



Remarks by the Director General of MSG, Leonard Louma, OBE
on the occasion of the FLNKS Congress
Noumea, New Caledonia
26 February 2023

(Perfunctory pleasantries)

Distinguished Delegates to this august FLNKS Congress

It is indeed a great pleasure to be here in Kanaky land to listen to ideas that the Leadership of the FLNKS have on constructive ways forward in our joint efforts to realise your right to exercise genuine self-determination under agreed UN precepts and your eventual political aspirations of self-rule and sovereignty.

But let me begin by thanking you, the FLNKS leaders, for the kind invitation extended to me to attend the FLNKS National Congress and for the warm hospitality that you have extended to me and my colleague since our respective arrivals in Noumea, New Caledonia.

I am reliably informed that the Congress has been very well organized and that a lot of the issues that would constitute the bedrock of your negotiation strategy have been progressed. I look forward with anticipation the final outcome. We, at the MSG Secretariat, are ready to render whatever assistance is required in the implementation of the strategy.

I am deeply humbled that you are able to provide the MSG Secretariat space within your Congress arrangements for me to address all of you. I stand here before you today, encouraged by your resilience and proud of your steadfast commitment towards Kanaky self-determination.

An important aspect of my visit here is to demonstrate solidarity with you and reaffirm the support of the MSG Membership and the Secretariat, towards your legitimate cause.

The FLNKS cause for emancipation and decolonization is one of the foundational reasons for the establishment of the MSG. FLNKS occupies a

very unique position in MSG, and the envy of many, because it is the only independence movement in our region that is a member of an inter-governmental organisation. FLNKS leaders sit as equals with MSG Heads of Government at the same table.

And the MSG Secretariat, your servant, remains committed to providing the necessary assistance to FLNKS as and when the need arises. We are at your disposal.

To improve the way in which the Secretariat can render assistance to the FLNKS and its cause, I have taken the decision to re-establish the FLNKS Unit/Desk within the Secretariat. Savings have been identified within the current Secretariat Budget to implement this decision.

I am now anxiously waiting for you to designate an appropriate person of your choice to occupy that position, so that arrangements can be made for that person to take up post in Port Vila. It is my intention to have this position filled before the end of March.

The decision to re-establish this FLNKS Unit/Desk is also in recognition that our fight has reached a critical stage, after the Third Referendum, and the Secretariat needs someone fully dedicated to assist with liaison work and coordination of effort, both regionally and globally, amongst all stakeholders.

Concerted effort is required to ensure that the 2018 Action Plan approved by the MSG Leaders in Port Moresby on diplomatic approaches internationally and regionally, in support of FLNKS, are meticulously executed. In line with this approved Action Plan, the Secretariat will be anxious to hear from you on the strategy that you adopt at this Congress and where we may play a useful role in implementing that strategy.

The FLNKS decision of non-participation, non-recognition of the legitimacy of the Third Referendum and its subsequent result has implications for our work. It raises the option of another Referendum to be afforded New Caledonia, conducted perhaps, as some of you have suggested, under the supervision of the United Nations.

If indeed this is an option you decide that we should pursue, this would require careful management and deft development of a strategy to secure support from the international community.

FLNKS decision to seek an Advisory Opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the Third Referendum would require a lot of intricate legal work and considerable diplomatic effort. This initiative would require to go via the UN. This is no simple task. This will need to be sponsored

through a Resolution outlining the specific question or questions to be put to the ICJ by a UN Member, which I am confident, MSG members would see their way clear to do.

I note, with much appreciation, that President Roch Wamytan of the NC Congress has been actively soliciting support for this ICJ initiative in his various discussions with Regional Leaders.

We at the Secretariat support the idea to have an FLNKS representative in UN/New York. This arrangement can only help better coordinate activities in relation to the ICJ initiative with our MSG Permanent Representatives to the United Nations. I am advised that proper accreditation is required to have this person embedded with one of our MSG Permanent Missions to the United Nations. We will need to move in haste on this matter in order to have this arrangement operational again.

The results of the Third Referendum, which MSG does not recognize, has however raised the spectre of a possible motivation to delist New Caledonia from the list of the Committee of 24.

MSG would do well not to allow this to happen and we must all work hard to avoid such a move to take place at the United Nations.

Our fight will be severely injured and the legitimacy of our call for self determination and sovereignty will be drastically undermined if New Caledonia is taken off the non-self-governing list – a list that confers it an entitlement to the granting of independence.

So long as New Caledonia is on the UN Committee of 24 List, the Administering Power has certain UN obligations and responsibilities, that it must fulfill, to devolve political powers and prepare New Caledonia towards the exercise of genuine self-determination.

The new environment created by the Third Referendum pose real and serious challenges to our current efforts. We all need to reassess and recalibrate our strategies domestically, regionally and internationally.

We at the Secretariat are your servants, and we will do our utmost to serve you in any way we can. This you can be assured. We stand ready to support you in your discussions with France for a constructive solution mutually beneficial to FLNKS and those that aspire for self-determination.

We will continue to assist you with your desires to establish meaningful Parliamentary cooperation between the New Caledonia Congress and other MSG Legislatures. For us, this is in conformity with the MSG leaders calls

to build capacity in areas of political and administrative competence in New Caledonia.

In my discussions with development partners, I have requested them to consider allocating the MSG Secretariat a specific scholarship quota. It is my intention to use part of this quota for Kanak capacity building.

Consistent with the MSG Leaders decision in 2018 to strengthen engagement with New Caledonia under the MSG Trade Agreement, we will continue to actively search for ways to have New Caledonia, through FLNKS Membership of MSG, to be engaged in trade, commerce, investment and technical cooperation.

It is also our intention to have NC/FLNKS more involved in MSG technical meetings.

FLNKS cause is a noble cause. Too many good men and women have paid the ultimate sacrifice and died for this cause. We must not let their sacrifice be in vain.

As such, let us all be untied in our fight.

Experience elsewhere around the world tells us that if there are fissures in any Group, however small that fissure might be, others will take advantage of this to the detriment of the Group.

Now is not the time to dwell on our differences, however small they might be. More than ever before, now is the time to find reasons why the fight must continue. At this critical juncture, it is pertinent to constantly remind ourselves of this old saying, "United We Stand, Divided We Fall".

MSG support for FLNKS cause will be more robust and legitimate if FLNKS is rock solid in its unity.

I came to listen to you to better understand the current situation in New Caledonia, and to learn more about the FLNKS strategy in order to position the Secretariat to ably provide the assistance you require.

I pledge again today the Secretariat's ongoing commitment to work closely with FLNKS in support of the decolonization process in New Caledonia. And I make this solemn undertaking today, cognizant of the fact that whole MSG membership are with you – FLNKS!

Finally, let me express, once again, the appreciation of the MSG Secretariat to the FLNKS for the continued working relationship, open dialogue and support to the MSG Secretariat.

Merci Beaucoup! Oleti!