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MEDIA STATEMENT

PNG LAW SOCIETY CONGRATULATES HELEN ROALAKONA — PNG'S FIRST FEMALE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR

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The Papua New Guinea Law Society congratulates **Ms Helen Roalakona** on her historic appointment and swearing-in as Papua New Guinea's first female Public Prosecutor.

This is a significant milestone not only for Ms Roalakona personally, but for women in the legal profession and for Papua New Guinea as a nation. Her elevation to one of the most important constitutional law offices in the country demonstrates the increasing role women are playing in leadership across our profession and justice institutions.

As President of the PNG Law Society, I congratulate Ms Roalakona and wish her every success as she assumes this demanding responsibility. The Office of the Public Prosecutor carries enormous responsibility for the administration of criminal justice. Decisions about whether and how the State prosecutes serious criminal conduct require independence, courage, sound legal judgment and an unwavering commitment to fairness and the Rule of Law.

This will not be an easy task. Papua New Guinea continues to face serious challenges involving violent crime, corruption, complex financial offending and public expectations that those who break the law are properly investigated and prosecuted. The strength of our justice system ultimately depends upon each institution within it performing its constitutional responsibilities effectively and without fear or favour.

Ms Roalakona herself has acknowledged the weight of the responsibility she now carries. We trust that she will rise to that challenge and provide the strong, independent and professional leadership the Office requires.

Her appointment is also particularly encouraging at a time when we are seeing more women entering and progressing through the legal profession. Increasingly, our law schools, the Legal Training Institute, the Bar and our justice institutions are demonstrating that women are not simply participating in the profession, they are increasingly leading it.

The PNG Law Society and the wider legal fraternity therefore pledge our professional support to the new Public Prosecutor. There will inevitably be difficult decisions ahead, and there will be occasions when the institutions of justice may hold different views. That is part of a healthy constitutional democracy. What must unite us is our common commitment to justice, due process, institutional independence and the Rule of Law.

On behalf of the Council and members of the Papua New Guinea Law Society, I congratulate Public Prosecutor Helen Roalakona on this historic achievement.

We wish her courage in difficult moments, wisdom in difficult decisions, and strength in carrying the considerable responsibility now entrusted to her.

Congratulations, Ms Roalakona. The Bar stands ready to support you as you serve the State and our people.

Hubert Namani

President

Papua New Guinea Law Society

ENDS