



OPENING STATEMENT BY
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OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI
BORDER CONTROL CONFERENCE (BCC)
POLICE ACADEMY, NASOVA
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Chairman of the Border Control Conference,
Head of Delegations of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji
Delegates,
Staff of the MSG Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Bula Vinaka and welcome to Fiji. It is a great honour and privilege for me to welcome you to the shores of our beautiful country and equally, officially welcome you to this first ever Border Control Conference (BCC) of the Melanesian Spearhead Group been convened here in Suva, Fiji.

Today's meeting marks another day to the history of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) as we conduct this first ever meeting to try and address the many surrounding challenges we face in our region particularly in the area of border control.

Colleagues, I wish to stress the importance and significance of this particular conference. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that our respective border control mechanisms are in place, and that our basic information sharing programs are not only operational at our national levels but amongst our MSG member countries. We must take a stand for our region to ensure that we safeguard the livelihoods of our people and our natural resources.

As young sovereign nations faced with the challenge of protecting our borders, our task is not so easy with the limited resources we have to protect our vast maritime border and various ports of entry. I firmly believe that working together through this Forum to address ways we can investigate and improve monitoring and surveillance mechanisms will greatly enhance our ability to protect our borders at the regional level. I would therefore encourage you to consider developing some regional cooperation arrangements in the long term to effectively deal with border control issues, bearing in mind other existing regional organizations that deal with similar issues such as the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO), Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC) and several maritime organizations and so forth.

Delegates, it would be remiss of me not to commend the Sub-Committee on Security (SCS) that met twice last year for seeking the blessing of the Senior Officials to establish the BCC. Their foresight in recommending the establishing of this forum to address this long outstanding MSG issue on monitoring and surveillance will go a long way in improving current mechanisms and strengthening our regional cooperation arrangements on border control. They were instrumental in realizing the establishment of this BCC which has been long coming and I hope you will take it upon yourselves to seriously address the tasks before you to be able to eventually deliver the expected Outcomes to our Senior Officials and to our Leaders.

It is also pleasing to note that the SCS was also instrumental in seeking the endorsement of Senior Officials to establish Technical Officials Meetings (TOMs) for the seven (7) sectoral areas in Bio Security, Civil Aviation, Navy, Maritime, Immigration, Customs and Police to investigate ways monitoring and surveillance mechanisms can be improved in those respective areas.

Distinguished delegates, I am please to announce that the terms of reference prepared by the Secretariat for these TOMS are ready and that you will be deliberating on them today. I have every confidence that with all the experts present here today, you will be able to assist the Secretariat in their endeavours to finalise these TORs to enable the convening of the TOMs in the second half of 2012.

Delegates, with these few remarks, I welcome you once again to Fiji, wish you well in your deliberations and officially declare this Conference Open.

Vinaka Vakalevu and tenkiu tumas.

*MSG Secretariat
PORT VILA, Vanuatu
20 March 2012*