

# Making, building & sustaining peace by peaceful means

**Hon. Sir Moi Avei, KBE MP,  
Minister For Bougainville Affairs,  
Papua New Guinea**



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**The PNG Prime Minister Sir Mekere Morauta  
arriving to sign the Bougainville Peace  
Agreement, 30 August 2001**

Member of Parliament for Kairuku-Hiri,  
Hon. Sir Moi Avei has been Minister for  
Bougainville Affairs in the Papua New  
Guinea government since December 2000.

The most important goal in the Bougainville peace process has always been peace. The point may seem obvious, but it is surprising how often participants in other, similar peace processes have allowed themselves to be diverted by other concerns – from the desire to make or avoid constitutional precedents, through political point-scoring, to the interests or reputations of particular persons or groups.

The key to peacemaking in Bougainville has been the link between means and ends made in the policy to which all of the parties involved in the peace process committed themselves when their leaders signed the *Lincoln Agreement on Peace, Security and Development on Bougainville* in 1998 – working to secure lasting peace by peaceful means.

Securing peace is more than a matter of signing agreements. It involves giving the strongest possible foundations in the community it is intended to serve. Implementation requires a comprehensive approach, which looks beyond agreeing to end violent conflict to the kind of wide-ranging agenda outlined in *The Lincoln Agreement*, and aims, as the Agreement's full name suggests, at promoting peace, security and development through ongoing co-operation in the wide range of activities and processes it lists.

Peace is, therefore, a goal which can readily be pursued on a bipartisan basis, if the political will exists to set aside other differences for the sake of peace. It is also a goal which is closely related to other projects which are best pursued across a broad front and on a bipartisan basis – such as nation-building, strengthening civil society, and building both economic and governmental capacity to promote the kind of development that facilitates public participation and distributes the benefits equitably across the country.

In the case of the peace process in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, the goal of securing lasting peace by peaceful means is shared by all of the parties involved. It was the decisive argument that convinced doubters, sceptics and worriers to set aside their concerns at the wider possible implications or possible 'flow-on' effects, and agree to support The Bougainville Peace Agreement.

Even the small number of people who have chosen to remain outside the process (at least for the time being) have generally respected the peace to which it has led. All of the participants in the Bougainville peace process continue to hope, pray and issue invitations for Francis Ona and his closest supporters in the area around Panguna, central Bougainville, to join in.

The origins and foundations of peacemaking and peacebuilding in Bougainville are to be found among ordinary people who have proved themselves capable of extraordinary feats.

Security and mutual confidence-building have been strengthened by the presence of the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (UNOMB), and the neutral, regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) made up of unarmed personnel, civilian and military, women and men, from our close friends and neighbours, Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu.

Our reconstruction and development efforts have been actively supported by Papua New Guinea's development co-operation partners – Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, the United Nations Development Programme, and non-governmental organisations based in-country, in our immediate region, and from other, far-distant parts of the world.

The political talks that produced the Agreement tested the commitment, flexibility and even, at times, the physical strength of everyone involved. But the process has prepared all of the participants well for the ongoing consultation and co-operation that will be required to realise the potential of what the Agreement itself recognises as our 'joint creation'

The outcome is a mutually acceptable set of arrangements for the establishment of an autonomous Bougainville Government with a wide range of functions, powers and access to resources guaranteed (and protected against arbitrary interference or imposed change) within the framework of the Papua New Guinea *Constitution*; and the firm assurance of a referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future, to be held 10-15 years after the autonomous Bougainville Government is established and conditions on the ground are right – with separate independence for Bougainville as an available option and the outcome subject to the authority of the highest, democratically elected, constitutional authority in the country, the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea.

The commitment to the goal of peace by peaceful means displayed by ex-combatants meant that they put away many guns – and helped to convince the National Parliament to give their support – before the Bills to give legal effect to the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* were put to the vote. The next big challenge is also for ex-combatants and their communities to reach the point at which UNOMB can verify that stage two of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved. Only then can the provisions on autonomy and the guarantee of the referendum in the new part of the *Constitution* and the new *Organic Law on Peace-Building* in Bougainville take effect. The small minority of people still outside the peace process will have a critical influence on the willingness with which others may participate in practical weapons disposal, and so the date on which the new legal arrangements will begin to apply. It would, indeed, be

appropriate – and deeply moving – if the communities among whom the conflict began were able, finally, to secure lasting peace by peaceful means by joining in.

Bougainville, both the people and the multiple challenges the name represents, has been a pioneer in many different aspects of Papua New Guinea life. Home to the first practical effort to develop decentralised government at provincial level, its leaders were noticeably absent from the celebrations when Papua New Guinea became independent in 1975. It was *The Bougainville Agreement* in 1976 which brought Bougainville back into the national political fold and paved the way for the implementation of provincial government throughout the whole of Papua New Guinea.

Bougainville is now a pioneer again – with Bougainville leaders having negotiated a set of arrangements with the national government which are unique not only in Papua New Guinea but, in certain respects, in the world. Identifying, applying and managing the features that might be relevant – or, more importantly, improve life – for other parts of Papua New Guinea are among the challenges Papua New Guineans still have to address.

Even greater challenges are on the near-horizon – for Bougainville and the rest of the country. They include summoning the political will, mobilising the resources, and maintaining the co-operation required to establish the autonomous Bougainville Government, ensure it functions effectively, and realise the potential *The Bougainville Peace Agreement* and implementing laws offer of building a nation founded on peace, participation, and consent. Current economic circumstances mean that the national government will be looking to foreign aid donors for support, especially for assistance in restoration and development, as well as funding the one-off Establishment Grant to help set up and sustain the autonomous Bougainville Government through the formative stage.

But the key to the peacebuilding to which we have all committed is continuing close consultation and co-operation – in developing joint implementation plans, managing the transfer of functions and powers from the National to the autonomous Bougainville Government, and conducting relations through the joint supervisory body for which the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* provides.

In short, the challenge of securing lasting peace by peaceful means continues to require both commitment and effort on all sides – in order to develop a pro-active partnership in practical peacebuilding which will realise the potential of the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* and really secure lasting peace by peaceful means.