



Speech By

MINISTER FOR LANDS & PHYSICAL PLANNING
Hon. John Rosso, MP

On the

**Occasion of the Launching of the National Land Development Program Phase
II**

“Our Land, Our Life, Our Future”

**INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER,
Port Moresby, National Capital District**

17th October 2019

Introduction

- The Prime Minister – Hon. James Marape,
- Minister for Housing and former Lands Minister – Hon. Justin T
- (name other important person in the room),
- the media fraternity
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

The agenda on Land Reform has quite a long history. It has existed through successive governments and has faced many challenges. The Land Reform Agenda was dormant for the last 6-7 years. My special thanks to my predecessor the current Minister for Housing & Urbanization - Hon. Justin Tkatchenko who noted the

importance of land reform and taken the leadership to ignite the process to revive the land reform program early this year specifically focusing on reforming customary land in PNG. I commend him for his bravery in venturing into an area most Papua New Guinean leaders do not dare to go. It is indeed a great success with the outcomes; the 2019 National Land Summit's 17 resolutions and cabinet endorsement of the outcomes, which we are here in this room to announce to the nation.

When I came in as a new Minister for Lands, this was one of the major reform item that was brought to my attention. After going through the underlying rationale behind the reform initiative, I am more than convinced that this is a way forward for PNG to realize its development aspirations through empowering of our people to utilize their land to improve their livelihoods. Consequently, I remain committed to this great initiative and will ensure I initiate the implementation of most of these 17 resolutions during the term of this government.

Once again, thank you all for coming to this landmark event heralding the start of seriousness of the Marape – Steven Government to reform customary land in PNG that will pave the way for sustainable economic growth. **Let me make it clear at an outset to all landowners in Papua New Guinea that the Government is not making land reform to take away your land but to empower you in a significant way so that you can actively participate to build a better future for yourselves and your future generations.** In doing so, the Government will enable a win-win situation for all parties; the landowners, investors and the state to participate in the productive process.

Land Reform in PNG

Past attempts at land reform always failed with bloodsheds however, after the inaugural National Land Summit in 2005, major strides were made into reforming land in PNG. The Government then established the National Land Reform Program Phase I which was tasked to implement the recommendations of the 2005 summit. Notable achievements made to date include; creation of the separate land court to deal solely with land disputes and is under the magisterial services, creation of the ILG and Customary Land Divisions within DLPP and the amendments made to two pieces of legislations to enable the forming of ILGs and registration of customary land. However, the program lost momentum commencing 2013 when the reform program was subsumed into the National Land and Affordable Housing Program which distorted the reform aspirations.

2019 National Land Summit

After 6 years, the program is now revived. Four (4) regional consultations (Port Moresby, Kokopo, Madang and Mt. Hagen) for landowners and provincial governments and a stakeholders workshop in Port Moresby for regulators, major agricultural investors, major mining companies, real estates and foreign diplomatic corps were conducted to gauge their views on customary land development. From these consultations, 17 resolutions were reached. These resolutions were verified and endorsed by all stakeholders in early May this year during the major National Land Summit here in Port Moresby at this very venue.

Cabinet Decision

I am now pleased to announce that the Marape-Steven Government has now approved and endorsed the 17 recommendations in its entirety for implementation

commencing 2020. The program will now be called the National Land Development Program Phase II.

Administrative Structure of Land Reform Implementation

The implementation is featured under 3 thematic areas:

- a) Land Administration;
- b) Customary Land Development; and
- c) Land Dispute Settlement.

The Government endorsed establishment of a Land Reform Committee (LRC) and a Program Management Unit (PMU) to administer implementation of the National Land Development Program Phase II. The LRC and PMU would comprise of officers from:

- a) Department of Lands and Physical Planning;
- b) Department of Justice and Attorney General;
- c) Department of National Planning and Monitoring;
- d) Department of Treasury;
- e) National Research Institute; and
- f) Other relevant agencies.

Key Outcomes of Reform Program

The key priorities and outcomes of the NLDP Phase II are:

1. Establishment and operationalization of Customary Land Development Agency;
2. Reviewing of existing legislations dealing with Customary Land;
3. Strengthening of Land Court System; and
4. Reforming of existing agencies dealing with Customary Land.
5. Ensuring the bankability of the customary land titles

Other Reform Initiatives Undertaken by DLPP

On this occasion, I am also happy to announce other reform initiatives undertaken by my Ministry- the DLPP;

1. Title Security – with technical assistance from Australia Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs, the DLPP is working on a new look state lease title with Security features to avoid duplication of titles.
2. All Land records are being scanned so that the records will be stored electronically which will solve the problem of missing files.
3. The DLPP's Automated System will be used come 2020 beginning with title dealings where transfer and mortgage registrations will be electronically processed. Also, the billing and receipting using the Auto Mated System will commence in 2020 and this will significantly increase the Revenue that will be generated by the department.
4. Strata Title – DLPP is working on a bill to introduce strata titling in PNG whereby units and apartments will be issued titles. This is to encourage high rise buildings and to maximize the use of available state land/space in urban centers. Also, this will increase revenue for the state. Currently, stakeholder consultation is underway through an online survey.
5. Legislative Amendments – most laws administered by DLPP is outdated. DLPP will look at amending some laws to have it compatible with the changing environment.

Conclusion

Land is the only and very critical asset that Papua New Guineans own. The rural majority of our people's livelihood is connected to land. Thus, improving the value of the land will contribute significantly to improving the livelihoods of the majority of our people.

This is one of the major reform undertaken and I am now calling upon our landowners through-out PNG, our state apparatus, private sector investors and our development partners to work as a team to deliver this reform initiative so that it will contribute to the development aspiration of our country.

Thank you and enjoy the evening.