who understands that province, its people and its public servants. We again talk about integrity so everything falls in line. If we have somebody appointed on the eve of elections to be the chairman of the committee that is there to oversee the most important occasion in the democracy of a country, that puts everything into question.

Madang Province had heavy political influence in the last elections. My recommendation to the committee is that we should look at the administrative heads of the provinces to be independent of political influences because they are the chair persons of the provincial election steering committees.

Thank you Mr Chairman and Deputy Chairman.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Deputy Chairman and the Honourable Robert Naguri. It is very refreshing to see something going well and then to look across and see the issues we have in Madang.

My personal conclusion as to why the Madang administration is not here today is because they were complacent in trying to bow down to political influences in the last election. No matter, we will summon them because we have those powers.

I like the conclusion by the West Sepik Province. Yupela em las provins na yupela kamap with a piece of gold. The integrity of the elections underpins everything that we do. Personally for me as the Governor of East Sepik representing its people, I worry about my own mandate. When people question my mandate, mi save pilim nogut stret bikos mi kam long hausman ya. Planti bilong mipela ol Sepik long East na West wantaim, mipela ikam long hausman. Your integrity is never questioned taim yu kamaut long hausman.

When people question that, you begin to look around and wonder why people are questioning this. Personally for me, it is a big issue about the integrity of my appointment by the people of East Sepik Province and I take that very seriously.

We have just come from the Highlands and if you look at the testimony, two provinces did not turn up. We later found out that they were threatened so they did not turn up to the committee to give evidence. I want to inform the people from these two provinces, Papua New

Guinea is made up of more than 850 tribes, na yu husait wanpela tribe we pasin bilong yu igo karangi liklik, and you want to impose your values on the rest of us, I am telling you now that you cannot. Mipela sampela ol provinses mipela laikim gutpela pasin imas kirap bek.

We want to restore the values that underpin our country. We're not going to give into violence and intimidation and external influences. Em nogat because we owe it to our people who currently exist and we owe it those who are not yet born to do the right thing. And that's what we are here for and I know many Papua New Guineans are, you know they look at this process with disdain na contempt na tok ol ba mekim wanem?

You know some of us are not in Parliament because we are interested in the position of power, we are there because we want what's best for our people. And you just heard the East Sepik Provincial Administrator yesterday, he will tell you, I don't influence him, I respect him and the administration.

I insist on good governance, transparency and accountability and we practice that but at the same time I respect their professionalism and I expect them to lead. I had a meeting with them about a week ago and that's what I was telling them, I expect them to lead. I expect public servants to lead and you know, my administrator is nodding his head there. I actually give them the responsibility because I understand my role as a law maker.

I don't want to be a cargo cult, delivery member of Parliament, because that's what we are doing now. Mipela ol memba bilong parliament, em wok bilong mipela long karim cargo tasol kam long ples. And where is that demand coming from? It's coming from the voters.

So yupela ol voters tu, change your behaviour. I expect my people in East Sepik to change their behaviour. I expect my people in West Sepik to change their behaviour. Em Conrad sidaun long hia, provincial administrator, I've always looked at East and West Sepik together and I'm glad the Deputy Chairman has used that term 'Greater Sepik' because that's what we want to build. We want to build something that's better.

We might not have the mines, the gold and copper and oil and gas but we're not going to be influenced by money. We want to be influenced by good behaviour and good values; gutpela pasin.

So, I just want to make that statement for Papua New Guineans who are looking in, don't lose hope, don't despair, noken ting olsem mipela olgeta memba mipela wan kain, not all of us are the same. We come from different backgrounds. Mi kam long haus man. And the reason I'm Governor of East Sepik is I have the full support of olgeta haus man inside long East Sepik, that's why I'm governor.

And the great man before me, much greater than me, much greater than most Papua New Guineans, he enjoyed that same privilege. Emi gat sapot bilong olgeta haus man, the founding papa bilong Papua New Guinea.

So, we owe it to the future, all of you. Yupela Papua New Guineans harim stap we yupela experiencim bad elections bifo, you know, this is the first time in our country we have such a committee. And we're here to act as an adjudicator on behalf of people of Papua New Guinea.

We represent Parliament, we don't represent the executive government of James Marape, even though wantaim blessing bilong ol na dispela committee em stap. And we're here because I believe our Prime Minister, James Marape, also would like see an improvement in the elections and we are here representing that view. And you've all been given an opportunity.

I will suspend shortly but after lunch, I think these are the last two provinces from Momase. After lunch we will give opportunity to the greater public in Morobe, yupela sampela kam stap lo hia long kam na presentism evidence. Yupela sampela ol public servants tu sapos yupela laik kam toktok olsem, you know taking the lead from the Deputy Chairman Sir Puka em toktok, we have to behave like Papua New Guineans too sometimes and take the bull by the horn so we'll give you that opportunity.

For now, we've dragged on a bit, it is 12.15p.m., so we're doing better than yesterday. We'll suspend for lunch and we'll see you all back here at 1.30 p.m., if that's okay. Lunch is provided at the back. Thank you all and thank you again Madang wantaem West Sepik. Thank you for that contribution. I now suspend the proceedings until 1.30 p.m. Thank you very much.

*( Inquiry convenes )*

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Let me bring the afternoon session to order and welcome all those viewers who are looking in from outside to the Special Parliamentary Committee on the 2022 General Election but looking at the improvements in elections in general.

We currently have four members of the public who will be assisting us in our deliberation and perhaps adding their own contribution to the session.

I welcome Ms Alewee Michael, President of the Council of women in Morobe Province, Ms Debbie Kais a former candidate for Morobe Province, it's good to see you, Mr Tae Gwambele, former candidate Morobe Province and Mr Steven Moe Church, representative from the Lutheran Church in Morobe Province.

I welcome the four of you. You obviously watched some of the proceedings so you know how this works so perhaps in the interest of the process, I'm going to start with the ladies and



work our way through to the gentlemen and once you give your stories and the time comes for us to ask questions then the committee members will ask whoever they wish to. They may even interrupt you in between to clarify some things for our records.

We'll start with Ms Alewee Michael, please state your name and then you may speak. Press the green button in front of you, you can navigate the microphone if you need too na you can Tokpisin or English, yu laik tok Motu tu em orait em Sir Puka bai understand. Tripela tokples bilong yumi so yu yet how yu laik wokim at least wanpela tokples yu pickim na yu ken contribute. Thank you madam.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

### **President-Morobe Council of Women**

**Ms ALEWEE MICHAEL** (President–Morobe Council of Women) – Thank you. Mi laik kisim dispela taim na tok gutpela avinun long yumi olgeta. Mi hamamas long lukim yupela olgeta kam long here. Sir Puka Temu, mi no niupela long yu, planti taim yumi stap, my brother there, barata bilong yumi white man mipela raun wantaim long planti taim.

Mi sindaun insait long dispela komiti long 2005, 2006 and 2007 election process. Mi lukim oslem komiti ol i save sindaun, ol kisim ples pinis na stretim olgeta samtin, olgeta bipo long election process, that's very good mi lukim. That time I was starting with the committee in 2005 to 2006 and 2007. Planti samtin nau mi lukim emi stap insait long provins bilong yumi. Planti samtin nau yumi harim oslem Palament em i fundim bikpela moni kam in long eleksen.

Long lukim bilong mi, mi mas tok stret oslem bipo provincial administrator, district administrator ol save wok gut na gat gutpela respek, ol i stap klia wantaim man na meri na ol toktok nais wantaim ol. Nogat wanpela problem em i afektim eleksen bipo. Nau long dispela dei, dispela neim district administrator, they are big bosses in the dark glass car. Ol ino save toktok gut long man na meri na ino lukim gut hau ol manager bilong ol perform insait long wanwan LLG. Lukim bilong mi, ol LLG manager taim ol kisim neim manager ol igo stap away long city.

District administrator ino luksawe long dispela whether patrol opisa tu wanem wok ol i makim bikos planti komplain i kamap, bikos man na meri laik votim gavaman but problem bilong mipela nau stap insait long Morobe province, like distrik bilong mi long Nawae distrik planti nem bilong mipela ino stap long common roll, em bikpela issue affectim pipol bilong mipela insait long Lavita na Nawae.

Na mi oslem lida mi volunteer long stap insait na opim dua na tok everybody get in and vote. Yu gat olgeta rait long vote, wai nogat nem bilong yumi, em arguement save kamap long

dispela issue bikos planti man na meri i nogat nem insait long common roll na ol ino take part insait long vote.

Wanpela bikpela samting taim steering committee sindaun long Morobe mi stap tu bipo na mi lukim olsem taim mipela steering committee i sindaun, mipela toktok pinis na mipela go aut, mipela go away na givim wok long ol public servant na mipela sanap na watchim ol ron olsem wanem.

Eleksen igo olsem wanem. Dispela pasin ino stap moa long dispela taim, ol man ino sawe respectim ol meri. Gender, taim ol women's rep or ol lida meri sindaun insait, olgeta system long controllim ol samting insait long komuniti, ol mama mas i stap bikos planti samting ino kamap gut.

Nau mi harim olsem bikpela moni save pundaun long hia. Planti taim nem council em nem mipela ol lida man na meri holim na mipela givim bikpela taim bilong mipela long konrolim dispela ileksen mas go gut, displa ileksen pipol noken kross pait.

