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INAUGURAL OR MAIDEN SPEECH

by Bougainville President - Hon Ishmael Toroama

Inaugural or Maiden Speech

1. The Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the Honorable James Marape; the outgoing President of Bougainville Honorable Chief Dr John Momis, Ministers of the PNG Parliament present here today, Ministers and Members of the Bougainville Parliament; Heads of Foreign Missions represented here today, the Speaker of the Bougainville Parliament, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my utmost pleasure to be presenting my Maiden Parliamentary Speech in front of you all.
2. Mr. Speaker, I am humbled and honored to be speaking to you, as your new President for the next five years. This is the highest position on our land, and I intend to serve the office with faithfulness and diligence.
 - Mr Speaker, we are entering a very important five years, as the people have given us, the enormous responsibility of securing the 98% vote. I am fully aware of this responsibility, as I now take the frontline in the political arena.
 - Mr Speaker, we enter an exciting Parliament, as about 70% are new members entering for the first time, to shoulder the long and old agenda. It is also an interesting Parliament, because three pairs of family relations have

made it into the house – a husband and wife; a father and daughter; and a mother and son. This must be a record in the democratic world. I look forward to their contributions, without fear or favor.

3. Mr Speaker and members of this house, before I go any further, let me first pay homage to the 20,000 lives, who died during our struggle for freedom. Many died not in combat but from lack of access to services. My victory is in their honor. May those of us still alive, continue the journey to the promise land so that their sacrifice will not be in vain.
4. Mr. Speaker, may I thank the people of Bougainville, both inside and outside of Bougainville, for having Trust and Confidence in me, and giving me the mandate to be your President. You had the difficult task of choosing me, from amongst the 25 candidates, all of whom are persons of high standing. Your choice of me as your President, proves that wisdom, knowledge and experience from the “University of life”, still has a place in our Bougainville society.
5. Mr Speaker and Members of this Parliament, what is my key agenda as your new President? As all of my voters know, I campaigned on a platform of three core issues which are **Independence; Corruption and Law & Order.**

5.1. As stated earlier, **Independence** has been our dream since the days of our fore fathers. We have fought for it, and won the war, but we have not yet won the battle! We have now translated it into a number (the 98% Vote), without any significant minority throughout Bougainville. Let there be no doubt, about the legality and validity of the Referendum and the results, as the Referendum is captured in the Organic Law on Peace Building in Bougainville and Referendum, and inserted into the PNG Constitution.

- Mr. Speaker, I thank the outgoing President Hon Chief Dr John Momis, the outgoing Minister for Referendum Mr Punghau, and the United Nations, for the tremendous work they have done in delivering a successful Referendum, and setting an international benchmark, as far as referendum votes are concerned. My Govt will ensure that both Hon Chief John Momis and Mr Punghau continue to guide and participate, in the consultation and dialogue process with the PNG Govt.
- Mr Speaker, the Joint Consultative Framework has already been agreed to by the March JSB. My Govts priority is to continue the preparations and conduct of consultation and dialogue with the Govt of PNG. The Bougainville Peace Agreement, the PNG Constitution, International Treaties and Conventions will show us the

way in our journey to our destiny. We must remain steadfast and continue to consult with our people, inside Bougainville, and outside of the islands, because this has been our collective past, and must also be our collective future.

5.2. Mr Speaker, my second campaign pillar was

Corruption. The bible says in 1 Corinthians 15: 33
“Do not be deceived as bad company ruins morals”
and 2 Peter: 1-19 says *“They promised them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved”*.

- These two versus are very clear, if we want freedom, we must not keep bad company. We must get rid of any individuals, systems or institutions, that are practicing corrupt behaviors. Corruption, whether it is true or a mere speculation, is damaging and we leaders must avoid putting ourselves in questionable situations.
- My Govt intends to keep a clear separation, between decision making (Policy or law) and implementation. Leaders should not make decisions, and then take lead in implementing the same decisions. Leaders may go out and monitor, to ensure laws or policies are being implemented as planned.
- Mr Speaker, I am aware of the weaknesses in the current Financial management system as it has too many leaks. We must fix the leaks going forward. *“A house that is built*

on sand, will easily get blown away by the wind” (Mathew 7: 26). So, let us now start building our Independence journey on solid rock!!

