

## P R E S S R E L E A S E

### PNG signs key human rights instruments

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The United Nations in PNG has commended the government on its recent accession to two important human rights treaties.

"I commend PNG for its recent accession to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)," said Jacqui Badcock, head of the UN in PNG at a ceremony to mark International Human Rights day recently.

"Accession is an important step towards guaranteeing respect for fundamental human rights," she said.

However Dr. Badcock pointed out that there was still much work to be done.

"In PNG there is a large gap between the rhetoric of human rights and its sobering realities on the ground. We cannot overlook the fact that there are still many children who are not going to school, women and men are not accessing healthcare, girls and women face violence, and people living with HIV are still subject to discrimination and stigma among other issues."

In signing and ratifying the two conventions, PNG will now have to report on a regular basis to UN governed bodies in New York as to its progress in achieving a range of human rights areas. The two covenants guarantee, under international law:

1. Labour rights
2. The right to social security
3. The right to family life
4. The right to an adequate standard of living (including the right to food, water and housing)
5. The right to health
6. The right to education
7. The right to participation in cultural life

The government must also now begin the process of ensuring that all PNG law:

1. Protects people's physical integrity (against things such as execution, torture, and arbitrary arrest).
2. Is fair (values the rule of law, provides rights upon arrest and in trial, meets basic conditions during imprisonment, protects the right to a lawyer, impartial process in trial).

3. Protects Papua New Guineans against gender, religious, racial or other forms of discrimination.
4. Protects individual freedom of belief, speech, association, freedom of press, right to hold assembly.
5. Protects the right to political participation

It is now up to the government to work towards the prompt enactment of implementing legislation necessary to give domestic effect to the covenants – a process that may take a number of years.

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