Givim mipela taim na servim ol public servant long lukautim ol long kaikai na olgeta samting. Mipela tu ting olsem ol wok meeting go tasol kain olsem mi lida meri na mi mas givim taim long servim ol or tokim komuniti na lukautim ol.

With due respect, lukluk bilong mi insait long district administrator planti i no save long dispela wok bilong em, planti ino save long wokim manager wok, just political appointment or administration mas putim mate bilong ol or ol dispela kain samting na planti system bilong wok i bagarap insait long province.

Mi go insait long tok bilong selectim ol president bilong LLG. Mi ting i moa gutpela olsem pipol imas votim president bikos ol yet mas lukim gut na votim gutpela president, ol makim pes bilong ol na sidaun gut long assembly long karim aut gutpela wok insait long komuniti so ol i ken sidaun gut na hevi i noken i stap.

Nau, mi lukim olsem planti president ol ino save long lidasip. Em ting olsem em i gat moni, cargo na kar na em i ken rausim ol councillors. Turangu ol ples man i ken i go na votim wanpela kain man husait em ino fit long lukautim kominiti na ples, LLG na ward level.

Em wanpela bikpela key issue na narapela tu long makim womens rep. Mi hamamas long Parliament long kamapim Constitution bilong mipela ol meri insait lon 15 Decemba 2013. Sir Puka Temu, i bin stap long dispela taim na ol i bin kamapim dispel Constitution bilong mipela na emi reachim Morobe nao na em i wok antap long dispela, but bikpela hevi i stap insait long ol memba.

Ol memba taim ol i kam, ol ino respectim ol Council of Women insait long province. Taim ol i kam ol mas selectim ol meri we em i wok long hatwok long putim em in order long

kamap memba, putim em insait long network long district authority tasol em i no save long network bilong meri na em ino save long wok tu. Na bikpela issue i stap long district authority wer ino mandated by or appointed by women. So dispela hevi em i bikpela insait long wanwan district na em insait long ol national MP mi lukim ino stret long dispela.

Mi ting dispela law mas kamap gut long dipela we Council of Women mas entitle na em i stap lo pawa lo selectim meri na putim in lo DDA bikos DDA em i lukautim hamaspla LLG, meri, pikinini na olgeta i sa kam in lo dispel area.

Dispela meri em bai fit lo toktok bikos em i save gut turu long wok na i stap insait long memba bilong provincial Council of women. Antap long dipela mi lukim olsem gavana bilong mipela, Mr Luther Wenge i wok long wokim samting stret nau. Kain olsem nau mi president long Council of women, em i putim mi through long assembly na mi gat bikpela bilip tru long dispela kain pasin mas stap insait long district na LLG wantaim.

So, askim bilong mi long floor i go long olgeta MP noken makim wantok, susa, cousin or mate bilong em go insait long ward bikos em bai bagarapim planti samting long district all the way i go long LLG level.

Lon lukluk bilong mi ol district administrator i gat rait long lukim gut how wok i kamap, ileksen proses i olsem wanem, i orait or nogat? Wanpela sumtin em ol manager na district administrator ol mas trainim ol scrutineer gut tru long lukautim na gaidim dispela ileksen. Taim ol i no trainim ol, ol save mekim planti samting.

Taim ol makim ples lain long kamap scrutineer, they can do anything unnecessary long disturb or kain samting. So, ol bikpela issue i stap long dispela, planti bai kam toktok na smart tru i go but hevi em bikpela samting affectim ol.

Mipela Morobe i gat neim long kukim box, mipela gat nem long bribery ol scrutineer na security givim moni long ol na tok give way box em paia. Ol man bai kam na toktok smart long ol, but ol ino lukim hevi na issue we em i affectim province, district na LLG. Long lukluk bilong mi long dispela em bikpela samting, olgeta Steering Komiti long province all the way long district go daun long LLG, ol meri mas stap na ol kontrolim planti samting tu.

Mi laik kisim dispela taim na mi tok bikpela tenkyu, planti issue na nogut mi wan toktok na plenti laik toktok na waitim mi na hat so. Mi kisim dispela taim tok bikpela tenkyu mi hope olsem plenti senis bai kamap. Election blong President pipol mas votim. Tenkyu and God bless.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Tenk yu lida meri. Mipela komiti i amamas long harim nek blong yu long toktok long ol issue we affectim yupela ol mama insait long Morobe Province. Tenkyu

long yu makim maus bilong ol. Ms. Debbie Kais you now have the opportunity to speak to the committee.

### **Candidate-Huon-Gulf**

**Ms DEBBIE KAIS** (Former Candidate-Huon-Gulf) – Gut de long yupela olgeta. Nem bilong mi Debbie Kais, I am one of the female candidates contesting the 2022 National General Election. Mi sanap long Huon Gulf electorate as N open candidate.

So, luk save bilong mi long dispela election blong 2022 is a very worse election in PNG. As the female candidate mi ron resis wantaim ol pikinini man, long lukim na painim aut blo mi mipela ol meri i hat tru long resis wantaim ol pikinini man long election taim. Why mi kamapim dispela tingting bikos planti blong ol man taim ol i ron long election ol i bully lo system, bikos ol i gat moni, ol i gat strong winim mipela ol meri.

So taim mipela i ronim dispela election i kam, mi wanpela meri ron aninit long Indigenous Liberation Party, Boka Kondra is the Party Leader. So, nomination fee blong mi, mi yet mi baim. Ol i tokim mi olsem ‘bikos of gavman ino givim mipela moni so yu baim pastaim and then taim the gavman givim moni mipela ken bekim bek moni bilong yu’. So fom ol i pilim but I paid for my own fee.

Long dispela taim bilong election, pati ino bin givim mi wanpela moni na mi ron long dispela election. Mi ron long own money blong mi yet, we mi yet i bin redim na i stap. So long tok aut na tok stret long dispela de, tete plenti bilong mipela mama taim mipela ron long dispela election blong 2022 mipela kam painim hat na mipela i sot win bikos mipela no inap resis wantaim ol pikinini man.

Ol pikinini man ol i gat strong, ol i gat moni, ol i bully lo system na ol i aburusim mipela na i go pas. Ol sapotas bilong ol, ol i ken pait bek long ol sapotas bilong mipela. Ol i ken sanap na ol i ken hatim bel bliong sapotas bilong mipela ol candidate meri, we strong bilong mipela ino inap long strong bilong ol. Olsem na planti bilong ol voters bilong mipela tu taim ol i go sanap long polling booth long taim bilong vote, planti bilong ol nogat neim insait long common roll na ol lain long polling booth i rausim ol na ol i no bin vote.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Yu tingting yet na inap mi askim wanpela question na bai helpim yu long wokim liklik toktok bilong yu na mi luk save olsem yu tupela meri lida i sindaun. Mi yet na Sir Puka Temu mipela bin stap long narapela komiti blong lukluk long wokabout blong ol meri, em i stat olsem GBV komiti na nau ating mipela changim nem igo long Gender Equity

Committee. Wanpela lukluk bilong mipela em long ol reserve seats bilong ol meri either insait long provincial gavman or local level gavman na even National Parliament wantaim.

But olgeta taim dispela lukluk i save kirap taim i nogat meri long Parliament na taim wanpela o tupela meri ol i winim election na go insait long Parliament dispela toktok i save i dai gen. So mi askim yu na Preident bilong ol meri long Morobe tu i sindaun stap, wanem tingting bilong yutupela long dispela? Yutupela i gat sampela kain tingting olsem nau yu expressim luksave bilong yu olsem elction em i hat tumas because mipela ol man i save taitim bun tumas na mipela i gat bikpela advantage antap long ol meri candidates. So yu gat wanem kain tingting long dispela? Bihain bai mi askim Ms Michael tu long givim tingting bilong em, Ms Kais.

**Ms DEBBIE KAIS** – Thankyou Honourable Allan Bird long question bilong yu long askim mi. As a former candidates mi tu mi president bilong Huon Gulf District Council of Women na mi president na mi contestim dispela seat long 2022 Election because mi lukim olsem plenti taim ol mama bilong mipela save kam long opis bilong memba long district bilong mipela ol save pasim iyau long karai bilong ol na ol no save luksave long ol mama long ol wari bilong ol olsem apply moni bilong SME o wanem kain ol liklik ol needs bilong ol.

Planti taim nogat luksave so mipela ting olsem mipela contest so that mipela ken lukluk long sait bilong ol mama. Mipela i laikim olsem government i mas luksave long ol mama na ol network bilong council of women. Government i mas luksave insait long province, district na LLG.

Husait ol man yupela save winim sit na stap olsem governor, member na president ol i mas kisim ol mama insait long council of women na putim i go kamap olsem LLG, DDA na provincial assembly representatives so that ol ken makim maus bilong ol mama long top level so that ol ken lukluk long ol needs bilong ol mama. So that wanem samting i kam long ol mama i ken skelim equal wantaim ol mama insait long district, LLG na ward wan wan.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Okay em gutpela tingting bilong yupela but yupela toktok long ol appointed members but mi askim long election. Wanem tingting bilong yupela sapos mipela i wokim representation i go long government long lukluk long sampela ol special seats bilong ol meri yet bai ol yet resis long dispela seat.