5.3. Mr Speaker, Members of the House and my people of Bougainville, the other key agenda that I campaigned on and got elected is Law and Order. This is essential if Bougainville is to prosper, socially and economically, beyond the Ratification and the securing of Independence. Our dream of being masters of our destiny, will amount to nothing if we cannot behave in civil ways. We have signed the Peace Agreement, we have contained weapons, we have reconciled amongst ourselves as well as with PNG, and above all, we have conducted a highly successful Referendum. There is now no more reason, for anyone to be carrying arms or causing violence or behaving in unruly manners.

- **To those groups that are still not actively participating in our journey, I urge you to join me, as your President, with open arms and walk this journey together. I will be meeting with the Law and Order agencies here in Bougainville, to develop ways of combating increasing law and order issues especially drugs, home brew, gender and family violence, stealing of cars and so on. In the medium to long term, we must have broader economic**

interventions, that can keep the young people usefully employed.

6. Mr Speaker, *“the very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision for the people. You can’t beat the garamut for nothing”*.

- The above three campaign agendas will be part of a much bigger Vision, which the people of Bougainville expressed in the form of the Bougainville Crisis 31 years ago. The Crisis was a revolution in every way, Politically; Economically; and Development wise. It destroyed all systems and provided a golden opportunity to create a new Bougainville. There were many new innovations at that time such as hydropower; coconut oil, new farming systems and even new architecture of village houses. The crisis liberated the thinking of Bougainvilleans.
- Mr Speaker, however, in restoring Bougainville to normalcy, we have simply re-established the old system under new labels such as Interim Authority, the Peoples’ Congress, and the Autonomous Govt and the Public Service. We have not encouraged, the innovative ability of our people, so evident during the Crisis years. The end result is that Bougainvilleans, are again in danger of becoming by-standers on their own land.
- I intend to re-orientate some of the Technical Services functions so that they are better positioned to respond to

the needs of the village people instead of simply being a manager of large tenders and contracts.

- Mr Speaker, we must be masters of our destiny, and we can only do this by putting our own **“software”**, into the structures and institutions we are going to build. Yes, we can borrow ideas from outside, but they must be adapted and adjusted to fit our own way of thinking. It is only through our own **“intellectual control”**, that we can chart our own Pathway and create our own identity, and a place in the global society – the Asian Countries have proven this in no uncertain terms. To this extent, Bougainville must establish, a high-powered **Planning Secretariat**, that will help us dream big into the future, innovate and reach new heights. We must make use of the enormous talent of educated Bougainvilleans outside of Bougainville in this endeavor.

- Mr Speaker and Members of this new Parliament, **the wins-of-change have arrived!** *“Change will not come if we wait for other persons or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek!!”* To quote President Obama.

7. How do we Build a New Society? Mr Speaker, we must **Build Trust and Confidence** in the people through the following strategies:

- **Strategy Number 1 is Political control of our Destiny** – we can only exercise political control through independence – we must pursue **Independence** by all peaceful means. It may happen in one year, or it might take a few more years, but we must never lose focus however long it may take. My people of Bougainville, you have endured this far and your continued patience is all I ask for of you.
- **Mr Speaker, in the Formation of the new Govt**, we must also give confidence and trust to our people. People have desired change as expressed in the high number of new members in this Parliament. This change will be the theme of my government. They may be small but significant changes, in the way Government operates, for example getting each department to manage their own funds, or they may be big infrastructural investments. However, while we are pursuing change, we must also maintain balance between old and new, because the new leaders need to be mentored by the experienced leaders in the ways of running a government.
- Mr Speaker, still under Political control, maintaining constant **Communication** with our people, is essential to their engagement. People must know and understand what the government is doing, in order for the people, to give us their support and participate fully. My

government will look at ways of communicating better with our people.

