



PRIME MINISTER

SPEECH

BY

**THE PRIME MINISTER GRAND CHIEF,
SIR MICHAEL SOMARE, GCL, GCMG, CH, CF, K.StJ
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCHING
OF THE WHITE PAPER
AT THE STATE FUNCTION ROOM
OF THE NATIONAL PARLIAMENT
19TH APRIL 2007**

[Delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Hon. Don Polye]

Governor General, Grand Chief Sir Paulias Matane, Minister for Justice, Hon. Bire Kimisopa, Acting Secretary and Attorney General, Ms Hitelai Polume-Kiele, Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Distinguished Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the Somare/Polye government and people of Papua New Guinea to welcome you all to the National Parliament to attend this launching of a major initiative of the Somare/Polye Government.

May I from the outset commend the Minister for Justice, Hon. Bire Kimisopa, the Acting Secretary and Attorney General, Ms Polume-Kiele and staff of the Department of Justice and Attorney General for their commitment to change the old ways of justice administration in Papua New Guinea.

It is through such commitment that we all gathered here this afternoon to witness the launching of the White Paper aimed at effectively and efficiently delivering quality services to the Government, Stakeholders and most importantly the country's people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, improving Law and Justice has been and continues to be my administration's top priority right from day one, when I formed the Somare/Polye Government after the 2002 General Elections.

This is indicated in several major policy initiatives being formulated, launched and implemented. The Somare/Polye Government realised that improvements in the sector needed a coordinated response, additional resources and strong leadership. Law and Justice is one of the seven priority development areas in the Medium Term Development Strategy. Our economic

development plans and priorities need a reliable system of justice and the maintenance of the rule of law.

In late 2002, as a first step, the Government through the National Executive Council set up the National Coordination Mechanism or NCM consisting of:

- Chief Justice
- Chief Ombudsman
- Chief Magistrate
- Secretary and Attorney General
- Police Commissioner
- Correctional Services Commissioner
- Public Prosecutor
- Public Solicitor and
- Secretary for National Planning and Monitoring, who chairs the NCM.

For the first time in Papua New Guinea, all agencies in the Law and Justice Sector are working closely together as a unifying force in the delivery of justice services. The NCM and the Law and Justice Sector agencies work within the National Law and Justice Policy that approved in 2002 as well as the Sector Strategic Framework, approved in 2005. These documents set out the Vision and are now supported by this White Paper and its initiatives.

The Somare/Polye Government's commitment to improving and strengthening the Law and Justice Sector is also evidenced in the Administrative Review of the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary. This review resulted in a pay rise for all police personnel, for the very first time in so many years.

Another major and significant milestone achievement of the Government was the amalgamation of the Constitutional Development Commission and the Law Reform Commission now known as the Constitutional and Law Reform Commission.

For many years, this important State institution was ignored and remained dormant until my Government revitalised it to perform its functions of reviewing and amending laws for the benefit of all citizens.

The Somare/Polye Government has also supported the sector with funding for priority development. In the 2007 National Budget the AusAID contribution of K65 million to the Development Budget was matched with K22 million of PNG funding and an additional K40 million for the rehabilitation of courts, prisons and police facilities. This was made available to the sector as a whole and I am pleased to be advised that these funds are being managed jointly with planning well advanced for expenditure this year. In

addition my Government has provided K50 million for police housing and K9 million for national court building projects. In 2003 Government of PNG Development Budget funding was only K2 million for this sector. We have backed our words with funding.

I am please to announce here today that two weeks ago the NEC endorsed this high level statement of my Government's policy priorities and approach for the Law and Justice Sector. This is to give further policy certainty and stability to the sector

As the Prime Minister, I commend to you in all of your respective fields, particularly as to the political leadership, courts and judges, the legal technocrats, the constitutional office holders, the leaders of our law and justice agencies, our foreign donor partners that it is imperative, in fact it is compelling, in my submission that our primary task is to maintain and enhance credibility, integrity and accountability in these institutions.

My experience in the years since Independence tells me that these institutions, which are at the core of sound government and the rule of law, have not progressed as far as some of us contemplated at Independence. We need to be responsive to the "Papua New Guinea Way" which the Minister reminds us of in the Foreword to

the White Paper. Our legal institutions need to adapt and evolve in the context of Papua New Guinea as it is today, and its needs.

At the same time many of the essential elements of good governance have been weakened to the point that the very institutions of the State designed under the Constitution to protect the State are contributing to a break-down in governance and the rule of law. Sadly, this is being exposed daily at the Inquiry into the Department of Finance which was called by government.

We cannot escape the fact that some institutions in this sector have become weakened by the inability, incapacity, ineptitude and incompetence of the people that manage them and those leaders who are meant to provide oversight. As Prime Minister I have to be confident that my Cabinet and government are receiving high quality, independent and sound legal advice to guide our decisions. We have to know that the checks and balances within the machinery of government are working, for the people, not unscrupulous and corrupt individuals. If we as a people cannot rely on our law and justice institutions our future is not good. This White Paper recognises these weaknesses and it also provides solutions.

Let me be clear about another matter. If we are really honest with each other money is not the real issue. We can all make do with what we are given. In my observation over all these years the issue is about your leadership and my leadership in our respective areas of responsibility within the resources available to serve the people. Having a plan such as this White Paper helps, but at the end of the day it needs quality leadership and accountable leaders to make it work. It needs the law and justice sector constitutional office holders, the departmental leaders, the National Coordination Mechanism and the political leadership to reinforce the values of hard work, integrity, transparency and accountability to the people for performance and service delivery, year after year.

Over the years I have been to numerous gatherings where we rhetorically repeat the same litany of problems and woes. Sadly, little has been done. However, I do have hope in you and in this sector. The NCM is working. Improvements are beginning to emerge under the Sector Strategic Framework. And this White Paper, with its clear Vision and implementation timetable, is different. It is practical, realistic and resolute in setting an agenda to enhance governance and performance in the Law and Justice Sector.

So ladies and gentlemen, I have taken a little bit of time and ask your indulgence. I trust that each and every one of us and the organisations we represent will work together to implement the foundation set out in the White Paper to deliver quality law and justice services and most importantly make Papua New Guinea a safer and secure place for all of us to live in.

Thank you