Na yumi ken statim long LLG elections na yumi lukluk long na tingting i kamap na yumi convinsim ol memba bilong Parliament na bringim sampela senis na yupela ol meri yet inap

long resis long sampela sit we yupela i ken go insait long Tutumang, Madang Pruvincial Government, tupela Sepik Provinces o even around the country.

Wanem tingting bilong yupela long dispela kain tingting? But appointment em i no hard em stap long discretion bilong man but sapos yupela i gat wanpela mechanism we em i allowim yupela long sanap na yupela kisim appointment bilong yupela through long electoral process so mipela kam lukluk long process, i no long ol appointment processes olsem na mi askim tingting bilong yupela.

You can come and take a seat in front if you want to contribute, yes, Madam. Dispela I no conference em Committee hearings so yu laim okay givim nem bilong yu long ol

**Ms ALEWEE MICHAEL** – Thankyou Chair, mi laik kisim dispela taim na bikpela tenkyu, ating network bilong council of women i slip orait because ol womens representative em constitution we Parliament i recognisim na pasim resolucion na mipela i kamap olsem legal document em Sir Puka Temu stap na mipela wok anatap long dispela na nais na slip orait stret. Anatap long toktok bilong 22 reserve seats, planti taim mipela ol meri pait long fopela region.

Fopela meri mas stap insait long Parliament. Dispela em kamap pinis o ol man i toktok long dispela o nogat. Wai mipela i toktok long fopela reserve seat bilong wonem Momase region n kain olsem presiden bilong Sepik, Madang, na bilong mi long Morobe, mipela sindaun na selektim wanpela bilong mipela inap long kisim face bilong mipela Momase rigen na go insait long Palamen.

Wankain long arapela tripela region, we fopela meri mas representim mipela ol meri na go isait long Palamen. Sapsa dispela gavaman i allowim dispela, yes em i ken wok aut. Bikos lukim long stretim insait long LLG, Distrik na provins em Constitution bilong Palamen em i kamapim, em i passim kamap legal document na mipela i sanap antap long 2015 December 15 na em i wok gut.

Mi bilip insait long Morobe provins olsem Governor bilong mipela Luther Wenge em too good na em lawyer tu nan au em stat long stretim dispela down the lane. Nau mi stat long mekim dispela wok i go daun long ol LLG level na distrik level na em i wok aut.

Toktok long wari insait long Palamen bikos long lukim bilong mi, mi yet, mi mas fit na mi go insait long Palamen bikos nogut mi go olsem na ol bai tok yu rubber stamp ya yu no fit ya, gavaman creatim seat na apointim yu na yu go insait.

Mi yet mi passim dispela law sindaun wantem na toktok planti olsem maus bilong mipela ol meri mas go insait long Palamen insait long dispela fopela reserve seat. Namba wan insait tu long Papua New Guinea mi againstim ol meri, as i olsem taim mipela traim hat na makim ol

i go insait long Palamen yu no sawe respectim mipela ol meri throughout long Papua New Guinea? Long dispela as na tinkink bilong mi yet i olsem, mipela ol meri mas traim hat na winim eleksen olsem man na go insait. Bilong wonem na mi toktok long dispela taim meri mipela i hatwok na votim i winim eleksen na i go insait em i lusim man na go maritim niupela man na go insait na man i tok bilas long mipela ol meri na mi olsem president of the counsel of women mi sem nogut turu. Olsem na long tinkink bilong mi, mipela ol meri mas traim hat na go isait long Palamen. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you bikmeri, i orait mi bai nau move i go na givim opportunity long Ms Nelly Mclay.

### **Community Leader-Lae**

**Ms NELLIE McLAY** (Community Leader –Lae) – My name is Nellie McLay I live here in Watut. I'm involved in a whole lot of things but I'm also the community leader. I'm a member of the Lae Chamber Executive Council, I am also board member for various boards here in the province and also elsewhere so I will leave it at that. I'm going to talk about my observation on what had happened in the National Election.

Number one, I'm telling you guys now gentlemen that you have failed as a government to update the electoral roll for the people to vote properly and that is your responsibility as Members of Parliament to push public servants to make sure that the common roll should've been updated at least 2-3 years prior and if anyone coming in they should just slot them in.

Number two, people lining up as early as 6:30 am., this is in ward two, I'm not going to specify which polling booth.

According to my observation, I thought to myself, this people do not live in ward two. Now Carol over here lives in ward two, Nellie Mclay lives in ward two we basically knows who lives in ward two na olgeta ol lain ol kam long where?

Number three, how do we change the mentality of our people, most of the voters do not vote on party line nor because that person is so clever and smart and that he'll deliver a five year development plan in five years, they normally vote on tribal lines. Em i tru o nogat? Planti lain ol i vote on tribal lines.

So we need to make sure that our people are educated in how to do the voting whether that particular person is standing as a member is good enough or he is just drawing, win nating, so to speak.

Number four, women turning out to vote should be voting on different booths at all times. We have started but it should be reemphasized because people are getting harassed as my good friend Alwewe has said. There was harassment in Lae district polling booths.

Most of the staff were running the polling booths for women, whether they were checking the electoral or making sure someone is putting the ballot papers in the right box and most of these women are public servants in either Lae district or Morobe province.

Now we talking about GBV, we need to protect our women because they're working for our government of the day, arim, ol I mas lukautim ol meri.

Number five, lining up in Ward 2 at Admin Compound, I thought there were people who did not reside there standing and lining up to vote. According to my observation, they were not from ward 2. I think we the residents of Ward 2, olgeta lain ol iwok long ward 2 booth doesn't matter whether it's down in here or in admin compound or somewhere in town. I'm talking about Lae district because I want people to know. It's going to be people who live around there so they know who's from here.

Number six, there were people who are openly saying that if their names are not on the roll, em bai ol go long narapela ward na bai ol I givim ol ballot papers na ol i vote. This happened in Lae and to me it's totally wrong. The people were allowed to do this type of thing.

You want to talk about the four regions of women, I don't want to talk about women's leadership there because to me I always see in Parliament, yupela ol man lo here ya, I know you want to say Honourable Bird but some of your members of Parliament regard the Parliament olsem em haus man. Yu save arim dispel too, Sir Puka Temu, it should stop, it's a Parliament that belongs to the people. It's not about you men and how did you men come into this world? Did someone give birth to you or came out of a tree or whatever.

This is a beautiful country and I was telling people that we have 850 different languages right nowhere else in the world comes close, maybe Nigeria and India in terms of 300 and 250 different languages or China or whatever but we have 800 different distinct languages.

Some months ago, some people from somewhere else in another country wanted to know how many languages we speak and me being always sarcastic I said what, you are asking us Papua New Guineans, how many languages we speak? You come from somewhere in a developed country and you only speak one language, English. We are multilingual just remember that. Our Papua New Guineans speaks two to three languages or even four languages.

Now, if we want to re-ignite the topic about women representing women in Parliament when did you think seriously either we do that or we disappointed them or go back to Rwanda.



I keep talking about Rwanda. Rwanda had genocide, Honourable Sir Puka Temu so what did the government do? They appointed women to be the head bureaucrats in the public service and even in the corporate sector. To this date, they still have a lot of women and it was the women who were running it because you know why, the men were killed, the Hutus were killing the Tutsis so the Tutsis who were men in Parliament or whatever it is in the bureaucrat's position.

And now they talk about GBV, its emphasized as gender equality and should be practiced all times. So we have a long way to go in terms of GBV. Thank you, I'll stop here for a moment.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, madam, this is what the Committee is here for, to hear your grievances because at the end of the day we represent you. And your very important contributions are taken to heart.

Just to give you some assurance, the failure in the electoral roll is something that we all acknowledge and its one of the reasons why certain members of Parliament and myself being right at the forefront requested that such a committee be formed so that we could look into these matters and hopefully find some conclusion to give you some assurance that this is not going to be a whitewash.

The Secretariat that is writing the report for this Committee is the National Research Institute, the other committee members are the Transparency International and we have their representatives here today sitting at the corner. We want to do this work a little bit different to what we have been accustomed to in our country, so I just want to assure you that we warmly welcome your comments.

And you know when we were up in the highlands last week, the public servants that came to give evidence basically confirmed much of the illegal practices that went on up in the highlands, that is on our record now. We also had two provinces that didn't turn up and we understand that their public servants were threatened not to give evidence before this committee. So just to give you some idea as to our own appreciation of how difficult it's going to be.

This week is for Momase, and we are very grateful that we haven't had four women in front of the Committee before.

**Ms NELLY McLAY** – I'm sorry I was told to come here this morning. That's the reason why I turned up. Who was responsible for telling the people of Lae and Morobe Province that this hearing or forum was going to be on?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – I think advertisements were taken out in the newspaper and other media. Our Secretary is sitting over there, so if there is any failure, we take full responsibility but we are grateful for your participation

**Ms NELLY McLAY** – I am happy to participate because whatever we do at elections determines whatever we do for the next five years. So I think it's important that we take part and I think it's important that you guys complete your hearing and make sure that the recommendations are put to parliament and the respected and should be followed. Thank you

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Could I now move to Carol Yawing, would you like to make a contribution madam

**Former Ward 2 Councillor –Lae**

**Ms CAROL YAWING** (Former Ward 2 Councillor -Lae) – Thank you, welcome to Morobe province. I would like to appreciate you also being in the forefront of GBV and over to this new Committee about Gender Equity is it?