- **Mr. Speaker, Strategy Number 2 is Economic Growth and Control** – political control will not lead to much improvement in our livelihood, if we are by-standers in the economy. After 45 years of independence, PNG, through the leadership of Prime Minister Honorable James Marape, is taking PNG back. We in Bougainville have a golden opportunity to get it right at this point of our political journey.
- Mr Speaker, under my Govt, we will have specific targeted plan for growing our economy. Panguna mine will be a key target but we will not put all our eggs in the one basket. My Govt has a number of specific large to medium project ideas in mining, agriculture, fisheries and tourism that will create employment and generate revenue for Bougainville.
- We welcome foreign investment, because without outside funding and technologies, we may not be able to exploit our natural resources. But we expect a fair share of return and participation, in the form of shareholding or equity in large scale projects. The medium to small enterprise sector must be controlled by our people.
- Mr. Speaker, it is time we change the shanty -town business image of our main towns. We must also create

an Equal opportunity environment for businesses, so that economic benefits are spread throughout a larger population. In this regard, my Govt will be looking at relevant policies of making this happen under an overall *Economic Development Plan*.

- **My Speaker, Strategy Number 3 for building Trust and Confidence in our people is Administrative Control.** We must have the right Administration to facilitate economic growth and be able to translate and implement political directions. The administration must change from being paper pushers to being agents of change. Too often the public servants are accused of being self-serving, who are more interested in their perks and privileges, or in how much allowance they will get when they go to Port Moresby instead of going to Torokina, Buin or Nissan. Their behavior must change. My Government intends to review, restructure and make changes as appropriate and with a view to redirecting resources to the District level.
- Mr Speaker, and Prime Minister Hon James Mapare, I understand that the drawdown of powers and functions under section 290 of the PNG Constitution that were made available to Bougainville, have not been fully drawn down yet. This needs to be progressed. As we consult and dialogue with PNG, we will also look at the possibility of

getting powers and function currently with the PNG Govt such as:

- Section 289 (powers currently vested with PNG Govt)
- Section 291 (powers relating to Criminal Code)
- Section 293 (the exercise of international obligations)
- and section 298 National Govt Assets & Lands as far as it relates to Bougainville.

- Mr Speaker and Members of this House, **Strategy Number 4 is mobilizing Private Sector and Civil Society** - 80% of our citizens live in villages where local custom, associations and churches play a far greater influence.
- It is impossible for Government to move Bougainville forward by itself. The private sector and civil society organizations be it the church, a farmer's association, and so on, must be mobilized to play a greater role than at the moment. The business houses for example, apart from paying taxes, can be asked to play a direct role in other ways. Many businesses have not been paying taxes here in Bougainville. This must now change.
- **Mr Speaker, Strategy Number 5 is Long term Vision & Planning** – as the saying goes *“Planning to fail is planning for failure”*. Bougainville must embark on an exercise of long-term planning, beyond the medium-term plans which gather dust in the offices of Govt. We must plan long term, say 40 years and have political commitment to

such planning, so that Bougainville rises from the ashes into a vibrant economy, where the full potential and capacity of our citizens are fully harnessed. Singapore, under the leadership of President Lee Kwan Yew was able to transform Singapore, into the global economic hub it is today, through deliberate and sustained long-term planning since 1954. Conditions in Bougainville are different from Singapore, but there is a lesson in long term planning and commitment to it that we can learn from. Bougainville must have a long-term Blue Print.

- **Mr Speaker and Members of the House, Strategy Number 6 is International Relations** – Our historical friends will continue to be our friends, as ours is a long enduring relationship through good and bad times. You have given us trouble but you have also helped us overcome these difficult times, and that is the nature of the human spirit, one that is able to recover, forgive and move on. History must be our guiding light in moving forward, so that we do not make the same mistakes of the past. Our doors under my Govt, will be open to the international community, especially to those who want to help us achieve our dreams, but in a way that is of mutual benefit to us and to our friends to be.

