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The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**CHAIRMEN FALEOMAVAEGA AND PAYNE CALL ON
INDONESIAN PRESIDENT TO ESTABLISH DIALOGUE WITH
WEST PAPUA LEADERS**

The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Rep. Eni Faleomavaega, along with the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health, Rep. Donald Payne sent a joint letter to Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono today calling on him to create an internationally-mediated commission to establish a dialogue between the national government of Indonesia and the leaders of West Papua.

In the letter, the Congressmen noted that dozens of prominent leaders and organizations in West Papua, as well as key Indonesian leaders and intellectuals support such a dialogue, which would be analogous to one successfully held in Aceh province. The letter urges the Indonesian President "to seize the opportunity provided by these developments to establish a similar process for West Papua."

"We believe that such a process would build on important steps Indonesia has taken in recent years, such as [Indonesia's] accession to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of

Indigenous Peoples. In becoming a signatory to that agreement, Indonesia clearly expressed its commitment to establishing legal protections for indigenous citizens, including Papuans.” the letter states.

“A national dialogue initiated by an internationally-mediated commission could work to improve enforcement of that law and better the daily lives of average Papuans by, for example, increasing the availability of electricity and fresh water, enhancing public health programs to prevent malaria and other treatable diseases, and upgrading the public education system to levels found in most of the rest of Indonesia,” the letter continues.

“A national dialogue would also present an opportunity to resolve other important issues in West Papua long viewed with concern by Members of Congress and the international community. These include human rights abuses, demographic shifts leaving many Papuans as minorities in their own land, limits on freedom of speech and peaceful assembly, restrictions on the free movement of Papuans within Indonesia, and constraints on international journalists, researchers, and those in nongovernmental organizations seeking to visit or work in West Papua.”

“It is our sincere hope that you will establish an internationally-mediated commission to initiate a dialogue bringing together nationally-respected leaders of your government and of West Papua. We believe this is the moment to begin such a process. A serious national dialogue will enhance the welfare of the people of West Papua, demonstrate Indonesia’s commitment to democracy and justice for all its citizens, and enhance your country’s growing stature on the global stage,” the letter concludes.

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