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – This is the Special Parliamentary Committee into the Conduct of the 2022 General Elections

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – I think much Mrs Mclay has gone through already. I'll just touch on three, the first one would be in future I want the awareness before any elections LLG elections or national elections, to go right down to the remote districts because these people lack knowledge about the elections.

All they know is their son who is running and they know the big feast about it. So in the future, I want the full awareness to go right into the districts where the ballot box normally goes and there are not much services seen or felt by the remote people there.

Secondly, the bullying and hijacking of the election system. As the former councillor for Ward 2 in Lae, we have experienced and seen with our own eyes the hijacking of the election process. If we were to have securities here, they must be rotating around to other regions come the next elections. We have seen the bullying and hijacking of the election process but we are powerless to do anything about it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Madam can I interject for a moment. Could you describe those incidents of hijacking and bullying just to give the Committee a better idea of what happened? You have to understand that we don't know what happened in your ward, so perhaps you can describe those incidences of what you actually observed. What do you mean by hijacking of boxes? Did a bunch of men come in mask and took it? That is what I am trying to understand.

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Hijacking of the process.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – How was the process hijacked in your ward?

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – If we say the election voting time starts at 8.00 a.m., and finishes at 4.00 p.m.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Did you have one-day polling in Lae?

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Yes we did. It has to finish at 4.00 p.m., sharp and not going later than that. To have so many securities at a polling booth and for them to be extending time for people to vote is not right. They extend the time on their own and later hurrying people up to vote so that they can collect the ballot boxes. The scrutineers will then be running after the ballot boxes to see where it will be stored.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Is that what happened in your ward?

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Yes in my Ward 2.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Do continue.

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – So in the future when the next election comes, the security personnel that were stationed in Lae, mi laikim olsem ol mas move. It's not only me but my community and ward also that want them torotate around; for instance, the security personnel that was stationed at Lae during the 2022 National Elections must be moved to another region, perhaps in the highlands. The personnel at Highlands region may be moved to the Southern region and Southern to the Niugini Islands.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Are you saying that you cannot trust the security personnel that have been stationed in Lae?

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Mi no trastim ol.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – That is fair enough. Please continue.

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Nau yumi toktok long ol lida meri. I ran for Ward 2 as a councillor and then was later appointed as the deputy mayor long klostu tripla mun tasol. Ol kirap kisim dispela posisen na go givim long narapela man. Yumi nidim bikpla skul.

Ol man tingting bilong ol ino stap gut. Olsem Mrs McLay itok pinis, Parliament House ol itok hausman. Hausman bilong wanem hap turu ya? Na yupela iwokim wanem kain kastom na nau ol meri igo sindaun insait long hap?

Mi hamamas turu long kam sindaun long hia bikos mitupela i kisim toksave leit na mitupela i spid ikam ya na mitupela ino save what you went through yesterday na kam tete. Sapos mi go abrus liklik yupela toksave long mi.

Mi bai ron ken long President. Na olsem susa Kais toktok pinis long hap ya, wanem kain halivim ba mipela ol meri i kisim long halivim mipela long ron. Mi toktok long sait bilong president, ino antap tumas. Mi tu mi laik go long Tutumang na putim nek bilong mi long hap. Long hia, olsem rispektim lida meri president bilong mipela, there are a whole lot of us down here, tasol ol man long hia ino save luksave long ol meri tamblo long hia.

So, mi laikim sampla kain form of education, painim sampla kain NGOs, sampla kain lain we ol iken kam putim training na education na igo insait lo ol meri.

Mi laik appreciatim na tok tenk yu lo UN Women for coming down and always helping and supporting the women for workshops and all that. Nau wanpla bikpla tru mi hamamas tru olsem yupla kam sidaun lo hia so we can come and be able to express ourselves na voice blo mipla lo yupla harim. Bikos husait ken ba kam harim lo hia. Em mipla yet toktok lo workshop na bung blo mipla na em tasol na em go pinis.

So mi bilip tru lo disla committee na gat confidence olsem yupla ikam bicos yu save olsem igat sampla hevi lo tamblo. That's why you're here. Why wanem kain samting turu ba yupla mekim lo halivim mipla bicos mipla tu ilaik ron ken na husait tru bai yupla luk save na identifyim ol ken. Ol iken kam na halivim mipla lo tamblo lo hia bikos susa Kais itok pinis, we spend our own funds to do these things and inogat luksave lo hap when you're talking about men because ol ting ol ilukim mipla olsem wanem carving or? Mipla iluk olsem wanem? I ting

bai mi kam stop lo hia pastaim. Thank you, planti toktok em Mrs McLay em touchim pinis. Dange. Dange Ngaiam.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you. Its refreshing to listen to people who are very passionate about the things they believe in so we appreciate that. Ms Kais, sori mipla abrusim yu go na, tupela powerful contribution kam pinis so Madam, yu laik completim toktok blong yu?

**Ms DEBBIE KAIS** – Thank you, Mr Allan Bird lo displa evening, Electoral Commission em sidaun pinis lo hia, yupla ol special parliamentary committee blong parliament yupla sidaun lo hia.

Mipla as a mama lo nau mi laik toktok strong lo yupla ol lain lo Parliament, kisim na go insait long Parliament, yupla putim insait long Parliament, tokim olgeta man nau ol isaidaun long sit insait lo Parliament olsem 2027 mipla no laikim, ol i bully long system. Bikos dispela election blo 2022, only the current member, the sitting member ol e bully long disla system because they have the money.

Taim pipol blo mipla go sanap lo polling booth lo castim vote bilong ol na once ol i nogat name, ol i no save kisim excuse blong ol, olsem mi blo disla ward na inap mi castim vote bikos i no wrong blo mi lo name blong mi no stap insait long common roll.

Imas igat ol man we ol e wok insait long disla samting lo puttim insait long common roll, ol ino mekim wok blong ol so pipol blo ples, ol kisim hevi blong ol, ol nogat name blong vote.

So olsem nau ol lain blo Electoral Commissioner ol sidaun here, wanpla askim blo mi laik igo long ol, inap ol i senisim ol system blong ol? Once taim ol man meri long ples ol nogat name insait long Common Roll castim vote, inap ol i givim tok orait lo community leaders? Like olsem the ward councillor or the ward chairman lo identifyim ward member blong em so em iken castim vote bilong em insait long ward bilong em. Em wanpla.

Narapla lo today mi askim kam lo yupla nau yupla sidaun lo hia. Kisim na putim lo Parliament. Taim mipla ol mama run lo kain resis, olsem gavman bai halivim mipla o nogat? Olsem nau mi wanpla female candidate, party endosim mi but party no fundim me. Mi yet, mi ron lo money blo mi na mi sotwin na mi pundaun. Taim yupla lukluk lo mipla, we all are the same, mama karim yumi lo wanpla rot tasol. Tasol yumi kam lo system blo yum nau, man i gat strong moa nau lo ol meri. So please, askim blo mi disla meri nau mi sidaun lo here igo lo yupla inap lo 2027 gavman bai lukluk lo sampla kain rot lo helpim ol female candidate or nogat? So that mipla ol mama can resis wantaem ol man.

Ino ol man tasol bai wokim decision, mama tu must stap insait lo national level, provincial level, district level na LLG level lo mekim decision so that mipla mas luksave tu lo ol mama bikos we are the mouthpiece of the women folk in the village level.

Narapla nau mi laik comment long em 2022 election em olsem, lo lukluk na skelim blo mi, mi laik tokaut na tokstret lo disla panel olsem sampla blo ol dispela candidate nau ol ikisim memba na ol istap insait lo Parliament, ol ino win lo polling booth, ol iwin insait long counting room. Mi yet mi candidate, mi no stap klostu lo tally room, counting room but ol scrutineer blo mi ol itokim mi olsem igat sampla samting iwrong lo tally room.

Mi lo Morobe province, lo district blo mi lo Huon Gulf, lo counting room blo mi, mipla gat ol bikpela, bikpela man i stap insait long counting room area.

Long dispela taim ol man husait i go pas ol i het bilong dispela olgeta i stap insait long Huon Gulf district counting room. Mi i no save hau na wai na planti ol bikman i stap insait long dispela hap. Mi wanpela bilong ol kendidet long taim bilong counting, mi bin kisim ol scrutinner bilong mi i go long counting room na ol i rausim tripela bilong ol long gate bilong Lae Secondary long Thursday na ol ino bin sindaun long counting room.

Mi hat long go na toktok wantem ol long dispela bikos polis tu i sanap. Taim ol mangi bilong mi i laik explain long ol na tok sori mipela scrutineers bilong Kendidet box 25 Debbie Kais, ol ino kisim toktok bilong ol na ol i rausim ol ikam autsait. That is why mi tok long first place olsem ol man i bully long dispela voting system bilong 2022.

So nau laikim na askim bilong mipela ol meri i kam long yupela gavaman bilong dispela dei I olsem 2027 mipela ino laikim dispela game bai i repeat gen plis stopim long 2022 na taim yumi go insait long 2027 na sapos mipla ol meri i laik kam insait long ron plis gavaman i mas painim rot long banisim dispela ol female candidate so ol i ken ron long gutpela resis wantaim ol pikinini man.

