

Chronology

Pre-colonial history

The earliest evidence of human habitation on the island of Bougainville dates to over 27,000 BC. Contact with Europeans begins in the mid-sixteenth century, when European explorers begin to chart the South Pacific and lay claim to some of the islands. The main island of Bougainville is named after the French navigator Louis de Bougainville who comes to the island in 1768. In the second half of the nineteenth century, large numbers of Bougainvilleans are coerced into indentured labour in the plantations of Australia's Queensland, Fiji, Samoa and New Britain. In 1882 the first traces of copper are found on Bougainville.

Colonial period

In 1899, the contemporary territory of Bougainville is incorporated into German New Guinea and the rest of Solomons Islands into a British protectorate. During the First World War, Australia seizes New Guinea from the Germans. It occupies Bougainville in September 1914. In May 1920, the League of Nations gives Australia a mandate to govern the former German colony. In 1942, Japanese forces occupy Bougainville throughout the war. American-led allied forces land at Torokina in November 1943. Both leave behind a significant cache of arms, some of which are re-deployed over forty years later. From 1946–75 Australia administers the Territories of Papua and New Guinea, with the latter as a United Nations Trust Territory.

Movement towards independence

1962

A UN visiting mission on Bougainville hears grievances, and speakers ask that the UN mandate be transferred from Australia to the United States.

1964

The PNG House of Assembly is established, although control of governance is largely retained by the colonial administration. Bougainville's representative Paul Lapun presents a motion calling for a referendum on the status of Bougainville which is rejected by the Assembly. Despite local resistance to mineral prospecting, a major copper deposit is discovered at Panguna in central Bougainville.

1966

Protests are mobilised in parts of Bougainville against the Australian Administration and the mining company, Conzinc Rio Tinto Australia (CRA). The issue becomes linked to Bougainvillean secession.

1967

CRA signs an agreement with the Australian Administration to set up a mining company, later known as Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL) to develop the Panguna mine. Bougainvilleans continue to oppose the principle of large-scale mining.

1968

Local demands for a referendum on secession are articulated and the Mungkas Association is founded.

1969

In July, the Napidakoe Navitu movement for Bougainvillean independence, led by Paul Lapun, holds its first public meetings. In August Bougainvillean women at Rorovana protest over inadequate compensation for their land and are confronted by provincial police with truncheons and tear gas. The authorities eventually increase the compensation.

1970

The Napidakoe Navitu movement conducts an unofficial referendum on independence in central and south Bougainville. Results reveal strong support for secession in areas closest to the mine, but not in northern regions of Bougainville Island or on Buka.

1972

Michael Somare forms a PANGU-led national coalition government and becomes Chief Minister. In June, the Assembly establishes a Constitutional Planning Committee (CPC) under *de facto* chairperson, Bougainville MP John Momis. It is expected to devise an acceptable decentralisation arrangement for Bougainville and other areas demanding autonomy. Two Bougainvillean civil servants are killed in a 'payback' incident in the New Guinea highlands in December.

1973

Bougainville leaders establish the Bougainville Special Political Committee (BSPC) to negotiate the future status of Bougainville with the Port Moresby government. In December 1973, Australia hands over self-rule to the Somare government.

1974

The *Bougainville Copper Agreement* is renegotiated, increasing the revenue for the PNG government. Although Somare promises that the new Bougainville provincial government (established in July) will receive 95 per cent of the royalties, no arrangements are made for increasing the income received by the Nasioi people who have been most affected by the mine.

Between independence and the 'crisis'

1975

On 28 May, the Bougainville provincial government votes to secede from PNG. They issue the *Unilateral Declaration of Independence of the Republic of North Solomons* on 1 September. The Somare government retaliates by suspending the government and withholding payments to the province but continues to negotiate with Bougainvilleans. On 16 September, Papua and New Guinea become independent as Papua New Guinea, incorporating Bougainville and Buka.

1976

Following anti-central government riots on Bougainville in January, negotiations begin between Bougainvilleans and Somare's government. In April, the Bougainvillean authorities agree to accept Papua New Guinea sovereignty and the Bougainville Provincial Government is restored. On 7 August the *Bougainville Agreement* is signed, recognising the 'special relationship' between the province and the national government.

