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## OFFICE OF ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER

### PRESS STATEMENT

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2022

#### EXTENSION OF RETURN OF WRITS NECESSARY TO ENABLE DELIVERY OF THE 2022 NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTION

This afternoon at around 2p.m, the Head of State upon advice from the Electoral Commission signed the instrument to extend the date fixed for the return of writs from today 29<sup>th</sup> July at 4p.m. to 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2022 at 4p.m. The extension has since been published in the National Gazette No. G597 date 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2022.

Effectively, this means that the Writs for the 2022 National General Election will be returned to the Head of State on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 2022.

The Electoral Commissioner sought the extension as a precaution to enable scrutiny and counting to be concluded and for results to be declared in the provincial and open electorates.

Mr. Sinai cited special circumstances that warrant the extension of the return of writs, noting delays during the polling period from serious security issues, attacks on ballot boxes and counting centres, air and maritime logistical challenges, inclement weather, and petitions from candidates and scrutineers. Out of an abundance of caution and the desire to protect the electoral process, the extension is necessary to enable the majority of writs to be returned for the 2022 National General Election.

The Electoral Commission is committed to returning most, if not all of the writs before the extended date. This will enable ALL, if not most, of the members elected to participate in the first sitting of Parliament to participate in the Constitutional process of electing a Speaker and Prime Minister. This is consistent with the Commission's mandate under the Organic Law, which is to ensure that the election process leading up to the return of writs is free, safe, and fair.

The extension has been sought based upon the four-person bench Supreme Court's interpretation of the relevant provisions of the Constitution and Organic Law dealing with return of writs. The Supreme Court took a practical approach in appreciating the challenges involved in running elections and in the discretion of the Electoral Commission in seeking extensions where necessary to ensure compliance with constitutional time limits. The Supreme Court is the only authority that can interpret and apply provisions of the Constitutional laws and not any other body. Accordingly, the Electoral Commission has to the best of its ability, applied the interpretation and application offered by the Supreme Court in the present circumstances.

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The Commissioner assures all voters and stakeholders that "I am committed to delivering the 2022 National General Election and enabling the formation of the next Government of Papua New Guinea. The additional time to complete counting and deliver the writs will provide greater certainty to stakeholders as the counting process is completed."

The Commissioner reiterated and emphasized to all voters and stakeholders, "I call upon all voters, leaders, and candidates and their scrutineers and supporters to respect the electoral process and refrain from inciting violence or intervening in the process."



**SIMON SINAI, ML**  
ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER



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