Mipela mama nau long dispela taim i singaut i go long ol lain long Electoral Commission plis yupela mas updatim gut ol common roll updates bilong yupela tu, bikos long 2022 eleksen yumi no usim common roll bilong 2022 mipela i usim yet common roll bilong 2017.

So Electoral Commission mas kamap na tok aut stret long mipela ol kendidet long hau na wai na planti bilong ol voters bilong mipela ino votim ol kendidet bilong ol. Dispela i bin kamapim bikpela lus long sampela bilong mipela ol kendidet. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you very much ladies. I would appreciate if you could sit till the end of the session because we'll come back to you. I'll now give opportunity to our, yutupela mas feel over-run liklik but em orait nau yumi gat sampela gender balance so. I'll start

with you Mr Gwambelek, yu gat opportunity long toktok long komiti and then ba mi move to Mr Mol and then I'll allow the committee to just ask some questions.

Before we continue for the women, I just want to leave this note with you, I'm Deputy Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Committee looking into issues for not just Gender-based violence but for women.

Our secretariat is provided by the UNDP and if by your counsel you would like the committee to come to Lae so that we can listen to this particular grievance because some of these issues are overlapping; mipela long hia mipela I lukluk long election process tasol, but you know issues of equity for women and persons living with disability are also something that we will and of course your access to be able to vote and things like that.

So whilst we are looking on that some of the other matters can also be part of the consideration that'll come from the gender equity committee That is why mi just tok save long long yupela na while we move across here and if you think about that and make some notes that you might want to come back and speak to us while these two gentlemen have the floor. Mr Gwambalek.

### **Candidate – Bulolo Open**

**Mr TAE GWAMBELEK** (Candidate – Bulolo Open) – Thank you, Honorable Allan Bird, Chairman of the Special Parliamentary Committee into the election review, Sir Puka Temu as the Deputy Chairman and the members of the Committee, good afternoon to every one of us.

My name is Tae Gwambelek former CEO District Administrator Bulolo and a candidate. I clocked after 40 years as public servant in Morobe province, 19 years of these is with Health Department and 21 years of these is with provincial affairs which include 11 years as District Administrator or CEO.

I ran three national elections as assistant returning officer and two national elections as returning officer. I will give you just brief on couple of views, and then the suggestions of what I think I need to bring to your attention.

As a retired senior public servant of Morobe, I would like to say that 2022 National Election was very chaotic, hijacked and worse than 2017. I will come to what I meant by hijacked as I go down my brief.

My views on the nomination, there are a couple of things that failed in the nomination. Firstly, it is required under the law of election that residential qualification must be looked at carefully.

Some of these candidates, including the winning candidates did not have the residential qualification, even now after they have won the election, they do not live in the electorate, and they do not have houses in the villages either. They have been living off and operating from the hotels in Lae.

Some of these candidates used makeup names, not their real birth names, they even used their deceased father's names and added junior, when in fact their names were different from their father's name.

This is also captured in the election laws and must be looked into carefully and these are some things regarding the nominations.

Also, there were some candidates that didn't have names on the common roll, this committee must look into making some recommendations that say, if the candidates do not have their names on the electoral roll then they do not have the right to be nominated. Sapos mama karim yu lo hap okay yu gat rait lo sanap lo ileksen. But, the law also states, that you must be in the electorate for more than six months to qualify for the nomination, which must be looked into seriously as this is not effective.

Secondly, the common roll update. I will just make reference to 2017 and then I'll give an overview of suggestions regarding this.

In the 2017 Election, the common roll update was very poor. In the Bulolo Open electorate, there seem to be usage of two common roll for the elections. One was the ULP common roll update of 2021 to 2022 and the other was the 2017 National Election and the 2019 LLG election update that was used for the National General Election. So there were two common rolls used in Bulolo.

Posters of the deceased were used against the candidate, for example, the party leader for the National Alliance is Mr Patrick Pruaitch but the candidates put Sir Michael Somare as the party leader; another was the party leader for ULP is Lekwa Gure but the candidates were putting the late Honorable Sam Basils photo and these lured voters.

The Polling, Bulolo LLG was being affected by two last-minute changes on the Floor of Parliament. Firstly, Bulolo district was split into two districts at the last minute by saying that the district is huge and the resources are very scarce that it cannot cover these two districts.

I was the District Administrator for Bulolo for eleven years and we have more than enough money to develop the district, K10 million a year is plenty of money to develop Wau-Waria LLG as well.

In Wau rural and Waria LLG, we have never used any of this money to develop Waria road for past 15 years. We never spent any money on that and yet it was said that not enough



resource to share within the district. It is not a matter of population, it's a management problem. Proper analysis and survey were not done. It is politically motivated.

Secondly, Bulolo urban LLG was integrated into Watut LLG so Bulolo LLG becomes Watut LLG, so the wards in Bulolo town was under Watut LLG. This is another change that came about in the last minute as an MP was talking about this morning that the CEO in Madang was appointed at the last minute to coordinate or to execute what the dreams of the MP's about. This is exactly what the public servant in Bulolo thought, happened to lure the election for the purpose it was made for. As such it affects the polling schedule, venues and everything that used to be so that is why, it is one of the hijack systems.

Mumeng LLG is the big electorate within the six LLGs that used to be in Bulolo until when it was spilt into four LLGs in Bulolo district and I am from Mumeng.

Polling schedule that was official authorized by the Electoral Commission to commence on Monday. The manager for Mumeng LLG changed the polling schedule to Tuesday. This is another failure that was done that this schedule was not approved and endorsed by the Electoral Commissioner. When I noted that, I reported this to the returning officer and the election manager and they took note but it never worked out because the polling was on the next day. Why, it hijacks the system because the working class in Zenag and Mumeng people who live in Lae went over the weekend to vote on Monday and they got permission to return to work on Tuesday, but when the schedule was changed to Tuesday, they have returned on Monday. So, no one voted on Tuesday so, this is again another hijack of the election.

Thirdly, sympathy votes, I make my suggestion later on in regards to it. In the likes of Barakau brothers, Abas and Basil, I will mention that in my suggestions.

The election funding should only be funded by Electoral Commission and no others should be given funding supports for election; not even the CEO or DDA because that money comes with influence. The money for the DDA to assist in election should be funded to the Provincial Election Steering Committee to execute as mentioned earlier by some of the panels and not direct from DDA to the election as this would be seen as maneuvering the election.

So, all funding should come from Electoral Commission. Because as of last year elections funding from Electoral Commission was delayed and never came forth for the election and somehow the money to run the election for example; the polling and counting during the election was on hold because the police cannot be present for the counting or polling because their allowances were not paid so they can move into those areas.

So, funding has to be sorted from within starting from the CEO and where did he get the money to fund the election and to fund the police personnel? All funding for that matter should go to Provincial Election Steering Committee.

The counting venue was one agenda that was a problem, during the late Member's time, he made sure the counting was done at Mumeng LLG and we argued on that basically because the gazetted counting area in the district should be at Bulolo District but it was hijacked to Mumeng and we argued for two days.

The Chairman of the district steering committee was the right hand man for the sitting member and he argued with us on the first day and the second day we told him to step down and move out and allow someone else to take over which he followed. We got through but the formal venue of counting was not approved so we moved to another location which is Bulolo Vocational Centre and we did the counting.

The counting venues for the district must be regulated so that any counting venues must be at the district headquarter and not at venues as required or suggested by the sitting member.

The polling irregularities as mentioned regarding sympathy votes, CEO funding the expenses, ballot box after the closing of the voting supposed to be transported direct to the police station to be locked up.

In one of the LLG in Bulolo, the ballot box went from the polling area straight to LLG and after some hours reached the police station in the night. Strict rules must be applied in such cases.

The counting irregularities; it was found on the ballot papers that the same hand writing was discovered on ballot papers either with same numbers and even numbers that wasn't listed on the ballot papers and it went beyond the actual numbering of the candidates but when it was crossed checked by RO and counting officials, it was written as normal but it wasn't normal. For instances, if the numbering stops at 35 and it goes beyond that then it's considered as informal but practically it was recorded as formal.

The names of candidates; for instance, the name Sam Basil Junior but on the voting papers it was listed as Sam Basil, when the scrutineers complained about this, the counting officials mentioned that it's the same person which means they meant to say Sam Basil Junior. If this voting occurred in Huon, Markham or Finschaffan District then its accepted but in Bulolo, we all knew that Sam Basil died and new candidate is Sam Basil Junior.

This was brought to the RO, AROs, the officials and the supervisors of the election and they said it is formal so they passed it through and when we complained they said take note of it and take it to court.

When it comes to checks, on one candidate 99 votes was down and when they queried it, the scrutineers were told to take note and perhaps to take it to court. The counting officials have never balanced that figure and they have never done anything about that 99 votes that was down. They left it like that for the scrutineers to take note.

Further more, when counting another box in another candidate's vote, they found 99 extra votes added. How did the 99 votes get into another box when scrutineers enquired about it, they said take note and take it to court and they've never balanced that figure. That is 99 but below that there are other figures from five to 10 and more, they've never balanced those figures and those figures were being accumulated. So this is the counting irregularities. Every time when they noted this, the officials will say take note and take it to court.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sir, in the interest of time if you could do a written submission, obviously you've got a lot of details there in your presentation and let me just say these are similar complaints that have emanated from other electorates not just yours.

