



MINISTRY OF INTER-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS & BOUGAINVILLE AFFAIRS
National Parliament, PMB, Waigani, NCD Papua New Guinea
Tel: 327 7386/87 Fax: 327 7388 Email: pbarter@mtspng.com

STATEMENT
BY
MINISTER FOR INTER-GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
HON. SIR PETER BARTER, KT OBE MP
AT OFFICIAL PRESENTATION OF
REPORT ON VERIFICATION BY
DIRECTOR, UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN BOUGAINVILLE (UNOMB)
H.E. AMBASSADOR NOEL SINCLAIR

PORT MORESBY

28 JULY 2003

Opening Formalities

I am not sure how many of those attending last week's Peace Process Committee (PPCC) meeting noticed.

But, at the front of Hutjena High School, where the PPCC met and many other important meetings related to the Bougainville peace process have also been held, is a sign bearing some very wise advice.

Expressed in only three short words, the message is especially apt to today's important occasion.

The notice says simply: 'Succeed through Effort'.

What better way can there be to explain how the Bougainville peace process has arrived at the point at which you, Ambassador Sinclair, have come to Port Moresby to present your report officially to the National Government verifying and certifying that stage two of the agreed weapons disposal plan contained in the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* has been achieved?

How better to describe the challenges which still lie ahead? – for the people of Bougainville; for the Bougainville leaders and officials responsible for establishing the Autonomous Bougainville Government; and for the political leaders, Government agencies and officials of the National Government who will be Bougainville's partners in developing the potential of the 'joint creation' embodied in the *Bougainville Peace Agreement*.

When the parties involved in the Bougainville peace process agreed to the *Bougainville Peace Agreement*, they were, in effect, signing up to follow the principle on the signboard outside Hutjena High School: 'Succeed through effort'.

Unlike weapons disposal plans in many other countries, successful implementation of the weapons disposal plan contained in the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* relies on the commitment and effort of former combatants, their leaders and the communities in which they live.

There has not been any weapons 'buy-back' in Bougainville.

Helping to get guns out of the community has been its own reward.

Weapons have not been taken by force.

Those holding them have brought in their guns to be contained.

Practical weapons disposal, both at stage one and stage two, has depended on the effort former combatants have made to succeed.

That effort, in turn, has owed varying amounts to the strong sense of commitment that the main former combatant groups, the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) and the Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF), as well as individual commanders, units and members, have felt towards honouring the promise of weapons disposal contained in the *Lincoln Agreement*.

It has also owed a great deal to the positive influence of leaders and communities around Bougainville.

I am pleased to say that it now extends to a growing number of former combatants, leaders and communities in the 'No-Go Zone' around Panguna.

If effort has made today's presentation possible, as I firmly believe, then it is also important to acknowledge the contributions that many others have made.

They include the Director of the United Nations Observer Mission in Bougainville (UNOMB), H. E. Ambassador Noel Sinclair, on whose neutrality, independence and integrity the parties agreed to rely when they asked him to be responsible for verifying when stage two of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved.

Evidence of the effort he has put into the process can be seen in the pains he has taken to promote public awareness, understanding and support of weapons disposal.

He has encouraged and, where possible, provided support for reconciliation and containment.

In doing so, he has also fulfilled his other responsibilities under the agreed weapons disposal plan.

He has recently consulted widely with communities around Bougainville, the parties, political leaders and the National Government before submitting his report to the PPCC on Friday last week.

The result is a comprehensive, balanced and frank report on verification.

The report not only assesses compliance to date, but highlights the challenges still to be addressed and overcome.

These challenges include removing guns still at large from the community, final disposal, and the need to make every reasonable effort to succeed in making weapons disposal and the peace process Bougainville-wide.

At every stage of his assignment, H. E. Ambassador Noel Sinclair and the small number of support staff in UNOMB have received consistent, generous assistance from the neutral, regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) - the unarmed civilian and military personnel from Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu who helped the Bougainville peace process in so many ways until we farewelled them from active operations on 30 June (they are still cleaning and packing up prior to leaving for home in another 3-4 weeks).

UNOMB continues to receive equally strong and generous support from the much smaller Bougainville Transition Team (BTT), which is now on the ground.

The United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations specialized agencies, together with foreign aid donors including Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom have provided additional financial and technical assistance.

So, many different supporters have contributed to UNOMB's work.

In this connection, I must also acknowledge the very real effort that Francis Ona and his supporters outside the peace process have made not to disrupt it.

It is obvious that it would have been better if they had decided to join in.

The peace process would then have been Bougainville-wide.

They would have had a much better chance to benefit from restoration and development, and to play a direct part in helping to shape Bougainville's future.

In acknowledging the contribution they have made by respecting the peace process while remaining outside, let me, therefore, make clear that, not only is the door open for them to come in, but all of the parties continue to invite and encourage Francis Ona and his supporters to do so.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today's brief ceremony marks an important turning -point both for Bougainville and for Papua New Guinea.

The *Constitutional Amendment* implementing the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* specifies what I have to do next.

Accordingly, I shall be advising His Excellency the Governor-General as soon as I receive H. E. Ambassador Noel Sinclair's report.

