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MEDIA STATEMENT

Saturday 5th January 2008

TI PNG urges Parliamentary Committees to be transparent and responsible

Transparency International PNG is concerned at the reported push by the heads of Parliamentary Committees for a rise in their allowances and other bonus and privileges which it understands are paid whether or not the committees meet or report to Parliament.

TI PNG strongly disagrees with the proposed increases and questions why an increase is necessary. It is also of concern that the committee system does not seem to be carrying out its vital watchdog role in scrutinizing the workings of the Government and its agencies. The revival of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) in the life of the last Parliament showed how important it was to have members involved in seeking answers to why Government agencies were not performing. TI PNG also questioned why these reported increases were following so quickly on the salary increases awarded at the end of 2007 especially when the country is yet to enjoy the benefits of improved and expanded public services especially in health, education, water, sanitation etc. Even more worrying is the manner in which these recommendations for increased entitlements are determined.

"Some of the increased funding would be necessary if the committees are to do their jobs properly as I am aware that the PAC was so short of funds that it had to be funded by one of its members for a short period during the last Parliament," said Mike Manning, Chairman of TIPNG.

"We would like the committees to be properly funded, staffed and resourced so that they can do their jobs properly and involve MPs in scrutinising the running of the country. However we would also like to know that members of committees are only going to be paid if they take their jobs seriously and provide regular reports to Parliament. No-one should be paid their allowances in advance or before they have performed whatever it is that they are being paid to do. It is important that MPs show a good example to the rest of the country about doing a good day's work for good day's pay," added Mr Manning.

Transparency International PNG calls upon the Salary and Remuneration Commission to ensure a free and fair assessment of the value of the work done by Parliamentarians and their committees is undertaken. "They should also hold public hearings and provide credible information and justification for a pay rise."

If is approved, TI PNG strongly calls upon all Members of Parliament to ensure that entitlements and or payments of such are only made to MPs that actually sit on a committee. Transparency International further calls upon all MPs who head parliamentary committees to do their jobs honestly as the nations most powerful watchdogs and not to use their public position for their own benefit as the country has suffered far too long from the lack of good management and dedication to getting results. A vibrant and functioning Parliamentary Committee system could go a long way to ensuring that this situation was reversed for the good of the nation.

Ends...

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