Of course they are very specific things and these are quite serious allegations, so I would suggest that you put it down in writing and bring it to us because some of the things are already given.

Let me just say that for example the electoral roll, this committee has already made that central to our recommendations and if you have been following the discussions, a lot of provinces have already made their submission that they will take over the update of the electoral roll, so after 47 years this committee is leading towards allowing the provinces to use their ward records to do that update. These are the sorts of changes that we want to bring

Of course in terms of counting processes and we note there is a complete lack of trust from amongst the counting officials and security personnel and all of these sorts of things and we have noted them almost in all contributions that we receive from the different provinces so I just want to assure you of that. But in this particular instance, given your very specific issues that you've noted in a particular district, I strongly urge you to put that in writing.

Whilst we've noted a lot of the things you've raise so far with the committee, I suggest that the entire contribution be placed on the record in written form, that way it will be easier for us. We also note that these are serious issues that you have raised. Is that okay sir, just to give time so that we can come back to the women here?

**Mr TAE GUAMBELEK** – Yes, thank you.

## **Church Rep- Morobe**

**Mr STEVEN MOL** (Luthern – Rep) – Thank you. Welcome Honourable Bird Chairman, Sir Puka Temu, Honourable Keith Iduhu and MP for Bogia. First of all welcome to the Lutheran City of Morobe. We've been in the elections and we the church we also got our elections and from our observations we learnt something. We think that government must come out clear and speak so these establishments of these committee must be the one that will provide the answer to restore something or do something good and it must not be another pink elephant formed by the Parliament.

For the Church, we've been here before the government and we are aware of it and we always think that the government is our small brother, in a sense in development and in any areas of life. So, we have been watching, I've been watching, they have been watching, Papua New Guinean have been watching and hearing about Special Parliamentary Committee been existing by the government and is here is to do with 2022 National Election.

As per this honourable Chairman, I think comes next elections you have to engage the church because we are with your people and the people know our voice and we know them. They don't know you, government, you are in Waigani and you don't know them and they don't know you. Election time yu go long ples na ol votim yu but trutru lo stap em mipela stap. With this, I think we have to look back at the Organic law. I think our forefathers put something in the organic law that contain our identity, custom and believe or practice. It's all in the Organic Law so with this issue I propose and I really think that this committee should go back and dig up the Organic Law.

Regardless if its mattersto do with election, I think there is something in the organic law that needs to be come out and then I believe we can produce some answers that the nation needs. Otherwise, we'll be in to it but as I've mentioned like the now, Papua New Guinea when you go into Westminster system, we're always living on borrowed ideas. Some of these things that we're talking about we don't design it.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Sir, this is a parliamentary committee looking into elections. Whilst I appreciate the philosophical discourse, this is not the place for it. If you got specific recommendations to do with the 2022 Elections, we would welcome them. If there's anything that is going to be specific from the Lutheran church, then I would suggest that you speak to those in charge of the church and then make a formal representation to the committee, would welcome that also. But, I don't think it is our place to engage in a philosophical discussion.

We are actually looking at the practical occurrences in 2022 elections and looking for ways that we can fix that. Is that okay? Do you have anything specific to add in relation to how we may improve elections or your own observations so if you could skip the philosophical discussion and get straight to the matter, we would appreciate that.

**Mr STEVEN MOL** – Yes, only one, I think in next election in 2027 and onwards engage the church. Thank you.

**Mr CHAIRMAN**– Thank you very much, we appreciate that Mr Mol. We would welcome any formal presentation from any of the churches as government. Certainly, in my case in my province, we recognize the massive contributions of the Catholic church towards service provision in my province.

In fact, my province works very closely with the Catholic church and indeed other churches like the Seventh Day Adventist and Assemblies of God, and others who are providing very valuable services to the people in my part of the world. So we value very much any contribution that would be coming from any of our church partners so let me just make that clear.

To our women leaders, I just sent a text message to the Chairman of the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Committee which is The Honourable Powes Parkop and I have said that the women in Morobe would welcome a visit by that committee to this province to listen to your grievances and he has agreed and thinks that it's a good idea.

So we will be scheduling a visit by that committee to your beautiful province in the not too distance future. I think there is one in Port Moresby, perhaps this month and then there will be a follow up and he is indicating so far in his response that might be in Morobe so you will get an opportunity, especially for all the women. We are discussing issues to do with women's empowerment, gender-based violence and all of those sorts of issues so you would be most welcome.

There will be a public announcement for the venue but most likely it might be here but I'm not sure and familiar with Morobe, were these things normally take place but please keep your ears to the ground and you can infact get the contact details of this young men sitting in the corner there.

He works for the Parliament and he may be able to inform you directly so that you can come and participate. So that's in relation to that.

Is there anything further, yes mam Ms Nelly McLay

**Ms NELLY McLAY** – Back to the election. One of the things that I was thinking of is that every candidate including sitting candidates, I want to see that one of the requirements that you must have to get into being a candidate is that we the people, for example, Lae district, I am Joe Blow, standing for election, I will have to put out a five-year development plan that should be executed between 2022 and 2027 of how Lae should be improved in all sectors.

So that when I'm standing for election, I've got something there for people to see. Right now we are taking every Tom, Dick and Harry for granted, whether he is a criminal or not for us to vote for them. Let's put some requirement there so that when I finish at year 2027, I should have a monitoring and evaluation of what I planned and that it has been executed and carried out and it's all standing and I should be proud of Lae city, tingting blong me.

So I want you guys to think about it, whether it's right or wrong because I'm sick and tired of people saying or bai yu votim mi, mi wokim olsem olsem. You lying toad, you're not going to do that. I'm sorry to say it in that manner, honourable members. Sorry Sir Puka Temu, yu save lo mi pinis, you were the secretary for Health so you know how I talk. But that's my point. Can that be added on as one of your discussion.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, madam. We've had significant representation from some of the various participants from previous engagements. And they've indicated strongly that we should be looking at the requirements for the qualification of candidates for elections. That will be reviewed by the Committee. I want to assure you again, our secretariat is provided by the National Research Institute, I think this is the first time in the history of Papua New Guinea that the National Research Institute is working with a parliamentary committee to produce some positive outcomes for our country. so we're very proud of that association. As I said, we've got Transparency International and INA as well and of course you know Mr Barker as well. Mr Barker is a strong critic of the government. We welcome that critic and this time we are working together for the good of our people.

**Ms CAROL YAWING** – Thank you honourable Bird, just one that I want to add. The candidates that are elected into office and goes and appoints his own men or women into the positions, I'm referring to the public servant. From the PA and down and onwards and you know, I don't want to go there, I think I've touched that and you would know. They just stay away from the public servants and don't go and bring their own men or women in there. Thank you

**M CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, madam. I think these are the things. Planti ol system blo yumi emi bagarap over the last 40 years. This committee is concerned with fixing one aspect and that is the elections.

I speak on behalf of the committee members here. It was expressed very profoundly by the representation from the West Sepik team this morning and I'm not sure but if you'll indulge me. I just want to read what Sir Puka Temu said, can you find it because this is from West Sepik.

They had a fairly peaceful election and their people participated quite well. We are not just looking at problems but also positive success stories. We are here to learn and not to make judgments. We are not a court of justice but a fact-finding mission by the government listening to our people such as yourselves.

The conclusion I want to read is from West Sepik Province.

In conclusion, without electoral integrity leaders and officials lack accountability to the public, confidence in the election results is weak and the government lacks necessary legitimacy.

Integrity depends on public confidence in the electoral and political processes, it is not enough to reform institutions. Citizens need to be convinced that changes are real and deserved their confidence. To ensure that elections have integrity, other factors outside of the electoral institution themselves needs to be taken into account and strengthened.

That is from the West Sepik Province and that summarises what we are trying to achieve here. I wanted to read that for your benefit. This is not something that the Committee came up with, but a gem from West Sepik.

I wanted to assure all our participants that we have a keen interest in looking for the truth and if we can find things like this, we will add them to our report. At the end of the day, the report of this committee should be a report for the people of Papua New Guinea speaking to its parliamentary leaders.

With that as a prerequisite, I will ask my two other members lo askim sampela askim.

**Ms NELLIE McLAY** – Sorry Honourable Allan Bird and Sir Puka Temu. When you put this out publicly apart from going through the government, you need to emphasise and tell Papua New Guineans and the country that a little province like West Sepik has a positive outlook. Our people should know that there is positivity in our country so we need to make sure we uplift the spirit.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – We have a few positive reports from New Ireland, East Sepik and Eastern Highlands Provinces. They have done some pretty incredible things that we would like to incorporate.

We are here to listen to you, it is not only about the problems but to see if you have some valuable suggestions. Mipela ol memba ino save long olgeta samting. Mipela fit long wokim rot, bris na klasrum tasol. Some of these things we should listen to you.

**Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Mr Chairman and all the women representatives. I really appreciate your inputs through your experiences and genuine presentations.

As Ms Kais was speaking, a reality dawned on me and I am sure has dawned on the country as well. She made a statement and said that the 2022 National Elections, em bagarap olgeta. That was what you said and I borrowed it.

