

## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Papua New Guinea Embraces Korea's Saemaul Undong (SMU) Model for Rural Development Expansion**

Hon. Soroi Marepo Eoe, CMG, MP, Minister for Provincial and Local Level Government Affairs is proud to announce a landmark decision by the National Executive Council (NEC) to adopt Korea's renowned Saemaul Undong (SMU) rural development model as a cornerstone of Papua New Guinea's rural transformation strategy. 70236732

Following a successful 12-year pilot in the Eastern Highlands Province (EHP), the government has approved the expansion of the SMU model to five additional provinces, marking a significant step toward empowering rural communities and driving sustainable change across the nation.

The Saemaul Undong, or New Village Movement, is a proven community-driven development approach that propelled South Korea from one of the world's poorest nations—an aid recipient in the aftermath of war—to a global economic powerhouse and donor country within 50 to 70 years. Launched in the 1970s, SMU transformed rural Korea by fostering a mindset of diligence, self-help, and cooperation, enabling communities to take ownership of their development. Today, PNG stands to benefit from this inspiring model as we seek to uplift our rural populations and bridge the urban-rural divide.

“This is more than a development program—it’s a mindset change,” the Minister stated. “The Saemaul Undong model teaches us that real progress begins when our people take full ownership of their future. It’s about empowering communities to identify their needs, harness their resources, and work together for lasting change. After 12 years of piloting in the Eastern Highlands, we’ve seen its potential firsthand, and now we’re ready to take it nationwide.”

The expansion to five additional provinces reflects the government’s commitment to rural development as a national priority. By embracing SMU, PNG aims to replicate Korea’s success story, fostering self-reliance and collective action to improve livelihoods, infrastructure, and opportunities in rural areas. The model’s emphasis on community participation aligns with PNG’s vision of inclusive growth, where every citizen plays a role in building a stronger, more prosperous nation.

Minister Eoe extended heartfelt gratitude to the Marape/Rosso government for its visionary leadership and unwavering support in championing this initiative. “On behalf of the people I wish to thank Prime Minister James Marape and Deputy Prime Minister John Rosso for their dedication to rural development and for recognizing the transformative power of the Saemaul Undong model. Their approval through the NEC paves the way for a new era of progress in our provinces.”

This announcement builds upon PNG’s long-standing efforts to strengthen rural service delivery through community-driven development approaches. The Department for Provincial and Local Government Affairs (DPLGA) has been at the forefront of such transformative initiatives, including the Rural Service Delivery Project (RSDP), which has successfully demonstrated how communities can lead and sustain

their own development through active participation and ownership. Like the RSDP, the adoption of the SMU model reflects the government's commitment to establishing effective mechanisms that reach rural populations, ensuring that development efforts are impactful and sustainable.

As PNG embarks on this ambitious expansion, the government will work closely with local leaders, communities, and international partners, including the Republic of Korea, to ensure the successful implementation of SMU. This initiative promises to unlock the potential of our rural heartlands, fostering a future where every Papua New Guinean can thrive.

This announcement is especially meaningful as it coincides with Papua New Guinea's 50th Independence Anniversary. As the nation celebrates half a century of sovereignty, the adoption of the Saemaul Undong model symbolizes a renewed commitment to self-determination and nation-building. The golden jubilee of independence is not only a time to honor our past achievements but also a pivotal moment to chart an ambitious course for the future—one where empowered rural communities drive our National Vision of a smarter, stronger, healthier, wealthier, and more prosperous Papua New Guinea by 2050.

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