



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CELEBRATING WOMEN IN SPORT**

The Papua New Guinea Olympic Committee (PNGOC) has paid homage to Women in Sport on International Women's Day by highlighting women in leadership positions, women's efforts at the Games and promoting the work the organisation does in the area of gender equality.

Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and in empowering women and girls. Off the field, much has been garnered about PNG women's growth in leadership positions in sports.

Since 2016 - 2020 there has been a 60% female representation on the PNGOC Board. As of 2020 that number is currently on 40%. Within the organisation itself, 60% of employed staff comprise of women headed by the Secretary General Mrs Auvita Rapilla, who is also PNG and the Pacific's first female International Olympic Committee (IOC) Member and sits on four IOC Commissions.

Apart from the Secretary General there are other prominent women in sport who hold influential leadership positions. Karo Lelai, the current President of the PNG Basketball Federation is also the Association of National Olympic Committee Athlete Commission Chair and Oceania National Olympic Committee (ONOC) Athlete Commission Chair. Tamzin Wardley, was awarded an MBE in 2020 in recognition of her services to Sports Administration in PNG. In addition, Tamzin has previously served on the PNGOC Board as Treasurer, and is a current Executive on the Pacific Games Council as Vice President of Finance.

Throughout the years there have been many esteemed women who have held the title of Chef de Mission to the respective games attended by Team PNG. These women include Tamzin Wardley, current Team PNG Chef de Mission to the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Tamzin has also served as Chef de Mission on multiple occasions to several Commonwealth and Pacific Games. Emma Waiwai (Samoa 2019, Rio 2016, 2014 Glasgow), Alurigo Ravusiro, OBE, (2015 – Commonwealth Youth Games, Samoa, 2011 Norfolk Island), Auvita Rapilla (2010 – Youth Olympic Games, Singapore) and Karo Lelai (2018, Youth Olympic Games, Buenos Aires), and Anzillah Miro, current Fencing PNG President, who served as General Team Manager (2019, Samoa and 2017, Port Villa).

The following women, from the PNGOCs member national federations, currently hold coveted positions on their regional sporting bodies and international federations, Karo Lelai (Basketball – FIBA Executive), Barbara Stubbings (Oceania Tennis Federation Executive), Elizabeth Wells (Oceania Swimming Association Executive) and Mel Donald (Oceania Shooting Federation), who was also a former member of the ONOC Executive. In addition, former PNGOC Female Vice

President, Emma Waiwai, is the Oceania representative on the International Working Group on Women and Sport.

Championing the efforts of the PNGOC's Gender Equity Committee is the Chair Iammo Launa, OBE. Iammo, a 2019 hall of fame inductee into the PNG Sports Hall of Fame, is the current Female Vice President at the PNGOC. In addition to these roles, Iammo is Vice President of the PNG Netball Federation, Executive on the PNG Kungfu Wushu Federation, President of the PNG Olympians Association and was previously the Executive Director of the PNG Sports Foundation (2009 – 2013).

On the field there has been steady increase in female participation in leadership and in sports.

Female athletes make up about 45% of Team PNG. In addition, female athletes contribute to more than 50% of Team PNG Gold medals since 2011. Interestingly, female athletes won 54% of gold medals for Team PNG at the 2011 Pacific Games, 56% Team PNG Gold medals at the 2013 Pacific Mini Games; 56% Team PNG Gold Medals at the 2015 Pacific Games and 67% of Team PNG Gold Medals at the 2019 Pacific Games.

The Secretary General Auvita Rapilla added "We would not be able to achieve such positions and progress in sports without the support of our male colleagues and families throughout the years".

As a socially responsible organisation and a member of the Olympic Movement, the PNGOC has set the tone as to how women and girls in sports should be portrayed. PNGOC remains steadfast in its efforts to promote gender equality initiatives so that women and girls around PNG are given greater access and opportunities to participate in sports.

Rapilla added "We continue to promote gender equality through our Gender Equity Committee and programs".

From the calibre of women present in the PNG Sporting Industry today, women entering the sport industry can look up to these role models and take solace knowing that there are individuals and organisations out there who have paved the way for better female representation and equality.

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