



MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & IMMIGRATION
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT

BY

HON. RIMBINK PATO, OBE, LLB, MP
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS & IMMIGRATION

**TABLING OF THE 2014 and 2015 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP SERVICE AUTHORITY**

Mr Speaker: Honourable Members

It gives me great pleasure to present the third and fourth annual report of the Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority (ICSA) and to inform the House of agency's progress and achievements.

Members of this House may recall that not that long ago, PNG's immigration agency was a small, under-funded Division housed within the Department of Foreign Affairs. With a small staffing establishment, it struggled to carry out its mandated functions and faced regular criticism in the media and from the public.

Following the establishment of the agency as a Statutory Authority, for which the previous Government and Parliament must be given due acknowledgement, the O'Neill Government immediately recognised the critical policy and operational role the Agency provides the nation in terms of managing our borders, facilitating travel,

and administering visa, passport and citizenship services to our own people and to foreign nationals wishing to come to PNG.

Accordingly, this Government has approved significantly increased staffing levels for the Agency to provide it with the necessary resourcing to operate effectively and efficiently. The agency has been restructured and is undergoing significant operational expansion. Staffing establishment has increased from 72 to 248 with a current staff on strength of 172 with final recruitment processes underway to fill the remaining positions in 2016

With the revenue retention arrangements in place, and in line with the Alotau Accord, ICSA has established a border post in Wutung, funded dedicated immigration officers in high priority overseas missions, rolled out the Border Management System to all overseas missions and provincial offices, and established and staffed a new Refugee Division.

Mr Speaker

The agency's ability to respond immediately to Government priorities was exemplified by the establishment - in less than two months - of an immigration office at Tokua Airport to process international arrivals and departures and more recently, the establishment of Offices at both Alotau and Mt. Hagen respectively. Previously the agency was unable to fund Citizenship Advisory Committee meetings; these meetings are now held regularly in progress, and managed by a resourced and dedicated Secretariat drawn from staff of the Organisation.

Mr Speaker,

Continuing on from the O'Neill Government's 'Year of Implementation' in 2013, ICSA continued to implement important policies and programs in 2014 and 2015. Its activities have continued to support the key priorities of Government, encapsulated in the Alotau Accord.

ICSA facilitated a Constitutional amendment Bill that was recently passed by this House in March 2014 to enable dual citizenship. It has completed the consequential amendments to subordinate legislation to implement this important change. The proposed amendments to the Constitution are now going through the parliamentary process in the usual manner.

In the same manner, the draft of the Revised Migration Act and the Regulations has been finalised and will be put to Parliament for its consideration in 2016.

Mr Speaker,

Being a lead agency in facilitating travel for business, trade and investment, tourism and sports, NEC in 2014 approved a Visa on Arrival Eligible Country List. These innovations have all been welcomed by the general public and the travel industry at large.

ICSA has also helped to make international travel easier for Papua New Guineans.

Apart from Israel, Reciprocal Visa arrangements were concluded for Diplomats and Officials with Indonesia and Japan in 2014 and 2015 respectively. Plus, members would be aware, the Indonesian Government has now agreed in principle to extend this facilitation measure to ordinary citizens.

ICSA is also negotiating for reciprocal visa arrangements with key countries and economies with common bilateral and mutual interest including, Macau, Russia, China, India, South Korea and the Philippines.

Mr Speaker,

The Government is proud to provide leadership in regional efforts towards combating people smuggling, trafficking of persons and related trans-national crimes. Furthermore, PNG is rightly proud of its humanitarian tradition of helping those in need.

A very large amount of work has gone into establishing Regional Processing Centres on Manus, managing asylum seekers, developing and implementing refugee status laws, and planning for the careful integration of genuine refugees. This work is saving lives and will help to protect some of the world's most vulnerable people. The construction of the Refugee Transit Facility at Lorengau East was completed in October 2014 and now houses transferees granted refugee status.

Just as importantly, in November last year, Cabinet approved action to address the situation of the many West Papuan refugees living in PNG without official status. NEC's decision will move people out of this limbo and enable them to obtain all of the rights and responsibilities of Papua New Guinea citizenship.

Following this decision ICSA has commenced the significant and historic task of registering and resolving the status of the thousands of Melanesian brothers and sisters from West Papua who have resided in PNG for many years.

More than 1,500 West Papuan Refugees will be granted citizenship towards the end of the year. This is a major achievement which the O'Neil/Dion Government must be congratulated for. The issue of settling these new citizens must not only rest with the Government but with the communities as well.

In October 2015, Cabinet approved the National Refugee Policy. This policy is now being implemented.

Mr Speaker

Effective border management and control requires cooperation and liaison not just with other PNG law enforcement agencies but with immigration and law enforcement agencies across the region and around the globe. In Kokopo in April 2014 I was honoured to officially open the annual conference for the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference – the regional immigration organisation - attended by Heads of Immigration agencies from across the Pacific, hosted by ICSA. At the conference PNG assumed the role of Chair and facilitated the signing of an

historic Memorandum of Understanding to establish the PIDC as a legal entity in its own right.

Mr. Speaker,

Consistent with the Section 22 of the Migration Act, the Minister responsible for Immigration is required to report to Parliament the removals and deportation of unlawful non-citizens. In 2014 ICSA facilitated a number of voluntary and involuntary removals. Some of these removals were a result of successful prosecutions related to breaches of entry conditions and criminal convictions. One of these removals was of a convicted paedophile, an UK citizen Mr. Roy Griffiths and suspected paedophile and former priest Mr. Roger Mount.

In 2015, the following removals were recorded, 1 Australian, 2 Iranians, 11 Myanmar Nationals, 15 Vietnamese nationals, 9 Thai nationals, 136 Indonesian nationals, 1 Ghanaian national, 1 Nigerian national and 1 US national. The reasons for these removals varied, including breach of visa conditions, illegal fishing in PNG waters off the coasts of Daru, Western Province and Wewak, East Sepik Province, illegal engagement at the Bewani Oil Palm Project

Mr Speaker


Looking at the many other impressive achievements outlined in ICSA's 2014 and 2015 Annual Report, I am confident that ICSA is more than up to the challenges ahead.

Having said that, I would like to acknowledge in this House the particular contribution of the Chief Migration Officer (CMO), Mr. Mataio Rabura. The CMO's leadership has been instrumental in transforming ICSA into a modern and highly performing government agency. Honourable Members will be aware that in recognition of his achievements and long record of public service, the CMO was honoured in 2015 with an Order of the British Empire and I extend my sincere congratulations to him for this well-deserved award.

Mr Speaker,

Immigration is truly leading the way for other PNG Government agencies. It is continuing to implement its ambitious reform agenda and will continue to lift the bar in terms of its responsiveness to implementing government policy, service delivery and public administration.

I commend this report to the House.



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