

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

**MINISTER FOR FINANCE & TREASURY, HON. BART
PHILEMON**

**ON THE OPENING OF THE CONSUMER PRODUCT
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE (CPCC) INAUGURAL MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY 27TH JULY 2005 AT THE ICCC CONFERENCE ROOM**

Commissioner, Thomas Abe.

Representatives from the Industry, Government and Consumer Groups.
Friends from the Media.

It gives me great pleasure to be present here this morning to open this inaugural meeting of the Consumer Product Consultative Committee (CPCC). I do not wish to be too formal in my address, except to welcome you and thank you for your attendance.

I must commend the Commissioner, Mr. Abe, the Associate Commissioners and staff involved in the planning and establishment of the CPCC. This is a milestone effort on the part of the ICCC to organize and facilitate the establishment of such a body whose primary objective is to serve as an informal forum for discussion and consultation on issues relating to consumer products in the market, particularly issues pertaining to product safety, product standards, product recalls and bans, and regulations regarding product standards in PNG.

Parliament in 2002 passed the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission Act which established the Independent Consumer and Competition Commission (ICCC) with its primary objective geared towards enhancing the welfare of the people of Papua New Guinea through promotion of competition and fair trade, promotion of economic efficiency in industry structure, investment and conduct, and the promotion and protection of consumer's rights and interests.

You will note that in the name of the ICCC, "consumer" or customer as referred to in the business context, has a prominent position. The people of Papua New Guinea, who are comprised of consumers like you and me, deserve a 'fair deal' when it comes to service standards, pricing, and quality in the many goods and services offered in the PNG market today. In fact that is why the government through the ICCC regulates

public utilities such as electricity, telecommunications, water, postal services, ports and motor vehicle insurance; and has declared certain goods and services such as fuel, tinned fish and meat, flour, rice, and poultry as well as PMV and taxi fares for price regulation purposes. It is the Government's desire that these goods and services be made available at efficient cost reflective prices, and that any monopoly or market power held by the suppliers of these goods and services is not used to the detriment of the consumers of Papua New Guinea.

In addition to the issues of service standards and product quality being a focus for attention by the ICCC for these declared goods and services, the Commission has a much wider role in terms of acting as a watch dog on product quality and service standards across the economy as a whole.

The Government embraces the 1985 United Nations Charter of Consumer Rights and the fundamental principles embodied in that Charter to protect the rights and interests of consumers and monitor standards for the ethical conduct of those engaged in the production and distribution of goods and services. The Commission plays a central role in the practical implementation of these fundamental consumer rights in the Papua New Guinea economy.

One of the most important rights is obviously the right to product safety, which I believe is to be the focus of this Consumer Product Consultative Committee (CPCC).

The Commissioner in his welcoming address made it crystal clear that we have some serious issues in Papua New Guinea in relation to product safety as highlighted by a number of the complaints already lodged with the ICCC. All parties concerned, including consumers, suppliers and manufacturers, with the help of ICCC, should make it an individual and corporate responsibility to address these product safety issues and safeguard our people. Hence, an initiative such as the establishment of this Consultative Committee, is commended.

A corporate responsibility implies all parties being prepared to initiate and implement action that may serve to resolve or overcome identified product safety issues. Where these problems exist it is not necessarily a matter for new legislation; enforcement of existing laws may be an appropriate response. However, in the spirit of cooperation and

consultation that this Committee is intended to foster, I would hope that many of the current and potential future problems that will be encountered in this area, can be resolved quickly and efficiently through appropriate action by the relevant groups concerned.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the composition of the CPCC reflects a broad cross section of key stakeholders. I am aware for example, that our women folk are represented on this Consumer Product Consultative Committee as a consumer group, and I welcome this initiative and acknowledge their presence here today. The input gathered from consultation with all representatives and experts present around the table will certainly be of value and contribute significantly to the functioning of the ICC and recognition in the wider public domain of the issues of product safety and consumer rights.

Finally, I take this opportunity again to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Abe and his staff for inviting me to formally launch the Consumer Product Consultative Committee and to thank all of those attending today who are giving of their time and expertise as inaugural members of this Consultative body. I can assure you that your time and efforts spent in the CPCC will be highly valued and will contribute to the process of market reform and enhancement of consumer welfare that we all desire for this generation and the generations that will follow.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare the Consultative Committee formally open and to wish you well in your deliberations and discussions.

Thank You,

HON. BART PHILEMON, MP
Minister for Finance and Treasury

27 July 2005