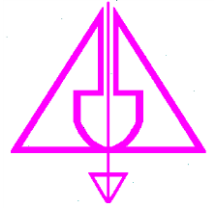




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2020 Implementation of Land Reforms

Business Breakfast - POMCCI

Hon. John Rosso
Minister
Department of Lands & Physical Planning

06 February 2020

Introductory Remarks - Setting the Scene

I acknowledge the

1) host (PNG Commerce & Industry-POMCCI) and other counterparts who are in the room:

- CEOs and Heads of Private Enterprises;
- State Ministers and Members of Parliament;

- Heads of Departments and Statutory Agencies;
- Heads of Diplomatic Missions and Development Partners; and
- Everyone else present this morning.

- 2) Role that the private sector plays in PNG's development. The business community is the engine for the growth of jobs and incomes for PNG citizens and the major source of income for the State through taxation. The private sector plays an important role in the development of our nation.
- 3) The good work the Chamber of Commerce & Industry does in PNG by hosting events such as this morning's Business Breakfast. Hosting of such events enforces the link between business, State agencies and other stakeholders.

Outline of this morning's discussions centers around three questions:

- What is the land reform agenda?
- What has been done?
- What is the basis of this reform agenda?

What is the Land Reform Agenda & What has been Done?

The land reform agenda constitutes three components:

(1) Reforms into Land Administration within the Department of Lands and Physical Planning (DLPP): This consists of a myriad of reform initiatives, including the following:

- review of land administration systems with Technical Assistance from the Australian Government;
- investing in a new title with security feature which cannot be duplicated and can be traced through a serial number to replace our ordinary A4 paper based titles – critical for managing fraudulent titles dealings;
- investing into an electronic online payments system;
- introduction of Strata Title Laws; and
- Scanning and digitalising of land records.
- Computerizing our systems to ensure stricter processes and accountability.
- Doing some legislative changes to reform out-dated land laws.

- Increasing revenue procedures.

(2) Reforms into Customary Land Tenure:

- Adopted 17 resolutions at the National Land Summit in May 2019 (NLS2019), following a series of regional and stakeholder meetings;
- NEC endorsed the 17 resolutions and created the National Land Development program II (NLDP II) to oversee implementation of these resolutions; and
- Government of PNG allocated K10m per year to NLDP II in the 2020 National Budget for a 5-year period to implement the outcomes of the NLS 2019, starting in 2020.

The main aim of NLDP II is to develop a legal and administrative framework that makes customary land bankable. This process must empower customary landowners to commercialize their customary and create certainty for those that use the land. Hence, developing a legal and administrative framework that ensures bankability of land titles arising from the commercialization of customary land is the main objective of NLDP II.

The implementation process will remain consultative, involving the customary landowners, users of the land – the investment community (both PNGans and Foreigners) and the financial institutions - and the State agencies who will be providing administrative oversight.

(3) Pilot project for commercializing customary land

In recognition of the fact that State land is all but exhausted in all urban centers and the demand for land by both the State and the private sector are on the increase and encroaching on customary land, we are piloting, using the existing provisions in the Land Act 1996, to empower customary landowners surrounding urban centers in PNG to commercialize their land by creating State leases and granting titles to fully or partially landowner owned companies.

This pilot project, which is within Port Moresby, specifically the Napa Napa area will generate the templates for application:

- elsewhere in the country for scale development such as satellite townships throughout PNG;
- in major resources sector, especially mining, who are looking for ways to secure land for **resettlement** – permanent compared to **relocation** which is temporary- in our major resource projects such as Lihir, Porgera, Wafi Golpu, and Frieder River; and
- help resolve the long outstanding issues of dubious dealings on Special Agriculture Business Lease (SABL) Currently, there are no more SABL being issued which has been abused in the past.

What is the Basis of the Land Reforms?

The land reform agenda are continuation from what my predecessor Hon. Justin Tkatchenko started:

- revive the land reform program that is specifically focused on reforming customary land in PNG which resulted in the 2019 National Land Summit's 17 resolutions, cabinet endorsement of the outcomes and appropriation of K10m a year in the 2020 National Budget by the current Government;
- started the review of land administration within DLPP, scanning of land files, developing the Strata Title Bill and investing in the new security proof titles system; and
- initiated the pilot project in Port Moresby to create the template for the commercialization of customary land within the urban centers across the country within the existing legal and administrative framework given the urgency of the issue.

These reforms are largely a continuation of the reforms initiated following the first ever National Land Summit held in 2005. The Outcomes of National Summit 2005 (NLS05) were implemented under NLDP I which ended in 2015. While the reforms into land administration lagged behind, the success stories of NLDP I are the creation of the Customary Lands Division within DLPP and the Office of Deputy Chief Magistrate – Land, within the Magisterial Services.

Concluding Remarks

Let me conclude by stating that

- the land reform initiatives are those being carried on from where the former Minister has left;
- I am convinced that these reforms are the right reforms for PNG to realize its development aspirations through empowering of our people to utilize their land to improve their livelihoods;
- I note that bankability of titles is fundamental to achieving this objective;
- I remain committed to this land reform initiative and I will ensure during my term as Minister to ensure
 - implementation of the 17 resolutions under NLDPII,
 - implementation of key land administration reforms within DLPP,
 - get a good model and template for the commercialization of customary land in PNG;
- Note that the reforms are realistic, practical, and are being implemented as highlighted in the examples above - We are **not** only talking but **walking** the talk!
- I invite each one of you, namely the business community and the development community to partner with me and my department, and more broadly the government of PNG to implement the land reform initiatives, which are critical for nation building; and
- Finally, I am well aware that land reform will remain a challenge, especially for customary land because the majority of our people are relying on their customary land for their everyday livelihoods. However, as a nation with development aspirations, just like any other country in the world on this planet, we need to harness the abundant land resources to better our livelihoods. I and this government under the leadership of PM Marape are committed to continue these reforms and make them work for us all – owners and users of land.

Thank you

God Bless