1977

In February 1977 the *Organic Law* on Provincial Government is enacted.

1979

The Panguna Landowners Association (PLA) is established, in part to negotiate for increased compensation payments.

1980

In March Sir Julius Chan, leader of the People's Progress Party, becomes Prime Minister.

1981

Provincial authorities enter negotiations with the central government in preparation for a re-negotiation of the 1974 *Bougainville Copper Agreement*. Bougainvillean demands for the transfer of equity, increased royalties, and a greater share of tax revenues are rejected.

1987

In August, a group of younger landowners in Panguna, including Francis Ona, form the 'New PLA.' They commence a campaign of escalating demands against BCL in relation to claims about the social and environmental health impacts of the mine.

The 'crisis' and beginning of armed conflict

1988

November

Landowners walk out of a meeting to discuss the findings of a report examining allegations concerning environmental health and social impacts of the mine. Ona declares that the New PLA will close down the mine. Large quantities of explosives are stolen and on 26 November a power line pylon is sabotaged. Ona's group, then known as 'Rambos', disappear into the densely forested Kongara region where they link up with Damien Dameng's *Me'ekamui Pontoku Onoring* (often referred to as the Fifty Toea Movement) and transform their militancy from mainly anti-BCL sabotage to support for secession from PNG.

December

On 8 December, Akoka Doi, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the Special Committee on Bougainville finalises a *Memorandum of Understanding* with Francis Ona. On the night of the signing at Arovo Island outside Arawa, police arrest key landowners. Francis Ona is not present. He rejects the *Doi Package* and attacks continue. In December national government authorities send in mobile riot squads to quell the violence.

1989

January

Violence escalates with further attacks on BCL property. The national government deploys more riot squad police and declares a night-time curfew. The militants become known as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA). Former PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) soldiers join them, including Sam Kauona who becomes its commander. The Special Committee on the Crisis in the North Solomons Province, chaired by Hon Sir John Kaputin, actively promotes political resolution of the crisis.

March

The government agrees to the deployment of the PNGDF in Bougainville and the first soldiers arrive.

April

Ona proclaims a 'Republic of Bougainville' and demands PNGDF withdrawal from 'foreign land'. The BRA launches its first attack on the PNGDF.

May

The mine closes 'indefinitely' on 15 May. The NSPG establishes the Bika Select Committee, under the chairmanship of John Bika, to make recommendations

for long-term solutions to the crisis. On 25 May the PNG Executive Council declares a 15-day truce to create an opportunity for negotiations. After initial indications that he will talk, Ona refuses when his pre-conditions are not met.

June

On 26 June, the PNG Executive Council declares a State of Emergency, greatly increasing the PNGDF scope of activities.

July

600 villagers are evacuated and residents put into 'care centres'.

September

Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu offers a meeting to discuss a joint PNG/ NSPG Peace Package. Ona insists that substance of 'dialogue' must be secession. On 10 September John Bika is assassinated, two days before the planned ceremonial signing of the deal. In the following months, the mobile riot squads and PNGDF forces engage in indiscriminate violence. By the end of the year, 1,600 village homes have been burned down.

October

Unsuccessful attempts are made to reopen the mine. Prime Minister Rabbie Namaliu comes to a peace ceremony in Arawa attended by 1,500 people, including church and traditional leaders and NSPG Premier Kabui.

1990

January

The PNGDF launch the ineffectual 'Operation Footloose' in the Kongara area, killing 27 civilians. The BRA expands its attacks over much of Bougainville. The PNG government withdraws public servants and all banks, offices and services are closed down. Non-Bougainvillean Papua New Guineans and expatriates largely evacuate the province.

Peter Wallenstein is invited by a PNG-based think-tank to visit Port Moresby and Bougainville to explore possibilities for a ceasefire.

February

On 14 February, six civilians, accused of being militants, are killed by the PNGDF at Tinputz in the 'St. Valentines Day Massacre'. Five bodies are dropped at sea from Iroquois helicopters supplied by Australia the previous year. 1600 houses are burned down in security forces special operations in Kieta district.

