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22 September, 2008

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Persistently high corruption in low-income countries amounts to an “ongoing humanitarian disaster”. Corruption allows: “The Rich to get Richer and makes the Poor, even Poorer”

Transparency International's (TI) 2008 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) was launched in PNG today (Wednesday 24 September). The CPI is an international ranking of countries by perceived levels of corruption drawing information and statistics from a basket of in-country survey's undertaken during each year, this years CPI has ranked Papua New Guinea (PNG) 151 out of 180 countries surveyed.

According to the CPI survey, Denmark, New Zealand and Sweden are top most ranked with scores of 9.3 whilst Somalia, Iraq and Myanmar rank at the bottom with scores under 1.3. PNG's score of 2.0 has not changed from last year indicating that levels of perception of corruption have not changed either.

An interesting observation is that PNG's score of 2.0 within the Pacific region ranks as the country that has a greater prevalence of corruption compared to other Island countries which rank Samoa at 4.4 as the least corrupt, Kiribati 3.1, Solomon Islands 2.9 and Tonga 2.4 accordingly.

Internationally, PNG is ranked among the 30 most corrupt countries in the World with no real indications of improvement in governance. This is a major cause for concern and TIPNG once again calls on Government to take strong action now to address corruption and instil good governance practices.

The Chair of Transparency International, Ms Hugette Labelle stated that “corruption levels can mean the difference between life and death, when money for hospitals, clean water and vital services is in play. Corruption amounts to an ongoing humanitarian disaster and should not be tolerated with tougher approaches to tackling corruption at all levels”.

The CPI is not the judgement by TI (PNG) or the TI Movement but is rather a gathering together of information by a number of surveys that provided the data on PNG. In the case of PNG, the survey results were assessed by ADB Country Performance Assessment (2007), Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) 2007, Country Policy and Institutional Assessment by the World Bank (2007), Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) 2008, Merchant International Group (MIG) 2007 and Global Insight 2008. Not all of these are reporting on every country and there has to be a minimum of at least three such surveys available before a country can be included.

It is important to understand that this is a perception index.

It shows that PNG is seen to be comparatively worse off than most of the rest of the world. TIPNG supports the statement of the Chair Ms Hugette Labelle that “Stemming corruption requires strong oversight through parliaments, law enforcement, independent media and a vibrant civil society”.

The reasons for PNG's lack of improved ranking in this years CPI can be attributed to the lack of real action by successive Governments, including the current Government to deal with issues and spread of corruption. Evidence of the lack of political will to tackle corruption has been demonstrated in the way the Government has handled the Moti Affair, the report from the previous PAC and recently the Taiwan "Cash for Diplomacy" scandal and the Singapore US dollar account.

Our communities will continue to suffer with limited to no health services, poor education for our growing number of children and we will not be able to earn enough money to pay for our daily basic food requirements.

Chair of TI (PNG) Peter Aitsi said: "The 2008 CPI is a timely reminder that if we do not to take serious action to combat corruption then our communities will face even harder times in the years ahead. The Corruption Perception Index is a real "wake up call". We can get angry about it and blame the world for inferring in PNG affairs or we can take real action and do something about. TI PNG will be staging a public forum next Tuesday the 30th of September 2008 from 1.30pm to 5.30pm at the main lecture theatre (MLT) at the University of PNG; we encourage all members of the public to attend to start the push for change".