8. **Mr Speaker, Members of the House and the People of Bougainville**, that is my six-point strategy for Bougainville in

the next five years. *My first 100 Day Plan will be one that will drive this six-point Strategy.* Education and Health will of course continue to be offered as normal services. Any new standards of services delivery must await improvements in the economy. We are only generating about 24% of total budget from within Bougainville. Furthermore, Covid-19 has greatly impacted the global as well as the PNG economy. PNG has recently slashed its budget by K2 billion. So, all of these need to be taken into account as we are planning and implementing the Strategies.

9. Mr Speaker, much needs to be done, but we must set our house in order before we can embark on these Strategies.

The following **preconditions** are necessary:

1. *Setting the right political leadership* – the right mix of political leadership is essential to leading Bougainville in the next five years especially for our journey ahead. I will therefore announce a full cabinet, within the 14 days, a team of vibrant leaders who will provide the drive, energy and innovation in moving Bougainville forward.
2. Mr. Speaker, as noted previously, *Innovative Leadership of the Administration* is also important. I will review the situation and make changes if necessary.

3. Mr. Speaker, a long-term Bougainville Blue Print that captures the entire Bougainville society is essential in guiding our way forward. In this regard, I intend to establish a *High-powered Planning Secretariat* (a small unit) made up of highly qualified and competent citizens who will report directly to the President & Executive Council so that our peoples political and development aspirations are achieved.
4. *Control over the population & Territory* is another precondition as already stated under Law and Order. We must educate the masses, those who have not had the opportunity to realize their potential, not necessarily in the classroom, but in the society, so that they become productive members of society.
10. Mr Speaker, at this juncture, let me address directly a number of stakeholders that are important to Bougainville:
11. Firstly, *the PNG Govt* - Mr, Speaker, to the PNG Govt, you caused us immense pain and suffering, but you have helped us in restoring our lives, and you are helping us to rebuild our Govt systems and institutions. We have reconciled and buried our differences as true Melanesian people. However, a lot more needs to be done in helping our Bougainville people live a comfortable life. I am aware

that Bougainville may not have received, its share of funds as agreed in the Bougainville Peace Agreement. I intend to explore this further with the Prime Minister.

12. Mr Speaker, Bougainville and PNG will also walk the journey ahead side by side as you help Bougainville to reach its destiny, which was sanctioned by the blood of 20,000 lives. The sentiments expressed by National Minister for Bougainville Affairs, Sir Puka Temu in his recent Parliamentary Statement, asking PNG Parliamentarians to educate themselves about the history, the culture, the sufferings and the aspirations of Bougainvilleans, is the right grounds on which to walk together the journey and set us free.

13. Mr Speaker, the changing of guards, always comes with uncertainty and trepidation. My Govt will endeavor to establish and maintain an environment of trust within Bougainville, with PNG and the international community so that we can confidently go about our joint agendas. Diplomacy, respect and our Melanesian values must underpin our joint journey but above all Trust and Honesty must prevail as we consult and dialogue towards an outcome that reflects the 98% vote.

14. My Speaker, let me now turn to the International Community & Development Partners.

15. The international community especially Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Solomon Island, Fiji, Vanuatu and the United Nations have been of tremendous value to Bougainville in pacifying the conflict and in helping to rebuild Bougainville. Under my Leadership, Bougainville will continue to work with you so that we reach new heights in our areas of mutual interest.
16. The door will be open to any members of the international community in general that is interested in helping Bougainville take its place in the international arena.
17. Mr Speaker, the Govt and people of Solomon island deserve a special mention. You sheltered us during our times of need and you suffered in the course of it. But most importantly, you were the launching pad for the peace process and I as the new President of Bville accord you my sincere appreciation and look forward to a continued and renewed relationship.
18. Mr Speaker, to the people of Bougainville, we have finally given an unshakeable number, to the long-held dream of our forefathers, and our leaders who have gone before us. We owe it to Sir Paul Lapun, Sir Donatus Mola, Dr Alexis Sarei, Anthony Anugu, Joseph Kabui, Francis Ona, Leo Hannet, Moses Havini and many others who at different times of our history, added to the foundations of our journey. My Govt will need your continued support and

patience, as we walk the journey of securing Bougainville Sovereignty. We must maintain peace and unity at all times.