March

On 1 March, the first *Bougainville Ceasefire Initiative* is signed by PNG, BRA, and the NSPG but breaks down shortly afterwards. The PNGDF withdraw from Bougainville. Members of the BRA detain and assault two of the provincial government's principle officers, Michael Laimo and Joseph Kabui.

April

The Bougainville Interim Government (BIG) is formed. Francis Ona is appointed as President and former Premier Joseph Kabui as Chairman.

May

On 17 May, Francis Ona issues a *Unilateral Declaration of Independence*. On 18 May, the national government formally rejects the declaration and imposes an economic and communications blockade on Bougainville. Leta village in Buka is burned by BRA elements from mainland Bougainville, contributing to tensions between some communities and the BRA on Buka.

August

New Zealand's offer to facilitate talks aboard the *HMNZS Endeavour* outside Kieta Harbour results in the signing of *The Endeavour Accord* on 5 August.

September

Conflict between Bougainville groups, particularly in the north, continues. The PNGDF land on Buka, beginning a slow process of return of PNG forces to many parts of Bougainville. With PNGDF support, a counter-BRA group, the 'Buka Liberation Front' (BLF) begin operations.

October

On 5 October Buka leaders and the national government sign the *Kavieng Agreement* (also referred to as the *Malagan Understanding*) endorsing the return of government services and the PNGDF to Buka. Women's delegations from Buka Island talk to the BRA about ending the war.

1991

January

The Solomon Islands government sends two government ministers to facilitate a new round of talks. This results in the signing of the *Honiara Declaration* on 23 January. Within hours of signing the declaration is rejected by the BRA. The PNGDF launch an unsuccessful offensive at Kangu beach.

March

On 12 March, 11 men are beaten and then burned to death by PNGDF soldiers in Iagit village on Buka after a village peace ceremony.

August

BRA and BIG representatives appear before the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations accusing the PNGDF of committing atrocities against indigenous Bougainvilleans. National government cancels all BIG member travel documents and appeals to Australia and New Zealand not to issue any transit visas to BIG leaders. In an initiative led by local women the Selau people declare a 'Peace Area' on the northern tip of Bougainville on 17 August.

September

National government representative, Mr Brown Bai, meets with BRA representatives on the MV *Kris* off Kieta, to finalise arrangements for talks then scheduled for October to review *The Honiara Agreement*. In the 'Tulane Plantation killings', 11 villagers from Hetal village are killed by PNGDF.

December

BRA forces launch the 'Tinputz Attack' on the PNGDF. The national government approves of the establishment of six interim authorities in areas secured by the PNGDF.

1992

March

PNGDF patrols conduct cross-border raids into the Solomon Islands to 'sabotage BRA supply lines'. Solomon Islands protest and pledge to refer the matter to the UN Security Council.

April

Former MP for South Bougainville, Anthony Anugu, is kidnapped, robbed and killed by BRA elements on his return from Port Moresby, along with five other south Bougainville leaders. He had been carrying funds for the establishment of a South Bougainville Interim Authority.

May

Sir Michael Somare, Minister for Foreign Affairs calls for CRA to be bought out of BCL and the share to be given to the provincial government and Panguna landowners. PNGDF land on Bougainville in the Siwai area of South Bougainville at the request of local chiefs. 270 BRA surrender in Wakunai and Tinputz areas. Central Bougainville remains under *de facto* BRA control. BIG representatives make a representation to the UN Sub Commission of Human Rights in Geneva. The 'Aita massacre' takes place in Aita village, Okugupa. Chief Silas Ausi, his family and at least 17 members of the village are killed by the PNGDF for celebrating Bougainville Independence Day.

July

Paias Wingti replaces Rabbie Namaliu as Prime Minister of PNG.

August

6,000 ex-BRA fighters join local chiefs in south Bougainville in denouncing BRA leadership. They form a militia of 'local resistance fighters against the BRA', later known as the Bougainville Resistance Forces.