Yu tok olsem yupela ol meri kendidets ino gat strong na pati ino helpim yu, na gavman ba helpim yu tu o nogat? Those were the questions. So in my mind, I was thinking about the kind of recommendation we can pose to answer that issue and Ms McLay brought about Rwanda. Rwanda is leading in terms of women representation on the Floor of Parliament in the world. We as a young country, within our country there is a glaring precedence which is in Bougainville. The Constitution of Bougainville allowed for provision of four seats in the Bougainville Parliament by law.

In our Constitution, it says nominate a non-elected representative but since Independence we have not invoked that Constitutional provision.

So, when Dame Kidu and myself were trying in 2015 which Ms Michael alluded to what we went through pushing the National Council of Women legislation that it must go to the district and LLG and by law, we need to push that district women president should be members of the DDA or members of the provincial assembly, those are the issues and LLGs as well.

And so, as you were speaking, I'm saying what recommendation is the committee going to make on behalf of the of the women in the country, in terms of their voice, whether it's the LLG and in this particular issue, is the National Parliament? And I'm appealing to all the women in the country, because my experience when we had three or four women, first time we had a good representation on the floor of parliament, but we were advised noken givim, by the women members of Parliament, Parliament was told in no uncertain terms, mipla mas go lo



election na resis olsem ol man, don't serve us on the silver plate. That came from the women members of Parliament and I was on the floor of parliament.

And so, I'm trying to juggle what are the options that we have in order to have assurance for women's voice on the floor of Parliament by 2027. Can we copy Bougainville? Because its already in the country. We just allow the law to create an X number of women positions whether its six positions or 22 positions and at one stage there was a proposal that if women candidates stood on the regional level, those runners up women should automatically become members of Parliament. That's one proposal at that stage, its about 15 years ago.

So, I don't have the answer but I'm using this opportunity to call upon women leaders throughout the country and thinkers who make a recommendation to the committee.

I think my own thinking is that Bougainville constitutional provision for women seats is the way to go. I think precedence has already been set. That's the National Parliament, how about the provincial assembly?

So, we have three levels of legislature. Elections lo National Parliament, women tu ol bai go lo election. How about the provincial assembly? Couldn't we, by law, say that 50 percent of the seats at the provincial assembly must be women? At the LLG level, couldn't we say by law, noken go election lo LLG, representation of 50 percent lo LLG em mas meri, 50 percent em mas man, na ol bai electim chairman, ino president.

Chairman lo LLG so ol ken deliverim services. That type of thinking must begin to happen in our country, so we bring women's voice on the floor of Parliament at the three levels of legislature. And at the administration level, we need to convince government that 30 percent of CEO positions in statutory bodies must be women. That type of thinking so we have to think ahead.

So, I just want to start a national conversation beginning today so yupla yumi olgeta tingting na kamapim wanpla positive one so that the committee can recommend so that in the 2027 elections, you don't have to go against men because you have said the right thing.

We need to allow a change of law to take place. That's the issue that I really picked up, but the rest of the issues LLG elections, Ms Michael said presidents will be elected by the people and that's the decisions that has been made. The other issues that have been raised, everybody has repeated the same thing so we will look at them.

On the Mr Gwambelek's issue on candidate's criteria on nomination, in my own view I think only birth should qualify a candidate to stand for election and not residential qualification. Husait i born long dispela electorate, mama na papa bilong ol em stret bilong Abau electorate em i mas sanap i noken somebody husait i kam stap sikspela mun tasol long Abau na yu qualify.

Too broad, so everybody is competing and there is an advice that the committee was given and that is in assessing the regional representation on the National Parliament. One region in the country has 43 per cent of the seats and the other 53 per cent is shared with the other three regions of the country that is a big issue. If you look at the number of seats created per region, the Highlands region has more seats than the Momase, New Guinea Islands and the Southern region.

These are some of the issues that we also have to consider in fair representation, not only on the women but because we are as Ms Maclay has reemphasised 850 different tribes and languages; we are truly a diverse country. Therefore, in the legislature at the national level there must be a fair game and play. So those are big issues that you have raised today and my mind was thinking as to how we would respond, so that we create level playing field for women on the gender issues and also in terms of our tribal issues.

One issue that came up which you haven't raised is the issue of speed voting na wanpela man husait i makim ol balot pepa. Antap long Highlands region they admitted that it took place. Should we say that is illegal? Well the current law says that is illegal but practice ol i wokim. Let's stop saying it is illegal but let's say it is legal but manage it.

I'm throwing in some thinking outside of the box. Let me give you an example, 850 different languages I know that Governor Allan Bird has his own tribe, I have my own tribe, tribal obligations are real so my village people will always say Sir Puka we'll give you vote one, the others we give you two and three, based on whatever their criteria is. Who will say that tribe is wrong because the law says it is illegal, so we shout up and down and say it is illegal. By doing that where are we parking our culture and our behavior. I am throwing this in so that we may need to rethink the current laws that govern elections in terms of gender, tribalism, bribery and where does our Melanesian culture come in?

Lida mas kilim pig na sharim buai. If we illegalize everything like when we illegalize other things, the black markets will mushroom and no state can manage the black markets effectively so your inputs are really exciting stuff. Thank you very much for coming.

For the church, the Chairman has already acknowledged but for myself, the behaviour of candidates and supporters is very apparent where the church has played a very important role. Where the church is struggling, the behavior of citizens and candidates are nowhere close to the regions where the election has run smoothly.

So, however our mindsets are influenced, if it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ then obviously it attracts behaviour etcetera. And so, the church's role in elections from the Gulf team, the Bishop of the United Church came and represented the church part of the PESC, that is why

we want to always acknowledge the important role the church has played. In fact, without the churches Papua New Guinea would not be close to where we are.

So, the church plays a critical role in our endeavor to become a good State. The call is for everybody to be responsible for making the 2027 Elections better than the 2022 Elections. We believe the Committee will package recommendations that are deliverable; easy to deliver, and manage.

This is not the end of the exercise and I have made a call for women in the country to look at how women's voices can be better heard particularly at the National Parliament level and we will look forward to those recommendations that are coming, thank you.

**Hon ROBERT NAGURI** – Thank you, Chairman and Deputy Chairman. Good afternoon ladies, I have just a few comments to make regarding the elections. I believe that how elections are conducted in an area comes back to the attitude of every individual.

Just hearing female candidates being intimidated during counting is shocking. It is shocking to hear it come from a female in an urban center in Momase; this is a city.

In Bogia, we are a rural district and we expect people to behave at a certain level. I have not seen that in my electorate because we do not treat our women candidates like that. We have this, holim han wantaim ol mama na yumi go insait lo ileksen. Mipela ino bin bagarapim wanpela meri lo taim blo ileksen, lo taim blo kautin na mi pilim sem liklik lo kain pasin olsem i kamap insait lo city. And, this is not very good, hearing it from Morobe.

I think yupela ol churches na gavaman i gat wok lo mekim lo educatim ol pipol insait lo city na ol settlements bikos planti bad influences i stap insait lo ol towns and cities. Mipela lo rural area custom i stap strong, church i stap strong na ol pasin blo mipela i orait. A very good example i kam lo ol lain lo Vanimo, West Sepik ol i ronim ileksen blo ol very well. Wanpela as tingting why ol i wokim gut is bikos ol i isolated na i nogat autsait influence lon paulim tingting blo man. Insait lo city i gat kainkain ol pipia i go insait lo het bilong ol man na em i save affectim ol man na ol man i wok lo givim dispela nogut treatment lo ol meri.

So, mi encouragim yupela lon wok hat lo dispela, yupela ol mama lo educatim ol pikinini yupela karim long em.

Em no ol narapela lain ol kam bagarapim yupela, ino ol aliens, Saina, Europeans na Americans. These are Papua New Guinean men, yupela ol mama karim na ating yupela fail long ol sampela hap long ino luk autim gut ol dispela pikinini so head bilong ol i kamap krangi.

Mi, Governor Bird na Sir Puka Temu tu mama karim mipela na olsem wanem mipela kamap ol gutpela man, het bilong mipela wok gut na sampela pikinini long hia het bilong ol ino wok gut.

Mama na papa, mi laik encouragim yupela long stretim siti bilong yumi, yupela olgeta churches, provincial government and political leadership long hia long women folk yupela mas wokim bikpela wok long stretim tingting bilong ol man insait long citi. So, 2027 sapos mipela i late long mekim ol reforms. Em bai kam bek gen long how pipol ol i behave long 2027 elections. Mipela no laikim em kamap worse than 2022, so em bikpela challenge i stap long yupela olgeta long yupela mas holim han na stretim ples bipo long 2027.

Sapos government em i mekim ol reforms long wok bilong mipela dispela komiti em bai gutpela. Ol reforms i kamap bipo long 2027, em bai orait na sapos mipela i delay na i gat sampela asua, em bai mipela go stap long wankain system yet na bai bikpela challenge tru long yumi olgeta long 2027. So em liklik contribution bilong mi tasol long nau apinun long pinisim bung bilong mipela. Tenkyu Chairman.

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Alright any last words from the participants before I close the session. Ms Yawing.

**Ms. CAROL YAWING** – Thank you Chairman, as Memba bilong Bogia i toktok na mi laik kam tok olsem as for us in Lae city, mipela i stap namel turu accessible from momase, highlands na olgeta narapela hap i kam.

