

**Statement by Amb. Koonjul on Papua New Guinea**  
**21 November 2002**

Like other delegations, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this open meeting today on Bougainville. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Sir Kieran Prendergast, for his useful and comprehensive briefing on developments in the Bougainville peace process.

We commend the authorities and the people of Bougainville for their continuing commitment to implement the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Bougainville is yet another concrete example where the Security Council and the international community, and especially the neighbouring countries, are playing a significant role in taking the peace process forward.

We take particular note of the progress towards achievement of the goals set in the Peace Agreement, signed at Arawa on 30 August 2001. We are happy to learn that agreements have now been concluded on the issue of a referendum to determine the eventual political future of Bougainville, within the framework of the constitution of Papua New Guinea.

We share the view that the peace process is on the right track, despite some setbacks. The Bougainville Peace Agreement is indeed a major watershed in the political history of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation and support to the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) which, despite its small size, has done a remarkable job in actively coordinating, implementing and carrying out the agreed weapons disposal plan. We are happy to note that, despite practical difficulties, UNPOB has successfully carried out the stage I process in the weapons disposal plan. We are, however, concerned about the information Sir Kieran has just given us on the growing number of incidents in which trunks and containers have been forced open and guns removed. These incidents would negatively impact on the good work performed by UNPOB and the Peace Monitoring Group and can risk derailing the whole process, thereby hampering the completion of stage II. We commend, however, the initiatives undertaken by the senior commanders, both from the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the Bougainville Resistance Forces, in investigating, advising and encouraging

the offenders to return these weapons. We hope those responsible will do so in the interest of peace and stability.

The progress in weapons disposal is inextricably linked to the establishment of the autonomous Bougainville government by the legal device which makes the provision on autonomy and referendum in the new part XIV of the national constitution conditional upon verification and certification by UNPOB that stage II of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved. It is therefore extremely important for everyone to ensure the completion of the weapons disposal plan. We are pleased to note that a total of 1,684 guns have so far been disposed of, including 301 high-powered factory made weapons. We urge the people of Bougainville to strictly respect the provisions of the Plan and put aside political and other differences in the spirit of community building.

As in any peace process, reconciliation and the reintegration of ex-combatants remain absolute priorities to ensure long term and sustainable peace. The early reintegration of former combatants and their engagement into gainful employment should therefore be addressed urgently. We appreciate the setting up of the Bougainville Ex-Combatants Trust Fund account, established under AusAID. We encourage the donor communities to inject more funds into this programme for its effective implementation.

The peace-building process in Bougainville cannot be realizable without heavy investment in the reconstruction of the infrastructure and the restoration of civil authority. My delegation recognizes and welcomes the desire of the Bougainville people to participate actively in the rebuilding of their province. It is therefore important that priority be given to health, education, agriculture and basic infrastructure. No peace dividend would be possible without progress in these fields. We appeal to the international community to provide assistance in this regard.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that there has been significant progress, even though the initial timetable has not been respected due to circumstances not attributable to the responsibility of the parties in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We strongly believe that the Security Council must continue to remain fully engaged in the process and we therefore support the request of the Government of Papua New Guinea, as well as the decision of the Secretary-General, to extend the

mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, which expires on 31 December 2002, for a further 12-month period.