November

BRA forces burn down a provincial government building in Arawa to prevent it being used by advancing government forces.

1993

January

Bougainville chiefs condemn the BRA for killing 17 civilians. The PNGDF pursue their counter-insurgency tactics of forcibly displacing the civilian population into 'care centres'. Arawa is re-occupied by government forces in 'Operation Dynamo' but BRA still occupies parts of the town. Withdrawing rebels set fire to numerous buildings including the Arawa General Hospital. In the north-west, 3,000 ex-BRA rebels offer themselves to the PNGDF to fight the BRA as part of Resistance Forces.

April

The Bougainville Leader's Forum is held in Buka, involving some 500 Bougainvilleans and 150 traditional leaders.

November

Amnesty International publishes a report outlining human rights abuses.

1994

January

The 'Bougainville Reunion' of the Catholic Women's Federation is held in Buka. The North Nasioi Council of Chiefs prepares a 'Peace Document'.

April

Australian parliamentarians on a fact-finding mission are prevented from entering BRA controlled areas by the PNGDF. Their subsequent report concludes that there can be no military solution to the conflict.

June

National government officials meet BIG representatives in Honiara and agree on a preparatory meeting between BIG and leaders of interim authorities to prepare for a Pan-Bougainville Peace Conference.

August

The unsuccessful PNGDF offensive 'Operation High Speed I' is launched to recapture Panguna Mine. Talks take place in Honiara between senior national government officials and Sam Kauona of the BRA and The *Tambea Accord* is signed. Following the dismissal of the PM Paias Wingti, Sir Julius Chan is elected Prime Minister.

September

Chan meets with Sam Kauona in Honiara. The talks culminate in *The Honiara Commitment to Peace* and *The Ceasefire Agreement*, paving the way for the creation of a neutral zone for the Arawa Peace Conference.

October

The Arawa Peace Conference is convened by the national government with security provided by the regional South Pacific Peacekeeping Force. BIG leaders boycott the conference. After the conference, North Nasioi traditional leaders and BRA commanders sign the *North Nasioi Agreement* with the national government representatives committing themselves to the peace process.

November

On 25 November, the North Nasioi Peace Committee and Chan's government sign the *Mirigini Charter*, agreeing to the establishment of the Bougainville Transitional Government (BTG).

1995

April

The national government formally recognises the establishment of the indirectly elected Bougainville Transitional Government with Miriung as its Premier.

May

Talks between Julius Chan and BTG Premier Theodore Miriung in Port Moresby lead to the signing of the *Waigini Communiqué* on 18 May.

September

Peace talks are held in Cairns ('Cairns I') between leaders from BIG, BRA, BTG and BRF factions. Women from BRA and PNG government-controlled areas of Bougainville attend the 4th Global Conference on Women in Beijing.

December

A second round of peace talks between Bougainvillean factions is held in Cairns ('Cairns II') results in the issuing of a *Joint Communiqué* by the BTG and BIG, which is delivered to the Prime Minister.

