

## Loi M Bakani: Launching of the Ekonomik Society of Papua New Guinea

Address by Mr Loi M Bakani, Governor of the Bank of Papua New Guinea, on the occasion of the launching of the Ekonomik Society of Papua New Guinea Inc, Port Moresby, 24 June 2010.

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Interim President Mr. James Kiele, the rest of the interim executives of the Ekonomik Society of PNG, fellow economists, ladies and gentlemen. I am indeed honoured to have been invited to officiate at the launching of the Ekonomik Society of Papua New Guinea Inc. It is an occasion that you and I can feel proud that we belong to the economic profession, and now have a common venue to express our views and contribute meaningfully to debate and discussion on public policy in PNG.

Before the accountants can account for how money is spent, before the engineers can design bridges and roads and construct them, and before the lawyers can write our laws and regulations, and take up legal cases, economists must decide on the allocation of scarce resources – the economic policies that govern and dictate: the delivery of public goods and services; and private investment and business decisions. One cannot help but think why is it then that in PNG there has not been a professional body of economists, just like the accountants, engineers and lawyers do have their professional bodies. To have a society or association of economists and thus such an occasion today is therefore long over due. As the saying goes, it is better late than never. So it is a proud and happy moment for everyone who has achieved an academic qualification in economics or business studies or economics major in a degree and who are employed in private or public sector applying some form of economic technique or knowledge in one way or another, or who are still in the process seeking employment, or who are self employed in town or in village applying what ever little economic and decision making skills they have.

Why an Economics Professional Body?

There are some obvious and not so obvious reasons and purposes to have a professional body for economists. I am happy to note that a lot of the reasons and purposes are provided for in the Society's constitution.

Some of these are as follows.

(i) *to promote teaching, study and application of economics and to contribute to the development and maintenance of standards for education and instruction for economists in Papua New Guinea;*

*There is a*

- Need for a good number of well trained economists, even to masters and PhD level
- Institutions offering economics courses must be of international standard
- Need for institutions offering economics courses to achieve and maintain parity with international standards
- Need for adequate teaching staff and quality learning facilities including specialized library with current titles and up-to-date issues of professional journals
- Fostering of proper application of economics as a decision-making tool in all facets of public policy and private investment decision making

(ii) *to encourage professional development and employment of economists;*

- In public and private sectors

- (iii) *to promote professional discussion of matters concerning the national economy;*
  - Need for regular professional dialogues for fostering sound alternative rational policy outcomes
  - Need for independent evaluation and commentary on official public policies and issues
- (iv) *to conduct independent research and make impartial commentary on public policy matters without fear or favour;*
  - Need to reduce current dependence on overseas experts and researchers with indigenous and home grown knowledge through professional research
  - Independent research and analysis can complement official policy and also provide alternative insights
- (v) *to make proactive and timely contributions to research and development of public policy; and*
  - Need for regular forum or avenue for exchange of ideas
- (vi) *to facilitate dialogue between governmental organisations, nongovernment organisations, community-based organisations and the private sector;*
  - As a facilitator and coordinator in networking partnerships between all sectors of society
- (vii) *to collaborate with other organisations both in country and overseas to further its objectives;*
  - To ensure parity with international body of knowledge, trends and reinforcement of professional standards
- (viii) *to publish journals and other publications consistent with the advancement of the objectives of the Society;*
  - For imparting and dissemination of knowledge
  - Capture research findings for promotion of proactive dialogue and for historical or inter-temporal comparisons
- (ix) *to organise and participate in gatherings such as conferences, forums, meetings and workshops for discussion of economics and other matters at domestic and international levels;*
  - For proactive exchange of ideas and findings
  - For encouraging professional development

Beside all these, if we get ourselves organized the Society can get recognized by the Government and other authorities, and can be called upon for advice and representation in various forums and organizations. Economists are needed in the evolving economy of ours in this changing and complex age of globalization. For economists have to make the important decisions macro and micro economic policies and other public policies, planning for delivery of goods and services to our people before; the lawyers to ensure the legal and governance issues are in place and are followed; the engineers/architects to design and oversee constructions of bridges, roads and buildings; and the accountants account and audit where, what and how the funds were spent (according to budget or if there is a case of misuse of funds).

Finally, the Society can be the vehicle, at the least, for us get to know each other in our profession and exchange views and ideas, and socialize. Networking is an important element of every professional's working life today.

I as the Governor of the Central Bank of PNG welcome very much the birth of this Society and encourage all who are eligible to become members. I have asked all my Economics graduate staff to join. The Bank supports this course as evident by it being the very first entity to make a financial donation to the Society, under the former Governor. This fund has enabled the Society to set itself up and eventually arrange this launching. I encourage other employers of economists to assist the Society in its endeavours so it can grow and meet its strategic objectives, and for the enhancement of the profession in the country. I note and appreciate all the efforts by the four interim executives in initiating and ensuring the birth of this Society through the formal incorporation of the Society by IPA under *Association Incorporation Act* on 19th December 2007 and in organizing the launching. It has taken this long to have the Society formally launched but the important thing is the moment has arrived and it is happening now. Thank you very much for that.

I am also pleased to note that the Society will hold its first full meeting in one month time to elect the first full office bearers. I encourage all you potential members to pay up your membership fees so you can be able to vote on that day and support the Society to see it mature through time from this birth.

Let us take pride in our profession and in this moment – the launching of the Economic Society of Papua New Guinea. With all these words, I hereby declare that the Economic Society of Papua New Guinea is launched.

Thank you.