



## Press Release: Papua New Guinea Elected Chairman of the Pacific Aviation Safety Office Council

June 1, 2026

**Honiara, Solomon Islands – 29 May 2026**

The Council of Directors of the Pacific Aviation Safety Office (PASO) has elected a new Chair following elections held during the 22nd Annual General Meeting in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

The Council elected Papua New Guinea, represented by Director of Civil Aviation/CEO of CASA-PNG, **Mr. Benedict Oraka** as Chair of the PASO Council for the next 12 months. The Council also reaffirmed its confidence in the existing Deputy Chairs, with representatives from **Tonga, Dr Vinolia K Salesi** and the **Cook Islands, John Hosking re-elected** to continue supporting the governance and strategic direction of the organisation.

Mr Oraka, has served on the PASO Council since 2021 and brings extensive leadership and regulatory experience to the role at a time of growing regional cooperation and development within the Pacific aviation sector.



The Council paid tribute to outgoing Chair **Fui Mau Simanu of Samoa**, who concluded four years of service in leading the organisation. Under his leadership, PASO strengthened regional aviation safety oversight, strengthened engagement with member states and development partners, and advanced important organisational reforms aimed at building sustainable and effective oversight systems. Fui took over the chairmanship from Magele Hoe Viali also from Samoa (2020-2022) and who guided PASO through the Covid – 19 pandemic and its aviation challenges.

Accepting the appointment, Mr Oraka thanked Council members for their confidence and reaffirmed his commitment to advancing PASO’s mission and strengthening collaboration across PASO member states.

“Pacific aviation relies on strong State collaboration to address shared challenges and opportunities. PASO plays a vital role in supporting our member states, and I look forward to working closely with Council members, development partners and the PASO Secretariat to further strengthen aviation safety oversight across our member states and our region,” the new Chair said

Papua New Guinea’s return to the Chairmanship follows the distinguished tenure of Sir Wilson Sagati OBE, who led the PASO Council for 13 years until 2020 and remains the organisation’s longest-serving Chairman.

The election outcome demonstrates the continued commitment of member States to regional cooperation and collective action in pursuit of PASO’s vision:

“Safer Skies, Connected Lives – Our Pacific Vision.”

End.