

THE *BOUGAINVILLE PEACE AGREEMENT* - SUMMARY OF AIMS AND CONTENTS

The main aim of the *Bougainville Peace Agreement* is to end conflict between PNG and Bougainville, and conflict within Bougainville.

To end conflict, it is not enough just to shake hands. It is also necessary to first try to fix up the things that cause the conflict. For us in Bougainville, that means fixing up both:

- problems that caused the original conflict with PNG starting in 1988; and
- the problems and issues that came up after that, and which caused conflict within Bougainville.

Any political agreement should not only deal with those issues, but must also take account of Bougainville's ability to run its own affairs in a post-conflict situation.

In 1999 the leaders of almost all groups in Bougainville identified the problems and issues that had contributed to conflict. They included:

- basic grievances about land, environment and culture;
- the strong wish of many people for Bougainville independence;
- the conflict and divisions among Bougainvilleans, including divisions about Bougainville independence;
- destruction of or major damage to the main industries in Bougainville and to infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools, hospitals, health centres);
- the weak economy in Bougainville (which means low levels of government revenue);
- the weak capacity of the Bougainville Administration.

To deal with these things, the leaders decided that the best future political arrangements for Bougainville should be based on two things: a guaranteed but deferred referendum on independence; and high autonomy for Bougainville before the referendum.

The reasons for choosing these political arrangements included:

- Autonomy gives Bougainville power to deal with Basic Grievances – Bougainville will control land, mining, forestry, environment, foreign investment and culture;
- Deferring the referendum keeps open the independence question, and also allows time for reconciliation and development of consensus among people divided on that issue;
- Autonomy and deferred referendum together allows us to build up the economy and build up administrative capacity until a final decision on independence is made.

The *Bougainville Peace Agreement* has been negotiated over 23 meetings with the PNG from June 1999 to August 2001. In the Agreement, PNG has agreed to change the National Constitution to guarantee the following things:

1. **Autonomy** - a very high level of autonomy, under which Bougainville can:
 - Choose its name and government structures in its own Constitution;

- Gradually take on most powers and functions of government;
 - Build up its own revenue through taxes as its economy grows, and until then get financial support from the National Government and donors;
 - Establish separate Bougainville courts, public service, police and CIS.
2. **Referendum** – a referendum for Bougainvilleans on independence for Bougainville, deferred for at least 10 years but for no more than 15 years after autonomy begins. The vote in the referendum will be subject to a final decision by the PNG Parliament.

The constitutional arrangements for Bougainville will be protected from change by the PNG Parliament – they will only be changed if Bougainville agrees.

The **Peace Agreement** also provides for disposal of weapons by the BRA and the BRF, and for withdrawal of remaining PNGDF and Police Riot Squads. The PMG and the United Nations have been asked to stay in Bougainville to help with weapons disposal.

These things will be part of wider ‘demilitarisation’ of Bougainville which is also intended to deal with causes of conflict. For the presence of opposing military organisations and high-powered weapons has contributed to conflict and insecurity in Bougainville. Demilitarisation also includes:

- strong restrictions on future deployment to Bougainville of the PNGDF and Police Riot Squads;
- Bougainville Police not to have anything like a heavily armed Riot Squad;
- commitment by all groups – including BRA and BRF – to working through the autonomous Bougainville Government.

As part of the efforts to deal with sources of conflict, the **Peace Agreement** provides both a new relationship between PNG and Bougainville, and a new government framework that allows Bougainvilleans to develop Bougainville in their own way.

Before most things in the **Peace Agreement** begin to operate, the PNG Parliament must pass the amendments to the PNG Constitution needed to implement the **Agreement**. There is an urgent need for support and pressure from Bougainville to encourage members of Parliament to vote for the amendments. This can be helped by quick progress in developing a Bougainville Constitution and by quick progress in implementing the agreed weapons disposal plan.

After the amendments are passed, the success of the **Agreement** will depend on the efforts of Bougainville to implement it properly.

JOINT BOUGAINVILLE NEGOTIATING TEAM
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