

Challenges for an incoming Government in Papua New Guinea

- Acknowledging UPNG and ANU especially Professor Howes and Professor Pillai and their respective Department's for inviting me to speak today. I would also like to thank the organising committee for the UPNG Update and to acknowledge the scholars, researchers, students, practitioners and diplomats who are attending today.
- Honoured to be asked to present at this Forum. PNG Update established itself as one of the premier events in the country. What I like about it is that it enables a wide range of people to contribute ideas, elevates critical challenges facing the country, generates insights and enables people to network and exchange views.
- Keynote addresses – generate new insights (what, when, where and how), makes people think about specific challenges/opportunities and helps generate discussion, ideas and ultimately lead to some form of action.
- Decided to focus on providing advice to the new Government. In keeping with UN's role in many places around the world but also in keeping with my role as a 'Senior Civil Servant' in the UK's Civil Service.
- In the UK when a civil servant is asked to prepare an initial Brief for an incoming government, it is generally a 'fine balancing act' combining continuity and change. Need to show that you are aware of and appreciate the new Government's priorities and that the ideas they have set out in the manifesto can help to lead to positive change in the country. Where one has doubts about the feasibility of some of the proposals, it is generally not a good idea (in your first brief) to say that too bluntly but instead suggest that some of the ideas may require further research before they are piloted or tested out on a larger scale.

In a first Briefing it is also generally advisable to 'fly some kites' that demonstrate that the civil service is capable to generating 'fresh ideas' to meet critical national challenges. The challenge is to describe the ideas clearly but briefly and show that they can help provide feasible solutions to perceived challenges. The aim is to encourage the Minister(s) to request more details on these ideas.

The initial brief is also all about building trust and confidence with the PM/Minister.

- So let me try to do this now recognising also that in this room I am speaking to a room full of Senior academics, policy experts and practitioners. I will also aim to indicate areas where I think more social-science research needs to focus in future.
- A word of caution – presentation represents my personal reflections – not the views of the UN.

Slide 2

Context: Country at a critical juncture and an important time in its history. What we do (or don't do) in the next 5 years will shape period to 2030 and beyond.

- +40 anniversary since independence
- Elections for the 10th Parliament
- SDGs and Vision 2050
- Regional Leadership role, Pacific but also Asia, APEC
- Changing landscape .. Australia, China, Japan, Indonesia, SE Asia, US & EU

- Consider ways in which the changing global context affects opportunities as well as risks and challenges in PNG
- Opportunities – mapping the way technology is helping to address key challenges in Asia Pacific including challenges in education, health and other sectors; Making more use of PNG's diaspora and experiences of students having studied abroad. The story of BSP or Duffy's
- Risks and Challenges – migration patterns (as a result of conflict, climate change etc.); impact of new global epidemics; food security challenges; drugs and criminal networks.

- Challenge for key PNG institutions (are we doing enough to build links with other similar institutions in other countries especially in Asia Pacific)?

Slide 3

- Disputed election results and the voter roll. Risk of people/areas feeling socially excluded (jobs, gender, youth, people in remote areas and those most vulnerable) and potential for increasing inequality and conflict.

- Representation of Women in Politics/Parliament – US Ambassador Ebert-Grey

- First 100 days (vital to signal what will continue and what will change). Enlist support from key National Institutions (Ombudsman's Office, Registrar of Political Parties, Constitutional and Law Reform Commission, NRI, INA, NARI, universities etc..)

Build Trust and Confidence (national unity) across the whole country.

- Improve Government Communications (two-way process – solicit citizen feedback)

Slide 4

Economic challenges facing the new Government (Secretary Vele and Prof Howes and Dr Schroeder).

Good that Minister Abel has already indicated a willingness to take urgent action to address the economic challenges (debt restructuring, revenue strategy and revision of tax system). Budget (2017-2018 -2019). Vital to have more predictability of budgets to assist planning & maintain discipline).

Supplementary budget (essential) but will not solve the issues. Reduce discretionary expenditure (DSIP/PSIP).

Secure external support for a broader Public Sector reform programme.

Assist provinces to develop growth strategies and develop a National Growth Strategy.

Slide 5

Build on the Unity in Diversity tradition. Stability is vital for growth and confidence.

Public perceptions of funding of APEC need to be addressed. Set out PNG's national objectives for the APEC. Find ways of linking it to local development and showcasing PNG products (Fairtrade coffee and cocoa), start re-branding PNG now and creating marketing opportunities.

Use the APEC not just as a 'well hosted one year' but to change the narrative of the APEC/ABAC to support Sustainable Development (establish PNG as a World leader on Sustainable Development).

Bougainville – agree to establish a Referendum Commission (to progress the Peace Agreement) asap, establish an Eminent Persons Group to ensure progress continues and is carefully monitored to deliver on the BPA.

Slide 6

Be ambitious - don't rest on what's been achieved previously. Need to build infrastructure not just for today's challenges but for next 20+ years (climate and disaster proofing).

Infrastructure outside Port Moresby

Consider naming roads and infrastructure after the companies that built these structures. ☺

Slide 7

Continuously measure progress and incentivise people and communities to do things for themselves and find private sector solutions.

Slide 8

Population (first priority in Alotau II)

Diversifying the economy (Alotau II mentions tourism, agriculture, SMEs, forestry, fisheries, manufacturing)

Education and Health

Climate and disasters

Re-design/build the public service

Data – (Prioritising evidence and timely data). We need to be able to target resources where they can make most impact.

Government Communications (listening to citizen feedback but also explaining what is being done) vital.

Slide 9

Parliament (our premier National institution)

- Consider the need to increase the number of Parliamentarians (eg NZ has smaller population but more MPs than PNG)!
- Affirmative action to have women and youth better represented in Parliament (via quotas or reserved seats).
- Establish key institutions (Sovereign Wealth Fund, ICAC and Human Rights Commission).
- Rebuilding the public service (an independent, objective, professional and high performing and highly motivated public service).
- Begin process of creating a federal state with powers assigned to centre and provinces. Devolve some powers to Provinces including some revenue raising powers and agree the areas where the Centre will lead on national policy.
- Consider some populist measures (introducing a ban on non bio-degradable plastic bags and single use plastics, investing more in building the National Volunteer Scheme).

Set out the vision of how you want PNG to be in 2022.