1996

January

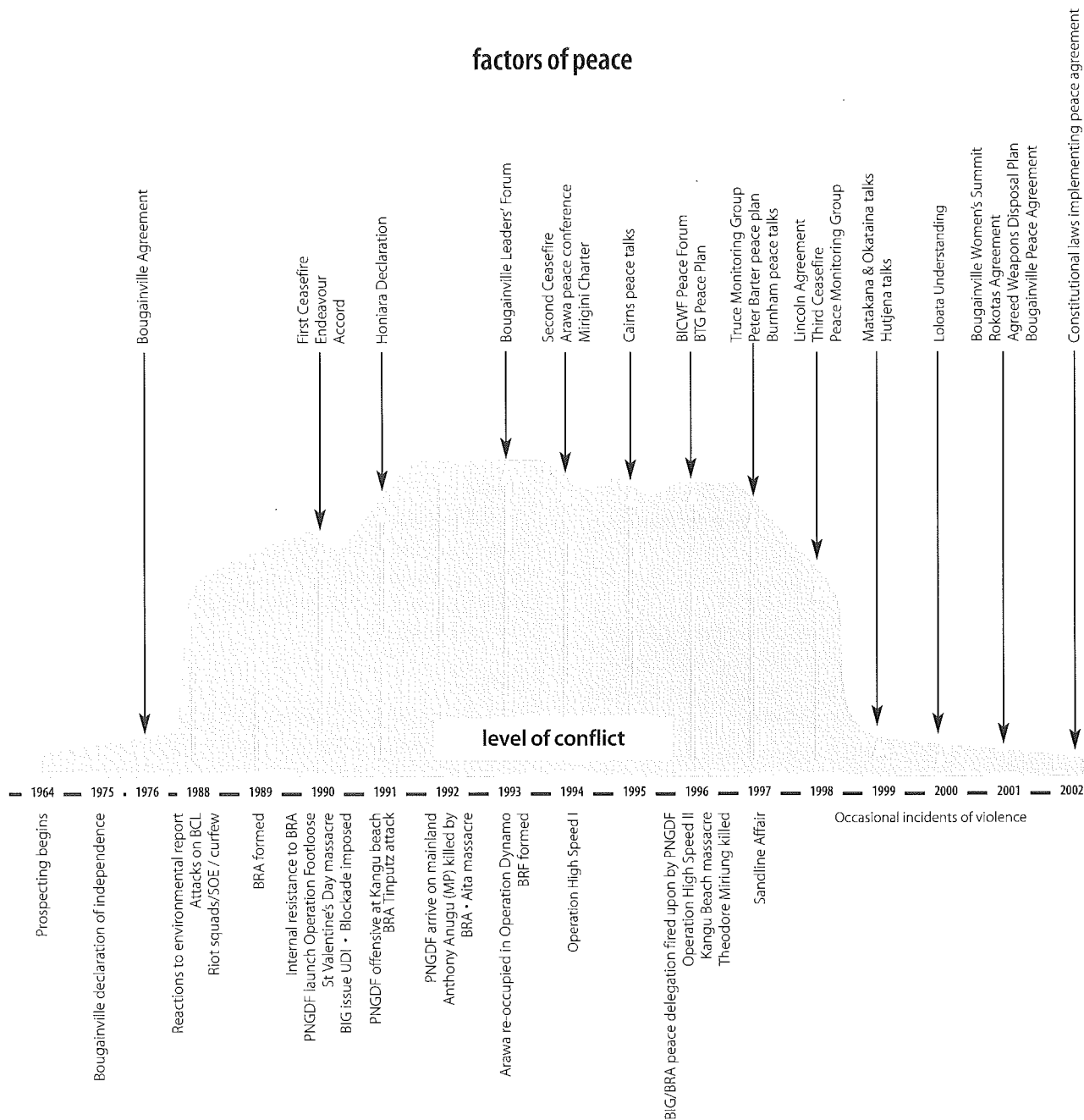
A PNGDF patrol boat fires upon the BIG/BRA delegation returning from the Cairns talks. 15 men, women and children are killed in the 'Simbo village massacre' in an early morning raid by the PNGDF in south Bougainville. Chan bans all overseas peace talks.

February

The BIG Office and house of Martin Miriori and his family in Honiara, Solomon Islands is firebombed. 12 members of the PNG security forces are killed in Buka in retaliation

Conflict and peace timeline

factors of peace



factors of conflict

Source: Based on an exercise undertaken by Bougainvillean Literacy Trainers during a CR/BICWF workshop in December 2001.

by the BRA for the ambush on return from Cairns. The BTG publishes its peace plan.

March

Chan announces the official lifting of the ceasefire on 21 March and begins a new military campaign. First contacts are made by national government officials with Tim Spicer, through Defence Systems Limited.

July

BRA forces launch raids into government-controlled areas of Buka and north Bougainville. The PNGDF launches 'Operation High Speed II'. The battle for Aropa Airport on 15 July results in military defeat for the PNGDF.

August

A Women's Peace Forum is organised by the Inter-Church Women's Forum (BICWF) in Arawa from 25-31 August. Tim Spicer sends a letter to Defence Minister Mathias Ijape suggesting a joint venture with the national government and RTZ to open and operate the Panguna Mine.

