



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND IMMIGRATION
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER**

MEDIA RELEASE

GOVERNMENT APPROVES THE NATIONAL REFUGEE POLICY



The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Hon. Rimbink Pato, LLB, OBE, MP announced today that the National Executive Council had endorsed a National Refugee Policy for Papua New Guinea.

“Papua New Guinea has a proud tradition of helping people in need” he said. “This policy affirms our humanitarian values and our strong regional leadership.”

The policy articulates 5 key principles:

1. Papua New Guinea recognises the rights of refugees in accordance with its commitments under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and related 1967 Protocol, and the Principles of this National Refugee Policy, and incorporates these within national legislation.
2. Papua New Guinea is committed to working with other countries and international organisations to provide protection to refugees and combat people smuggling, trafficking in persons and related transnational crime.
3. Papua New Guinea may enter into arrangements with other countries or international organisations for processing asylum seekers’ claims and where appropriate settlement of refugees.
4. Papua New Guinea embraces the skills and qualities of refugees, supports them to become self-sufficient and offers them the opportunity to become citizens.
5. Papua New Guinea contributes to global refugee support efforts and targets for international resettlement of refugees with appropriate skills required by PNG for national development.

The Minister explained that the policy covers all refugees in PNG, including those from Indonesia’s Papua Province (West Papuans) and non-Melanesian refugees who either arrived independently or were transferred under arrangements with Australia.

PNG is a strong regional leader in providing humanitarian protection to some of the world's most vulnerable people who have fled situations of persecution, war, torture and rape. They simply want to rebuild their lives.

PNG is rich in natural resources but we are still developing our national economy and institutions. The national government is first and foremost focused on enhancing the welfare and fulfilment of our own people, but it is also committed to fulfilling its humanitarian obligations. Therefore this policy supports our nation's and people's needs as well as helping to protect refugees.

It focuses on building refugees self-sufficiency and enabling them to make a contribution to Papua New Guinea's economic development. Many refugees have skills and experience that are in short supply and greatly needed by Papua New Guinean businesses.

The Minister stated that the policy now enables the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Service to enter into arrangements with Australia and Other Partners for processing asylum seeker claims and where appropriate settlement of refugees and process applications for citizenship by West Papuan refugees.

Placement of refugees from Manus for employment in various locations will commence soon while Applications for Citizenship by Naturalization for over 2,000 refugees from Indonesia's Papua Province West Papua in the Western Province will be considered by the Citizenship Advisory Committee early next month.

The Minister acknowledged that the policy had taken some time to develop. "It is crucial that we get this right" he said. "Settlement of refugees is not easy and we have to ensure refugees are not competing for employment and income earning opportunities with our citizens as well as prepare them for placement in the employment environment.

The National Refugee Policy is available on the Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority website: www.immigration.gov.pg.



Hon. Rimbink Pato, OBE, LLB, MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration

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