

Joint Understanding between PNG and Australia on the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges

1 Preamble

This Joint Understanding has been developed in the spirit of the Port Moresby Declaration of 6 March 2008 on cooperation between Australia and its Pacific neighbours, and the principles therein of partnership, mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

This Joint Understanding covers both the sustainable development of communities along the Kokoda Track corridor, and protection and sustainable use of the natural and cultural resources of the broader Owen Stanley Ranges region.

1.1 Special importance of Kokoda and the Owen Stanley Ranges

The Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges hold a special importance for Papua New Guinea and Australia:

- The Kokoda Track has iconic status for people in both PNG and Australia. It represents the bond forged between our people at a time of war.
- The Kokoda Track has contemporary significance as a tourist attraction, has the potential to widen the base of PNG's tourism industry, and is an important person-to-person linkage between people from PNG and Australia.
- The Owen Stanley Ranges region, including the Brown River catchment, is important as a future water and power supply opportunity for Port Moresby.
- The Owen Stanley Ranges are one of PNG's major carbon stores and will be assessed along with other locations as potential sites for demonstration Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD) activities within the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership.
- The Owen Stanley Ranges are significant from a World Heritage perspective, and were included by the PNG Government on its World Heritage Tentative List in 2006.

1.2 Vision

The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia have a vision for the future of the Kokoda Track and the Owen Stanley Ranges that includes:

- Sustainable development of people and communities along the Kokoda Track corridor, including improved economic opportunities and livelihoods, health, education, transport and related services.
- Preservation of the historic values of the Kokoda Track, and maintenance of the integrity of the Track and of the special qualities of the trekking experience.
- Preservation of the water catchment in the Owen Stanley Ranges for future power and water supply for Port Moresby.
- Maximising the potential forest carbon benefits.
- Recognition of the World Heritage cultural and biodiversity values of the Owen Stanley Ranges.

1.3 Guiding principles

To achieve this vision, the Governments have set down the following guiding principles:

- This is a PNG led, Australian supported joint initiative to support environmentally sustainable development that delivers real benefits to local communities.
- This understanding has been developed within the guiding principles of the PNG - Australia Development Cooperation Strategy 2006 – 2010 and recognizes the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership signed on 6 March 2008.
- Partnerships will be built between the two Governments, and there will be a cooperative, mutually determined engagement process with the landowners and communities along the Kokoda Track and in the Owen Stanley Ranges.
- Papua New Guinea processes and systems (government, community and private sector) will be used wherever possible for new and enhanced services to assist local people.

2 Objectives of the Understanding

2.1 Economic and social objectives

The Australian Government will work together with the Papua New Guinea Government to assist it in its efforts to achieve:

- An improved standard of living, quality of life, and access to basic services for communities along the Kokoda Track corridor.
- Improved opportunities for income generation, through the following:
 - sharing benefits from tourism on the Kokoda Track, through better distribution of trekking fees and development of local income generation opportunities (business and employment);
 - improved access to markets (transport) for other income generation opportunities; and
 - assistance with quantifying and accessing long term benefits from natural resources (e.g. water and/ or carbon rights). In this regard, investment in avoided deforestation in the Owen Stanley Ranges may deliver wider benefits for communities and national natural resource management.
- The preservation of social and cultural values of the World War II route.
- A feasibility study into a World Heritage nomination and management framework.

2.2 Environmental objectives

The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia will work towards ensuring the following:

- The impacts of trekking are managed to deliver clear net environmental benefits for the Kokoda Track Communities.
- The PNG Government is supported in its efforts to maintain the Brown River Catchment, given its national importance as a potential water and power supply for Port Moresby.
- The Owen Stanley Ranges, as one of PNG's major carbon stores, will be assessed along with other locations as potential sites for demonstration REDD activities within the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership.
- The World Heritage values of the Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges are understood and, where appropriate, protected.

2.3 Management objectives

The PNG and Australian Governments will put in place the necessary resources and structures to move ahead in a coherent way to:

- Address immediate needs for the 2008 trekking season and create interim Kokoda Track management arrangements.
- Develop appropriate and effective coordination and management arrangements for the long term.

3 Implementation outcomes and actions

The PNG and Australian Governments will cooperate in developing and delivering practical activities and processes to achieve the broad outcomes listed below. Some activities will proceed immediately, while others will take some time to be designed and implemented.

3.1 Kokoda Track and Owen Stanley Ranges management

The PNG and Australian Governments will work together to ensure trekking delivers real and increasing benefits to landowners and communities along the Track corridor through the establishment of effective management arrangements for the Kokoda Track. Particular areas of focus include ensuring trekking fees are transparently managed and deliver benefits to Track corridor communities; that trekking operations are well managed; and that effective landowner consultation processes are in place.

To assist the PNG Government in achieving these outcomes, the Australian Government will provide immediate project management, financial and legal expertise and assistance.

