First PNG National Urban Forum - Statement of Outcomes and Recommendations

1. The first PNG National Urban Forum was held on the 22-23 October, 2012, at the PNG Institute of Public Administration, Waigani, NCD, and was attended by over 800 delegates from PNG and overseas. The Forum was organised by the Office of Urbanisation and hosted by the Minister for Housing and Urban Development.

2. The first PNG National Urban Forum was honoured to have a keynote speech given by the Prime Minster, the Hon. Peter O'Neill, CMG, MP, and the opening speech was given by the Hon. Paul Isikiel, MP. Minster for Housing and Urban Development. The closing speech was given by the Hon. Charles Abel, MP. Minister for National Planning and Implementation. Five other members of the current Parliament including the Hon. Sir. Puka Temu, KBE, CMG. MP. Minister for Public Service, Hon. Loujaya Toni, MP. Minister for Community Development, the Hon. Benny Allen, MP. Minister for Lands and Physical Planning, the Hon. Labi Amaiu, MP, Vice Minister for Sports and the Hon. Bire Kimisopa, MP. Member for Goroka. Their contribution as well as the contribution of several former MPs was invaluable in setting the future directions for managing urbanisation in PNG.

3. In his keynote address, the Prime Minister, the Hon, Peter O'Neill, commended the Office of Urbanisation for the timely organisation of the Forum. The Prime Minister, also formally launched the interim *State of PNG Towns and Cities Report in PNG* prepared by the Office of Urbanisation, and the *PNG National Urban Profile* coordinated by UN-Habitat. The Prime Minister acknowledged the importance of these reports in outlining the condition of PNG towns and cities.

4. Throughout the Forum, participants engaged in active discussion on both challenges and solutions for managing PNG urbanisation. Participants concurred on the declining condition of towns and cities since colonial times, including increasing levels of urban poverty, expanding settlements in urban and peri-urban areas and deteriorating basic services and infrastructure. Urban customary landowners are both a solution and a challenge in the urbanisation process, being physically, socially and economically marginalised as towns and cities consume their lands in an unplanned manner.

5. At the first PNG National Urban Forum, participants acknowledged that the following factors were paramount in shaping the PNG urban future;

i. that the concept of urbanisation be seen as a process of modernisation of the whole country by improving development outcomes in both urban and rural areas. Urbanisation in PNG is about providing basic services and infrastructure in small, medium and large towns and cities in PNG, thus supporting people's livelihoods and lifestyles.
ii. resolving land issues and working with urban customary landowners is central to the orderly and well planned expansion of towns and cities. Lessons from the past

indicate that traditional landowners within the urban and peri-urban areas can use their land as a source of wealth and prosperity based on clear paths of land registration and unity within landowning groups on the sharing of benefits.

iii. urbanisation plans and policies need to go hand in hand supporting and leading Government's economic development corridor concept as contained in the PNG *Development Strategic Plan,* and supported by a regional planning framework. Thus, there needs to be an agreed hierarchy of towns, cities and district service centres as contained in the National Urbanisation Policy 2010-2030.

iv. urbanisation has now reached the stage of being a national development challenge requiring national solutions. The time has come to have a national rollout program to implement the strategic directions contained in the National Urbanisation Policy 2010-2030. This includes the alignment of urban local level governments with a new national urbanisation authority or similar (rather than provincial government as current).

v. as stated by the Prime Minister, the Hon. Peter O'Neill, MP.CMG, resolving urbanisation issues is a "team effort", not solely the domain of Government. Important steps being taken by urban local level governments and national, provincial and other stakeholders, including NGOs and landowner initiatives, need to be recognised. National pilot projects are underway on customary and State lands including greater awareness on accessing and developing urban customary land. All stakeholders need to play their part in improving outcomes in PNG for a better urban future.

6. In the above context and noting the range of issues raised and debated by participants as they seek better urban outcomes, the following represent the main recommendations of the first PNG National Urban Forum:

i. that the Government implement the National Urbanisation Policy 2010-2030 in 2013,

ii. that a national program be designed and implemented in urban and rural areas commencing in 2013,

iii. that the national urbanisation program complement the PNG Development Strategic Plan and Medium Term Development Plan, and target priority development areas of basic services and infrastructure, customary land development, governance, strategic plan making, land use, etc,

iv. that the status of the Office of Urbanisation be elevated to a higher authority such as a commission or department, so as to effectively implement its core functions of urbanisation program coordination, plan making and land development,

v. that the necessary legal, adminstrative and policy framework for the above, including the draft Urbanisation Management Act, be detailed out, and

vi. that adequate funds be allocated to implement the program in 2013 and onwards.