

Business Council of Papua New Guinea

President's Report to the Annual General Meeting

27 June 2007

Welcome to the 2007 Annual General Meeting.

A new look Board (formally Executive Committee) took office 12 months ago and with a mixture of experience on the Council together with several fresh faces, it has been a time of change and much activity.

A Strategic Business Plan (SBP) formulated in April 2006 last year has given some direction to the work of the Board this year and a review was conducted following a retreat early this year followed by a review of the plan in April this year.

The Council has undertaken a lot of work consistent with the objectives and strategies of the SBP. Much work and thought process has been directed at ensuring that focus is not lost and that objectives where deemed necessary have been reviewed and new priorities and strategies constantly planned and monitored.

The Board has done much to ensure that the SBP becomes part of the culture of the organisation and that it is maintained as a living document.

On the external front, the National Working Group on Removing Impediments to Investment & Business (NWG) continued to be the main focus of the private sector consultation and dialogue and proved to be one of the most important examples of private/public sector partnerships. The President of the Business Council is the Co Chair on this committee and in that capacity, I have worked closely with the Chairman, Chief Secretary and other senior members of the bureaucracy along with private sector organisations. I have stood in as chair on several occasions.

New Labour legislation passed recently is an example of the work that takes place at the NWG. Other examples include the finalisation of the Land Task Force and the general encouragement of practical measures to improve investment conditions.

Whilst no meetings have taken place this year, it is hoped that the NWG will reconvene shortly after the formation of the new government.

The Australia PNG Business Forum continues to be one of our main activities on the calendar. This year's Forum held in March in Cairns was again a resounding success, despite being held some two (2) months earlier than normal. The reason for the change in date was due to the election campaign this year. This "gamble" paid off and together with a change in venue to the Cairns Convention Centre made the Forum the success it was. A total of 167 delegates attended of which 92 were from PNG.

The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Alexander Downer attended in person having sent apologies and a recorded message in the two previous Forums as did our own Minister, Paul Tiensten.

It was pleasing to see both Ministers share centre stage especially after the aftermath of the Moti Affair which had resulted in the cancellation of the Ministerial Forum last year.

The three way partnership between the Australia PNG/PNG Australia Business Councils and our own Council to stage another successful Forum spoke for itself. For the information of members the net proceeds from the Forum will be split three ways between the three (3) organisations.

The cancellation of the Ministerial Forum last year did not deter our joint Councils and we continued with our usual pre Forum consultations with key PNG Government & Australian senior Foreign Affairs technocrats. These meetings were an opportunity to show business solidarity and the partnership between PNG & Australia despite political hiccups at any given time. A joint communiqué urged both governments and in particular the Foreign Ministers of both countries to re-establish dialogue at an early opportunity.

Another joint meeting is being planned for early August and whilst a new government may not yet be installed, we have decided to proceed on the basis that it is for us, always business as usual.

An important part of the Council's internal management and decision making process is the extra work put in by members of the various Board Committees. These are the Finance, Marketing & the Trade & Services Committees. These committees meet as and when in between the monthly Board meetings, sometimes often.

The work of the latter committee deserves special mention and one of their main tasks to date has been the creation of awareness, forging of closer links and consultations between various line agencies of government.

Another project on the go is the hosting of the APEC Conference on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to be held in August of this year. The Business Council is working very closely and jointly with the IPA and the National Events Council to host this very important meeting.

The collection of data, policy and legislative review of trade in PNG forms another part of the activities of this Committee. The intention is to formulate a paper on Trade Investment & Competition Policy and Law Reform for the new Government.

Membership of the Councils continues to grow at a steady rate with membership from 103 to 135 in the last twelve (12) months.

Whilst this steady growth is predicted, the Board is mindful that the activities and achievements of the Council are reported to members and that members see the benefits of their membership of the Business Council.

I wish to thank the outgoing members of the Board for their support and valuable input to the direction of the Council; in particular, Messrs Mike Manning & Syd Yates who have retired after many years serving on the Executive Committee of the BCPNG.

I wish to acknowledge the valuable support provided by Mr Mel Togolo in various capacities on the Executive Committee including as President and recently as Vice President. Mel has stepped down as Vice President but has kindly agreed to continue on the Board of the Council.

I welcome Mr David Toua as the new Vice President and also two new faces on the Board in Troy Stubbings and Paul Barker.

Lanna Kami, the “new” Executive Officer who replaced Maryanne MacDonald, and Asi Geno, the two staff members of the Council. Thank you.

The other members of the Board and you the members of the Business Council for your support and guidance throughout the year – thank you.

I look forward to the opportunity of serving you all for another term.



Henry R Kila OBE
President