Woman is Autonomous Bougainville Government acting president

Contributed by Tangata Vainerere
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12 FEBRUARY 2009 BUKA (Pacnews) ---- The Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) has again made history by recognising women leaders and paving the way for maintaining gender equality at all levels of government, reports The National

ABG President James Tanis yesterday announced the appointment of South Bougainville MP and Minister for Churches and NGOs Laura Ampa as acting president while he and his deputy, Ezekiel Massat, attend the Joint Supervisory Body (JSB) meeting in Port Moresby.

Mr Tanis said he named Mrs Ampa as the acting president because of the leadership qualities she had demonstrated as a peace advocate during the conflict.

“This is also something which I want to see – that governments maintain gender balance and work alongside their women leaders,” he said.

Mr Tanis said he was confident Mrs Ampa would take care of matters in Bougainville while he was away. The minister for local level government, Jonathan Ngati, will be the acting vice-president.

Mr Tanis said his government would take a new approach to accelerate the pace and broaden the agenda for section 295 for the transfer of powers and functions at the JSB meeting.

Mr Tanis, through the JSB meeting today, will be presenting a document to the Prime Minister, requesting that all former North Solomons provincial government laws be reactivated.

He said getting all powers and functions back were his top priority and he would give equal time to addressing them.

Mr Tanis said there were several powers that could have been immediately drawn to the ABG on the first day that it was formed.

“I am confident that Bougainville will get a positive response and the National Government will surely hand down some of the powers and functions,” he said.

He said there was a need to broaden the agenda of the JSB as part of the new approach to clearly map out the implementation of autonomy, destruction of weapons on Bougainville and start the planning stages of the implementation of the referendum on independence.

Before his departure for Port Moresby yesterday, Mr Tanis also said the conduct of a referendum for Bougainville was not an issue for discussion. The referendum for Bougainville was provided for under the National Constitution and also under the Bougainville Constitution, and the job of the JSB was to co-ordinate and implement what was in the Constitution, he emphasised.The broadening of the JSB was to let both parties discuss powers and functions that could be immediately transferred to the ABG while discussions continued on more technical powers and functions.

In the past, most of the JSB time was consumed by discussions on the mining issue, leaving no time for other areas…..PNS (ENDS)