



## MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & IMMIGRATION OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

### Media Release

03 July, 2013

### **“NEC Endorses Proposed Constitutional Amendments to Allow Dual Citizenship and Remove Doubt over Asylum Seekers”**

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Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration, Hon. Rimbink Pato, OBE, LLB, MP, announced that the NEC had agreed to pursue amendments to the Constitution to allow Dual Citizenship and to remove any doubts regarding the legality of regional asylum seeker processing arrangements.

“As Papua New Guinea has matured and its position as a nation has undergone change, its needs and circumstances have also changed” said the Minister.

Under the current provisions in the Constitution, PNG nationals may hold dual citizenship until the age of 19. At that point in time, a dual PNG national must make a decision – either to renounce their other citizenship or retain their PNG citizenship.

“The fact is that many Papua New Guineans have been asking for dual citizenship. In this global society, more and more Papua New Guineans are travelling and living abroad in many parts of the world. If they marry a foreigner and have children, those children are forced to make a difficult choice at the age of 19. Similarly, some Papua New Guineans become eligible to obtain another country’s citizenship and would like to enjoy the benefits it would provide. At present, both classes of people would lose their PNG citizenship, despite their to keep both”, Minister Pato said.

Under the proposed amendments dual citizens would not be permitted to vote, stand for public office, acquire freehold land or obtain access to sensitive documents under freedom of information. The countries in which dual citizenship is permitted would be prescribed by their Regulation.

“I am pleased that NEC has also endorsed a proposed amendment to Section 42 of the Constitution to remove any doubts that may exist regarding PNG’s ability to work with our neighbours to manage the regional issue of asylum seekers”, the Minister said.

“The issues facing bordering countries are not just for these countries, they are for PNG as well.”

The proposed amendment will recognise that, notwithstanding the constitutional safeguards around the liberty of the person, foreign nationals may be held at asylum seeker processing facilities in PNG under arrangements between PNG and other countries or international organizations.

All the proposed amendments will be put to Parliament in the July 2013 sitting.

“I am very hopeful that the Honourable Members will see the benefit to our nation, and people in extending dual citizenship and supporting regional cooperation and pass these important amendments to our Constitution”, the Minister said.

Authorised by:



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