



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

CAUTION ON THE MISUSE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA TRADITIONAL MOTIFS AND/OR DESIGNS FROM TRADITIONAL BILUM ON TEXTILE AND MATERIAL FABRIC

This notice serves to inform and/or caution businesses and the general public on the production and distribution of material fabric or textile that contains traditional motifs and/or designs or symbols of cultural significance from the traditional bilum.

There is a widespread sale of textile or fabric material and meri blouses, dresses, shirts and T-shirts containing traditional motifs and designs from PNG Bilums. Whilst there is a demand for these kinds of clothing, this is encouraging the misuse and abuse of traditional motifs, traditional designs or traditional cultural designs particularly out of its original use or intent.

It is a wide known fact in Papua New Guinea that the traditional bilum which is the “hand woven bag” belongs to different regions and provinces of Papua New Guinea. The traditional bilum is a significant traditional icon of PNG where it represents various diverse cultures and traditional skills and knowledge coming from different parts of PNG and often depicts different traditional stories, legends and even life perspectives of women and young girls in PNG who are involved in bilum /weaving. It represents a cultural heritage of skill and knowledge of bilum weaving by hand and knowledge and identification of traditional resources from the environment to make bilums.

The traditional bilum also depicts traditional motifs and traditional cultural designs and these are often owned by the weavers who are either females (women and young girls) or from traditional clans, tribes, communities or custodians of these traditional knowledge or cultural expressions. Therefore, it is only these groups of people who have the right to use and/or give permission for further modification of these designs through consent.

Furthermore, it must be made known to the public that “bilum-weaving “is a reserved activity under the Reserved Activities List. This means that only Papua New Guineans can weave bilums and sell bilums in the country. Local communities into bilum weaving should begin to take ownership of the bilum weaving knowledge and skills within their own communities and begin to document their traditional designs. NCC encourages those local communities who are into bilum weaving to come forward and register with NCC so a record of bilums and designs can be developed and regulated.

A joint inter-government task force is being mobilized by the National Cultural Commission (NCC) and its key and relevant stakeholders including the Investment Promotion Authority through the Intellectual Property Office to address this issue and appropriate policy and legislative measures will be taken under the National Cultural Policy to resolve this issue.

In the interim, we caution any business entities and individuals/entrepreneurs both local and foreign to refrain from producing, manufacturing, importing, selling and distributing or even sewing or tailoring any fabric material or textile that contains traditional bilum designs and/or motifs.

The National Cultural Commission pursuant to the National Cultural Commission Act 1994 will hereby work towards enforcing the National Cultural Property (Preservation) Act 1965 to stop this unauthorized exploitation of items which are deemed as of cultural significance to the country.

Authorized by:

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