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APEC – Seize the Opportunities for PNG

“With PNG hosting the APEC Summit in November 2018, it is important that we seize its opportunities for promoting PNG and advancing our development. While the Alternative Government considers that there were much better ways to promote PNG and all it has to offer, and wiser ways to invest the huge costs for the summit into health, education and infrastructure, it is now too late and it would be too embarrassing to pull out from hosting the Leaders Summit. There are some important things we need to do to make the most of this opportunity” said the Shadow Minister for Treasury and Finance, Ian Ling-Stuckey.

“First, we must make sure that we have a forward looking agenda consistent with the principles of APEC. For this reason, the Alternative Government strongly supports the planned focus on the opportunities that digital technologies provide for breaking down transport and communication barriers. Indeed, PNG is a leader in the world on financial inclusion and approaches to reaching out to the unbanked. We must get private credit growth going again and this must be made more accessible to our rural people. We must use the options of digital media to highlight the extraordinary ways in which PNG leads the world. This includes PNG being the most ethnically diverse country in the world with over 800 languages – this is a strength. We applaud the promotion of our culture through each province making bilums for the summit. We also need to promote the amazing richness of our biodiversity as the island of New Guinea ranks third in the world. This will require careful handling of policies that are seen as potentially damaging such as existing forestry policies, seabed mining and adequate controls on pollution. We must demonstrate we have the integrated sustainable development policies for promoting PNG’s tourist potential.

“Second, we must ensure youth, businesses and women have a special chance to speak out during the summit. The recent APEC summit in Vietnam included a special session on “Voices of the Future” and this part of the summit should be strengthened for the PNG meeting. As Roberta Morlin, a representative from PNG at the Vietnam APEC summit states “The world and technology are advancing at such an exponential speed and the youth have an important role to play as they are better versed and can be the driving force of the new digital era”. Youth will be the future economic drivers of the Asia-Pacific region’s development. Similarly, we must ensure business has a strong voice as they are vital for lifting our economic growth rates. Given the recent highlighting of sexual abuse allegations at the recent Logie Award presentations, PNG should also look to giving women a special voice at this summit. We have lost a women’s voice in our Parliament and PNG faces particularly challenging issues around sexual violence and allegations of witchcraft. We can show the world we are serious about addressing these issues” said Mr Ling-Stuckey.

“Third, we must demonstrate to the region that we are a democratic country that respects true freedom of the press, including on social media. Despite the extraordinary shortcomings of the last election, we need to ensure our Parliament gives proper voice to alternative points of view and leadership, and that our media is able to include critical coverage, even during the Summit.

“Fourth, we must carefully navigate the budgetary implications of this summit. The true cost is unknown – contrary to principles of budget transparency. K300 million has been allocated this year on top of the hidden tax credit arrangements for Oil Search to build the untendered APEC Haus. The actual cost will most likely be more than double this even if we do it as simply as possible. As we get an update mid-year on how revenues are going (the Treasury Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook), we should work to have a major Supplementary Budget by the end of August. We need to get our house back in order with realistic budget estimates. The 2019 Budget, which is scheduled during the APEC Leaders week, could then be deferred to later in November” said the Shadow Treasurer.

“Fifth, we need to be true to APEC’s mission of ‘championing free and open trade and investment, promoting and accelerating regional economic integration...’. The recent Senior Official’s meeting in Port Moresby highlighted APEC’s support for a rules-based, free, open, fair, transparent and inclusive multilateral trading system. The O’Neill/Abel government needs to urgently review its approaches to trade as the recent moves to increase over 900 tariffs runs counter to the principles of APEC. We do not want to come across as hypocrites as we host this meeting – otherwise that would really be wasting opportunities from what will be an expensive summit for PNG. We should urgently finish the proposed second stage of the Sir Nagora Tax Review which indicated it would look at the issue of tariffs, certainly in a more systematic and efficient manner than the recent government changes. We should look at better policies to get per capita growth going again and ensure the benefits are spread across our rural communities, not just some isolated projects benefitting a few. We need to think about getting our agricultural products to the markets of all countries in APEC, not just PNG supermarkets under protectionist barriers.”

“Finally, with the best plans & agenda for APEC, it all means nothing unless the government can implement its ideas and the appointment of the Minister for Lands Justin Tachencko to oversee this monumental event is a good decision by the Prime Minister. Minister Tachencko is a competent no nonsense product of the private sector and we are confident he will get the job done”

“Let us work together to make the best of this expensive opportunity to showcase PNG and promote trade liberalisation and inclusive growth in our region” said Mr Ling-Stuckey.

Hon.Ian Ling-Stuckey,CMG.MP
Shadow Minister for Treasury & Finance

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<http://apec.org/About-Us/About-APEC/Mission-Statement>



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Roberta Morlin (third from the left) and Zachary George-Neich (second from right) in Da Nang, Viet Nam, during Economic Leaders Week 2017

Roberta Morlin, a representative from Papua New Guinea who is working to improve the health and education sectors through technology, said she was looking forward to young people making a key contribution when her economy hosts APEC for the first time in 2028.

Morlin, 28, said there was a clear need for the APEC program, given that the youth are the future economic drivers of the region's development.

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APEC Voices of the Future Representatives Gather in Da Nang, Viet Nam, during Economic Leaders Week 2017