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MEDIA RELEASE

More Refugees Departing to the United States

[PORT MORESBY, 31 JULY 2019] The Minister for Immigration and Border Security, the Hon. Petrus Thomas MP today announced a further nine refugees have departed Papua New Guinea for the United States.

“I would like to wish this group of refugees the very best with their new lives in the United States. Resettlement is a key step in the lives of refugees and one of the three durable solutions which are promoted and recognised by the UNHCR , said Minister Thomas.”

Minister Thomas noted that the departure of this latest group was a significant milestone in delivering on the expectations of Prime Minister Marape that the regional processing caseload be resolved quickly. Minister Thomas said “It is regrettable that some of the reporting on this matter does not show how much progress has already been made. With the departure of these nine individuals, we have now seen a total of 269 refugees depart PNG and resettle in the United States. The significance of this number cannot be understated. There are now only 261 refugees in PNG –this is less than the total number who have already gone to the United States. With many more refugees currently progressing through the resettlement process, I am confident that the number will continue to decrease significantly over the coming weeks.”

Despite the clear decrease in refugees remaining in PNG, Minister Thomas remains resolute in the expectations he has on the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Authority (ICA) to pursue every avenue for resolution of the regional processing caseload and the ultimate cessation of arrangements in Manus Province. Minister Thomas said “I have directed the Chief Migration Officer (CMO) to explore all options to quickly and effectively end all operations in Manus. CMO has already briefed me on a suite of options that will deliver on the expectations of the Prime Minister and continue to meet PNG's international obligations.

“It is important to remember that no matter what support is provided, it remains incumbent on individuals to engage with the options that are provided to them and to make the personal decisions that will enable them to move on with their lives. PNG is a welcoming country and we continue to encourage those who wish to settle here to do so. I would like to take this opportunity to speak directly to those who have been found not to be owed protection. You do not have a lawful right to remain in PNG and you must depart. It remains the preference of PNG that you depart voluntarily and with the generous financial support that is available to you”.