September

Resistance fighters join the BRA to attack a PNGDF camp at Kangu beach, south Bougainville. 12 PNG security personnel are killed and five are taken prisoner. 1,000 civilians leave the Kangu Care Centre. The event causes a national outcry.

October

On 12 October, Bougainville women from both sides of the blockade meet at the 'Women Speak Out' Forum in Sydney. On the same day, BTG Premier Theodore Miriung is assassinated in southern Bougainville.

November

Nine civilians are killed on 28 November when a PNGDF mortar falls on Malapita Church during morning prayers.

December

14 are killed in Mukakuru village in south Bougainville on 1 December, by PNGDF and Resistance forces. Tim Spicer visits Port Moresby under the company name, Sandline International, and meets with Minister for Finance Chris Haiveta to discuss 'Project Contravene'.

1997

January

Julius Chan contracts Sandline International to defeat the BRA and retake the Panguna copper mine. A cheque for 50% of payment (US\$18million) is provided to Sandline.

February

Peter Barter, Minister for Provincial Affairs, puts forward a peace plan emphasising the need for a negotiated peace. The Australian government discovers the plan to use mercenaries.

March

PMs Chan and Howard meet to discuss alternatives to the use of Sandline. On 16 March, PNGDF officers arrest Sandline commanders. On 17 March PNGDF commander Singirok calls for Chan's resignation on national radio over the Sandline affair. Protests in Port Moresby begin. Singirok is sacked the following day but demonstrations and the ongoing opposition of the PNGDF leads to the suspension of the Sandline contract. On 26 March, Chan, Havieta and Ijape agree to 'step aside' pending a commission of inquiry on the Sandline affair. John Gilheno is appointed Acting Prime Minister.

May

On 26 May, the National Executive Committee approves Peter Barter's *Bougainville Peace Strategy*. Behind-the-scenes communications and meetings between representatives of BTG and BIG begin and continue until July.

June

Prime Minister Chan loses his seat in the national election and is replaced by Bill Skate. Lawyers Mark Plunkett and Leo White lead a conflict resolution training course with ten members of the BIG and BRA leaders in Solomon Islands.

July

'Burnham I' talks are held in New Zealand from 5-18 July leading to the *Burnham Declaration*. The five Kangu Beach hostages are released to New Zealand diplomat John Hayes. Bill Skate is elected Prime Minister on 22 July.

October

'Burnham II' takes place and is the first meeting to involve large numbers of leaders from the Bougainville combatant groups as well as senior civilian officials, senior PNGDF and Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary officers. It results in the signing of the *Burnham Truce*.

November

Further talks are held in Cairns between PNG officials, BTG, BRA and BIG and result in the signing of the *Cairns Commitment on Implementation* on 24 November. A New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group begins deployment in Bougainville.

1998

January

Political leaders from all parties sign the *Lincoln Agreement* on 23 January that effectively ends nine years of civil war. Francis Ona does not sign.

March

Preparatory talks on the Ceasefire Agreement take place in Canberra.

April

The *Lincoln Agreement* annex – *Agreement Covering Implementation of the Ceasefire* is signed in Arawa on 30 April.

May

An Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group replaces the Truce Monitoring Group and the formal ceasefire comes into force.

August

UNPOB is established following a formal request to the UN from the PNG Government for an observer mission.

December

Legislation to establish the Bougainville Reconciliation Government fails to pass the second vote in the PNG Parliament and *ad hoc* legal arrangements are needed to set up an interim form of the BRG. It is agreed that the new provincial government due to be established in January 1999 will be suspended to make way for the interim BRG. The Bougainville Constituent Assembly meets in Arawa to draw up a constitution for the interim form of BRG to be called the Bougainville People's Congress (BPC).

1999

January

Interim governmental arrangements are put in place and the NEC provisionally suspends the BTG.

February

Hon John Momis MP loses a court case challenging the state's suspension of the Interim Provincial Government.