19. Mr Speaker, to the outgoing President - I acknowledge the presence and work of the outgoing President Hon Chief Dr John Momis. You have led Bougainville through the colonial era through to Self-Govt and Independence, you crafted the Constitution of the Independent State of PNG, you inserted the Organic Law on Provincial and Local level Govt; you later helped to amend to include the Organic Law on Peace Building in Bougainville; you have now served two terms as President of Bougainville. All in all, you have been our leader for about 45 years – your durability compares only with a very select group of eminent leaders in former Prime Ministers Somare and Chan. Yours is a contribution that will remain unmatched, and will forever be etched in the history of Bougainville. I thank you and salute you from the bottom of my heart. If you think you are going into retirement, then you are mistaken because I will be seeking your wise counsel at every opportunity.

20. Mr Speaker –Some of our relatives and friends are still outside our journey for their own reasons. The Bougainville Peace Agreement provides “pardon and amnesty” to any violations of human rights committed during the crisis, up to the point of conducting the Referendum. Any violations committed thereafter are law and order issues. I want to

appeal to you, as your newly elected President, and as a soldier who fought with you, to come out and join me and my Govt in pursuit of our destiny.

21. Mr Speaker, to the other 24 Presidential candidates who contested the presidential seat with me, we campaigned as colleagues appearing together in public forums in the major towns. This spirit of togetherness must continue as we move forward in our journey towards our common goal. I intend to tap into your enormous collective pool of knowledge and expertise and look forward to your continued active participation in the journey ahead.

22. Mr Speaker, now to the Public Service - yours is a mandate to be servants of the people. But too often you have become a self-serving organization, caring only about the perks and privileges you can enjoy. The Public Service must rediscover the spirit "of service" that we saw in the early days of Independence and Provincial Government.

23. My presidency intends to have a closer look at the Public Service in order to realign with the needs of the people and I need your cooperation in this endeavor.

24. Mr Speaker, to the Youth and Women who constitute the most active economic population of our society. You are the now and the future of Bougainville society. My Govt intends to help you realize your potential. Yours is not a situation of men against women or that women should be

allowed to perform certain roles, but a question of how men and women should work together better. Your roles are already prescribed by custom and by church doctrines. The divisive gender politics of western societies has no place in Bougainville society because it has led to unchristian values like "*same sex marriage*" in some societies. Instead we must find our own balance in enhancing the roles of women within the Bougainville context.

25. Mr Speaker, to the members of this Bougainville Parliament - You have run under various parties and on various platforms during the campaign. But we are all serving the one and the same 380,000 people of Bougainville. So let us join our many different leadership talents into a harmonious pool of leadership for the benefit of the people of Bougainville.
26. There will be differences in views from time to time, depending on the policy or matter of law, and depending on the political thinking of individual leaders. In deed differences in opinion is a healthy sign of a mature democracy, and it needs to be exercised with responsibility.
27. My Govt intends to encourage good public debate on key policy matters, both in Parliament as well as in the community, through the various foras that exist today. Good public debate leads to good policies and laws.

28. Mr Speaker, last but not least, I very much look forward to your leadership in managing this house, in a way that will be reflective of the status of the house, as we are *“political leader servants”* of our people! It’s the people who have voted us into this house, and it is they who will also get us out of this house, if we do not deliver to their expectations. The people must be *“front and centre”* in any debate and decision making in this Parliament.

29. Mr Speaker, the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, the PNG Cabinet Ministers, the outgoing President Dr Chief John Momis, Ministers and Members of this Parliament, the Diplomatic Core and the people of Bougainville, I thank you once again for this opportunity to be your President and may God bless us All!!

Hon President Ishmael Toroama

Bougainville Parliament

29/9/2020