His Excellency will then bring the *Constitutional Amendment* and the *Organic Law on Peace-Building in Bougainville* into full operation.

The clock will immediately start ticking towards the period, 10-15 years on, for holding the guaranteed referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future.

The Constitutional framework for setting-up the Autonomous Bougainville Government will be in place.

The same framework provides for the gradual establishment of Bougainville Government services; the creation of new Constitutional offices; and the transfer of functions, powers and control over revenue sources as capacity and resources allow.

The mechanism by which a report from a United Nations body has such significant Constitutional effects is probably unique in the world.

It is a mark of the respect and faith all of the parties have for the United Nations in general, and for UNOMB and H. E. Ambassador Noel Sinclair and his staff, in particular, that it has been included in the Papua New Guinea Constitution.

The Director of UNOMB has responded by providing a remarkably frank and comprehensive report.

The report weighs what the agreed weapons disposal plan has produced so far with what remains to be done, and balances the risks involved in bringing the new Constitutional arrangements into full operation.

Its over-all thrust can best be summed up by saying that success in securing lasting peace by peaceful means will require continuing effort by all of the parties.

For our part, the Somare-Marat Government has committed itself to provide K10 million, in two equal tranches of K5 million a year, for the one-off Establishment Grant.

We have also managed to find our own funds or obtain foreign aid to help in particular areas, including the work of the Bougainville Constitutional Commission, community policing and other activities to improve security and law and order on the ground.

Last weekend's announcement that AusAID has agreed to support the repair and upgrading of the Buka Ring Road is only the latest example of the strong support various foreign aid donors continue to give to the peace process, restoration and development in Bougainville.

Meanwhile, the arrangement through which the parties have agreed to co-operate in managing the establishment and operations of the Autonomous Bougainville Government, the Joint Supervisory Body, has already been set up on an interim basis.

The Bougainville Constitutional Commission is making good progress in preparing the Constitution for the Autonomous Bougainville Government (the Second Draft is being reviewed). Officials from Bougainville and the National Government are working closely together to develop practical strategies for implementing other parts of the *Bougainville Peace Agreement*.

These include policing, courts and correctional services, financial arrangements, and public sector reform.

But, as H. E. Ambassador Noel Sinclair's report makes clear, some of the parties still have a great of work to do for the efforts made so far to succeed in bringing the peace, security and normalcy for which we all hope and pray.

Areas highlighted in UNOMB's report include the need to continue weapons disposal till Bougainville is truly free of the threat and fear of the gun.

They also include continuing co-operation to ensure that, once put away, the guns are, in fact, secure and out of the way for good.

As last week's PPCC meeting recognised, the parties have to meet soon to agree on the final fate of the weapons.

I am pleased to report that the main former combatant groups have, therefore, decided to meet on Nissan Island as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made.

The Government's firm view that the weapons must be destroyed is already well-known.

As UNOMB's Report on verification shows, it enjoys the support of communities, leaders and former combatants around Bougainville.

The Bougainville Transitional Consultative Council, which is made up of representatives of the Bougainville Interim Provincial Government and the Bougainville People's Congress, has, in fact, resolved that Bougainville should be weapons-free.

Destruction is the only way of making sure that guns are not only out of sight but out of mind.

It is also the best way of making sure that scarce public funds are used to promote economic and social recovery through restoration and development, not wasted on providing security for guns and containers that serve no further useful purpose.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If all goes well, then presentation of the verification report marks the end of one important phase in UNOMB's work and the beginning of another.

As the Director of UNOMB acknowledges in his report, 'verification and certification does not by any means signify the end of ... [UNOMB's] concern for the success of weapons disposal.' He and his staff will continue with the various initiatives they have already taken to protect what weapons disposal has already achieved, while working to keep the process moving ahead. UNOMB 'will not fail to stress the need for the most unwavering commitment of all the Parties to the full implementation of the *Bougainville Peace Agreement*.'

UNOMB's future commitments include promoting further practical weapons disposal, the making and implementation of the stage three decision at the earliest practicable opportunity, and generally helping to create the conditions for holding free and fair democratic elections under the Bougainville Constitution.

In the worst case, the *Papua New Guinea Constitution* now provides that, following the agreed weapons disposal plan contained in the *Bougainville Peace Agreement*, UNOMB may have to decide whether elections for the Autonomous Bougainville Government 'should be delayed' until conditions are conducive.

The Bougainville parties have agreed to be bound by UNOMB's findings.

With UNOMB due to complete its assignment before the end of the year, the United Nations Security Council insisting there will be no extension, and the BTT due to leave at the end of the year too, the need for urgent action is clear.

No one who regards himself as a friend of the Bougainville peace process benefits from unnecessary delay.

Consistent with my Constitutional obligations, I shall be doing my best to ensure that H. E. Ambassador Sinclair's report is followed up in full and on time, as the parties involved in the Bougainville peace process have agreed and the *Papua New Guinea Constitution* now requires.

The Government and people throughout Papua New Guinea - including the grassroots people of Bougainville who continue to work and pray for peace – look to leaders, former combatants and communities in Bougainville, both those involved in the peace process and those still outside, to do the same.

Let us all keep on working together so we can succeed through co-operative effort in bringing about lasting peace by peaceful means.

Thank you.