3.2 Analysis of potential future benefit streams and livelihoods

The PNG and Australian Governments will identify potential benefit streams and improved livelihoods for landowners along the Kokoda Track corridor and in the wider Owen Stanley Ranges and Brown River region through the following activities:

- Assessments to quantify the possible benefit streams for landowners, including benefits derived from tourism, water and power supply, carbon, and other local income generation activities.
- An economic participation study to cover such options as agriculture, food services for trekkers, and participation in delivering development programs.
- A tourism benefits study to consider options for tourism-related income generation that might include trek and related activity organising, guides, food service, souvenirs, art and artefacts.

3.3 Kokoda development program

Working together, the Governments of PNG and Australia will support the sustainable development of communities along the Kokoda Track corridor, located within the Kokoda and Koiari Local Level Government areas. Outcomes to be pursued include:

- Increased access to safe water, improved sanitation and environmental health for local communities and trekkers, through support for installation and management of water systems and toilets at a range of locations. Implementation will be in line with national minimum standards, with active community participation.
- Functioning elementary and primary schools, in line with national and provincial education policies, and improved access to secondary, technical and vocational education.
- Functioning aid posts providing primary healthcare services, with the Kokoda Rural Health Centre providing secondary health services and support to aid posts.

- Improved access to markets and services, in line with the outcomes of a transport feasibility study to be undertaken.
- Potential village-scale power solutions will be considered as part of additional medium-term program design.

3.4 Capacity Building

The PNG and Australian Governments will work jointly towards improving human capacity within key PNG Government agencies to manage the development and delivery of long term sustainable benefits to landowners. This will be undertaken through the provision of technical and other expert advice.

3.5 Owen Stanley Ranges: climate change and World Heritage

3.5.1 Climate change

The Owen Stanley Ranges are one of PNG's major carbon stores, contributing to global climate stability and underpinning our global ecosystem, and will be assessed along with other locations as potential sites for demonstration REDD activities within the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership.

The aim is to build PNG's technical capacity for REDD activities, particularly in relation to forest carbon accounting. This will be achieved through the following activities:

- Under the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership, Australia is assisting PNG to develop a national forest carbon accounting system. This system will enable PNG to respond to reporting requirements of the UN Climate Change Convention and support REDD demonstration activities, and participation in future international emissions trading. This system may also assist in monitoring requirements for the World Heritage listing of the Owen Stanley Ranges.
- PNG aims to develop a 3-5 year REDD plan with its development partners by the end of 2008. Australian support will be provided within the context of the three areas of the Papua New Guinea – Australia Forest Carbon Partnership: policy dialogue, forest carbon accounting and REDD demonstration activities.

3.5.2 World Heritage: support to PNG Government in undertaking a feasibility study for a possible World Heritage nomination

The Owen Stanley Ranges and Kokoda Track were submitted by the Government of PNG for tentative World Heritage listing in 2006. The tentative listing is based on the outstanding biodiversity values and cultural values of the Owen Stanley Ranges area, including the Kokoda Track corridor.

At the request of the Government of PNG, the Australian Government will provide technical assistance to support a feasibility study for a possible World Heritage nomination of the Owen Stanley Ranges area by the Government of PNG, including:

- Deployment of Australian Government experts to the PNG Department of the Environment and Conservation to facilitate PNG Government processes to enable identification and consideration of a proposed World Heritage area.
- Provision of expert advice to assist PNG in undertaking a values assessment and associated comparative analysis for a potential World Heritage nomination.

- If appropriate, provision of expert advice to assist PNG with ongoing management of any identified World Heritage area (for example through a twinning arrangement with managers of an Australian World Heritage area).

4 Implementation

4.1 Oversight

Implementation of this Joint Understanding will be overseen by the PNG Deputy Prime Minister in coordination with the PNG Minister for Environment and Conservation, and the Australian Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, and supported by whole of Government Taskforces in Australia and PNG. Program review will be undertaken annually by Ministers, with ongoing review by Taskforces.

4.2 Resources

The PNG and Australian Governments will mutually determine their contributions to the implementation of the activities and processes above. The Governments will put in place arrangements for ensuring that these activities can be progressed efficiently.

4.3 Monitoring

The Governments accept that monitoring will begin at the same time as implementation begins, with a monitoring framework to be developed as part of the design process. The design of the overall program of work from this Joint Understanding will take place within six months. Taskforces will be responsible for annual reporting to Ministers, with more regular oversight by high level officials.

4.4 Timeframe

This Joint Understanding will last for two years. The program of work described herein will be reviewed at two years and a second phase (Phase II) of this program mutually arranged. A high-level review in two years time will enable the review of this program to be coordinated with the planned wider review of Australia's current development assistance program to PNG.

Signed in Madang on 23 April 2008

The Hon Benny Allen, MP
Minister for Environment and Conservation

Government of Papua New Guinea

The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP
Minister for the Environment, Heritage and
the Arts

Government of Australia