March

The Bougainville Interim Provincial Government is sworn in by the Governor General on 30 March.

April/May

The *Matakana and Okataina Understandings*, which address differences over interim provincial governance arrangements, are signed in New Zealand.

May

Elections are held for the Bougainville People's Congress. Joseph Kabui is elected President.

June

The *Joint Bougainville Negotiating Position* is agreed between the BPC and senior BRA commanders on 29 June. The first talks between national government representatives and BPC officials on the future political status of Bougainville begin on 30 June.

July

PM Skate and BPC President Kabui sign the *Hutjena Minute* on 10 July. Sir Mekere Morauta replaces Skate as Prime Minister on 14 July.

October

The BPC and the four Bougainville MPs meet at Nehan and agree to pursue 'the highest form of autonomy' for Bougainville, as well as a binding referendum on Bougainville's political future. The meeting results in the *Nehan Resolution*.

November

A one-day reconciliation ceremony is staged at Hoko, Gogohe between the Buka BPC members and the Leitana Council of Elders. Momis wins an appeal on his challenge to the suspension of the provincial government and becomes governor of the Bougainville Interim Provincial Government (BIPG). He agrees that the BIPG will cooperate with the BPC.

December

The first round of political negotiations takes place with the Morauta Government. Momis and Kabui lead the Bougainville negotiating team. The *Greenhouse Memorandum* is signed by Momis and the BPC, formalising an agreement that the BIPG makes its decisions in consultation with the BPC.

2000

February

UNPOB holds its first meeting with Bougainville BRA 'hard-liners'.

March

A further round of negotiations between the government and the Bougainville leaders is held at Hutjena High School. A further round of negotiations is held in Port Moresby. The *Loloata Understanding* is signed by all parties on 23 March.

June

Following two months of talks at the Gateway Hotel in Port Moresby, the *Gateway Communiqué* is signed by all parties on 9 June, recording progress in the talks.

September

Morauta's proposals on constitutional change allow for referenda on major national issues but rule out a referendum on independence for Bougainville. The *Record of Outcome of Political Talks Between Bougainville Leaders And The national government* is signed on 11 September, following talks in Rabaul on Autonomy, Referendum and Arms disposal. Talks continue in October, resuming in late November.

December

The talks end in deadlock on the referendum issue. Somare is replaced by Hon Moi Avei as Minister for Bougainville Affairs. Alexander Downer, Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs proposes a compromise formula for a deferred conditional and non-binding referendum on Bougainville's future political status.

2001

January

On 26 January, the *Agreed Principles on Referendum* is signed by all parties to the negotiations to allow for a referendum on Bougainville's political status within 10 – 15 years after the election of an autonomous Bougainville Government.

May

Meetings begin between ex-combatants at Togarau, central Bougainville, facilitated by UNPOB and the PMG. The *Rotokas Agreement* on a three-stage weapons disposal is signed on 8 May between the BRA and the BRF. The *Agreed Weapons Disposal Plan* is signed shortly afterwards by the national government, BRA, BRF, UNPOB and the PMG.

June

The *Agreed Basis For A Comprehensive Political Settlement* is initialled on 22 June.

July

A ceremony takes place on 31 July to mark the re-opening of the Jaba bridge. Numerous Me'ekamui Defence Forces members attend the ceremony but Francis Ona is absent.

August

The *Bougainville Peace Agreement* is signed in Arawa on 30 August.

October

Moi Avei tables the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* in Parliament on 17 October.

November

Amendments and the *Organic Law* required to give legal effect to the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* are approved by the NEC.

December

A weapons' disposal ceremony takes place at Torokina

2002

January

PNG Parliament approves the first reading of the legislation covering autonomy for Bougainville on 22 January.

March

The Bougainville Bills are passed by the PNG Parliament, giving full constitutional authority to the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* on 27 March. Over 900 weapons are handed in by the time of the second vote.

May

Negotiations take place between Bougainville and PNG officials on the terms of the amnesty and pardon.

June

BIPG/BPC leaders approve the terms proposed for amnesty and pardon and make decisions needed to establish a Bougainville Constitutional Commission.