

Introductory Remarks

By

Director General of the
Melanesian Spearhead Group
Senior Officials Meeting (SOM)
Fiji Police Academy, Nasova

Suva, Fiji

22-23 March 2012

Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

Senior Government Dignitaries,

Heads of Delegations,

Directors and Staff of the Secretariat,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning to you all and May I join the Chair in acknowledging the presence of all delegations as well as welcome everyone to beautiful Suva. Our collective gratitude to the Government of Fiji for hosting this Special SOM and for their kindness in catering for all our needs including the lovely meals that all delegates have and will enjoy.

We pay our respects to the Government and communities in parts of Fiji who were recently affected by floods, especially those who lost loved ones during the floods. We remember and wish them very well as they seek to rebuild their lives.

Distinguished delegates, we have a full agenda before us containing on-going issues that have gone through the sub-committee process and therefore have had the clearance of the relevant technical officials. We need to acknowledge the hard work of these technical committees and as much as possible

uphold their recommendations. After all they are the experts with the technical knowledge and their advice comes with technical soundness and should be taken seriously.

At this point may I acknowledge the excellent work of the TEOM, Sub-Committees on Trade in Services, Customs and Quarantine, the PCC, the newly instituted BCC, the Sports Sub-Committee, the fisheries technical advisory sub-committee, the sub-committee on Security and the all important sub-committee on Legal and Institutional issues. These are important arms of the MSG's decision making process.

Distinguished delegates, the MSG will be celebrating 25 years of cooperation since the Agreed Principles of Cooperation that gave birth to the MSG were signed in March 1988 in Port Vila next year. Ahead of next year, we need to reflect on our achievements in the past year. I believe and as has been acknowledge many times we have achieved a lot over the years. But it is always helpful to remind ourselves about our commitments to the MSG cause. So that we remain committed to it. However, going forward we need to also be clear about our vision. Where exactly is our cooperation leading to? and what more can we as a group hope to achieve?. These are valid questions and it is right to be asking them. We have provided an opportunity for these matters to be discussed in order that we can have a better appreciation of what exactly we needed to do. We are a region of great potential and we can seek a region of prosperity, security and sustainable peace.

Madam Chair, we wish you and all delegates all the best in your deliberations and God Bless.

Vinaka Vaka Levu