So taim bilong election i kamap, taim yu refer igo long yu yet olsem Bogia with due respect or wanpela hap long Nui Island or Milne Bay for that matter, em yu yet yu stap. Taim yu lukluk i kam long Lae, em olgeta lain i kam stap long hia.

I'll go back to Sir Puka Temu i bin tok pinis ol i kam long stap long hia, we say six months but ol mushroom squatters lain, ol i kam sindaun na claimim nating graun na stap. Taim bilong election ol i winim ol asples man long sanap na ron long election. So dispela kain mentality na challenge ol i save givim long meri tu. Mipela ol lain long hia as Morobeans speaking, mipela ino kain lain olsem. Mipela karim gutnuis long hia na igo, mipela tok kam long hia, so yumi save stap wantaim. So dispela respect i mas kam bek long mipela long hia, em tu mas i stap. Yu nonap kam six months tasol or two months tasol na yu traim long kam challengim mipela long hia. Em wanpela samting taim yupela toktok long olsem isolation na yupela i lukim gut olsem Vanimu, Milne Bay, or long area bilong yu, em olsem yupela yet. Mipela long hia em nation i kam stap. Tenkyu.

## Closing Remarks

**Mr CHAIRMAN** – Thank you, Ms Yawing, I think your points are noted. Before I close the session, I just want to thank all the participants; we had Morobe and East Sepik yesterday, today we had Madang and West Sepik. And I just wanted to thank you all for coming here to contribute and I just want to make this statement.

(1) We are not the court of law, so ino wok bilong mipela long tok olsem yu wrong or right em ino wok bilong mipela. Justice system bilong yumi em stap long mekim dispela wok, mipela i makim Parliament, mipela ino makim executive government na olsem yupela i tok pinis Parliament em maus bilong ol pipol. And its been a long time since parliamentary committee's have been used in this way and I know that our people have not experienced parliamentary committee's coming through and its kind like a new phenomenon but there those of us in Parliament who want to make sure that our systems work and they work for our people. So, mi laik assurim yupela ol lain i lukluk long dispela transmission bilong mipela igo out na plus ol participants long tete. We don't know everything so part of our role is to go around and look and listen.

When we do that, we uncover in all of the doom and gloom, planti samting em i wrong long kantri bilong yumi but then we discovered that they are pockets in our country where certain groups are doing well, they got good leadership who are accountable and so we want to discover this well functioning and performing groups and then to see if we can translate that across our country.

It's been a long time; in fact our elections have never been scrutinized like this. Em first taim bilong history bilong mipela, even before Independence during the first elections in 1964 up till now mipela i stat long lukluk. So, we welcome your comments, yupela i gat sampela bel hevi that's what we are here to do to listen to you. So mipela i tok tenkyu long dispela especially long ol mama now that the issue has been raised and I have flagged it to our Chairman,

Honourable Powes Parkop na em i tok pinis olsem mipela bai kam down long Morobe, hopefully in the not too distant future, but between Parliament sitting and what not bai mipela i karim the gender equality and women empowerments committee i kam long hia. Hopefully we can get Momase here so yupela administration i stap mi lukim East Sepik i stap, Madang i no stap, West Sepik i stap, sapos i gat opportunity long yumi invitim ol participants long kam we will work that out but suffice to say that these things are not going to be fixed by us members of Parliament alone.

So mipela kam long harim nek bilong yupela and that's the reason why we have involved groups like NRI, Transparency International and INA because we want to give confidence to our people, all of you, yupela ol mama, youth, churches, participants in the elections. We want to give confidence that these things will be fixed.

When we first started this; mipela interviewim Police Commissioner, Defense Force Commander na CIS Commander na ol i tokim mipela olsem long 2017 elections ol save putim colour code long ol different provinces, olgeta highlands province bin red, sampela province long nabis stap yellow na planti i green. Na long 2022 elections nogat wanpela province i green na olgeta i go yellow, plenti i kamap red, so ol i tokim mipela olsem 2027 elections sapos mipela i no stretim wanpela samting then olgeta province bai red.

So as a responsible Parliament representing the Government of the day, mipela i nonap sindaun tasol na larim em i go red when we know that its going to go red. So, all of the things that we can fix and we want to do things that are implementable.

Yes, there are some great ideas about how we can go forward but one of the things em dispela voter roll ya is one thing we need to fix very quickly because there are several provinces who on their own initiative ol i go pinis. But there are restrictions for example the electoral roll at the moment under law belongs to the Electoral Commission. So, we have to figure out whether administratively or through a change of legislation so that it becomes a public document so that all provinces can update it and it can be available quickly.

We don't understand why things have been working the way they are but because of this committee that mipela member bilong Parliament and we have always sat on this side and participated in the process but don't manage the process.

So, as we talk to the people who manage the process mipela tu stat long kisim understanding olsem wanem samting i wok long go wrong. So the electoral roll is key to the whole agenda but then there are process issues that needs to be fixed; issues like people don't trust the security forces, they don't trust the public servants that work with the members of Parliament, ol creatim DDA na dispela kain so DA bilong district em kam pas wantaim member na karim briefcase bilong member raun na em stap olsem secretary bilong member, so obviously that creates a lot of suspicion, mistrust, so em kam bek ken long mipela ol lida long lukluk long sampela ol dispela process we em i compromisim mipela olgeta. I am aware of this so I work at arms and lengths.

To my administrator, em ino wantok blo mi, em igat different tokples. Mipela Sepik igat 98pela tok ples, West Sepik igat 112 tokples, so that's how many tribes in the greater Sepik area, that's over 200 of us.

So em ino wantok blo mi or wan lotu blo mi, emi narapla man olgeta, so we try to maintain a level of professionalism because it is essential that we do those kind of things to give assurance to the general public because public ya, mipela lo Sepik ol lukim yu sanap toktok wantaim wanpela meri tasol ol bai tok em tupela ya sampela samting kamap. Mipela Sepik mipela save saspek hariap hariap so we have to be careful in how things are viewed by the public. So it's just not us it's got to be done across the country.

Our people need to have confidence that firstly, their systems are trustworthy secondly, that if they participate in the process, a genuine outcome is possible at the end. So that is what we are here for.

So mi laik tok stret lo yupela olgeta lain, all the viewers looking in from outside, I know there is a lot of skeptics. I tell my colleague members, in the last Parliament, we were trying to pass the ICAC law, and ICAC was on the shelf for more than 20 years, and when it was brought to the Floor, many members of Parliament were reluctant to pass this Bill. I was one of the few who stood up and said, almost everyone in Papua New Guinea brands us as corrupt, ol tok mipela olgeta stil man. I said, I don't know about all of you but I don't like those titles from the people because in my own province, I can drive to my village without police escort. I can stop by the roadside markets and converse with the mothers and villagers. So if people like me who have the confidence of my own people, to be branded as a thief, pretty soon we start to lose trust in all our systems and that is not good enough.

So before that happens, this committee is tasked in fixing one aspect of our country and that is the elections. Those who participate in the elections, for example, mi yet mi gat kain tingting and mipela ol committee discuss pinis, yu husait man yu karim tribe blo yuk am lo election na u threaten other people or yu kukim ballot box or dispel kain, mi laik changim penalty, so we ban you for life so you never again participate in an election.

It is a privilege for you to come and represent your people. So these are the serious considerations that the committee is taking but we will be guided by NRI and our partners.

Some of us have extreme tingting so we got to balance that with reasonable thinking and our report, we want to take it to Parliament quickly in the next sitting that is why mipela raun na mipela hariap hariap.

We will be the first Parliamentary Committee that has delivered a report within 12 months. We will be the first if we do it and once we do we will focus on implementation. We

want to make sure for example, that things like the update of the Common Roll start quickly. Things like making sure that, the Electoral Commission receive K300 million, this committee still does not understand how that money was spent. The Police received a K155 million so we want to see, dispela moni oli spendim lo we? Was it all spent in one place? Did they hire cars with it? What did they do with it? We still don't have a clear picture of that. So this is one of the things that we want to know. Over K600 million was spent in the last Election, I say over K600 million because planti ol provins too i putim moni.

I know that in the case of my province, the Administrator is seated at the back, he made a decision on his own initiative with the public servants lo spendim money blo province lo completim elections. If em ino bin baim allowance blo ol security forces lo East Sepik and ol counting officials, they wouldn't have counted and we would have missed the deadline but he took the decision himself.

So obviously, money did not come from Port Moresby to do that, these are the sorts of things that we have to ensure does not happen again. So if it means that a lot of the provinces take control of some of these aspects of the elections then that is what we are going to do. We can't keep doing the same thing over and over and expect a different result. Em bai ino inap kamap. So we have go to change the way we do business and that's what we are about so with that let me thank you all.

Next week Thursday we will be in Kokopo. We have left the best for last because from the reports we have received, the best conduct in the elections was in the NGI with the least number of incidents and things going wrong.

I am not sure about West New Britain given the things that are happening there now but we will be there next week so yupela ol lain lo NGI yupela igat opportunity lo kam na as you have seen today, have your views heard before the Committee.

With that I thank everyone for your participation. I now suspend the hearings until next week Thursday at 10 a.m., in Kokopo.

Thank you all very much.

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