

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



Director General's closing statement during the "Launching Ceremony of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Framework for Action"

*25 July 2023,
MSG Secretariat,
Port Vila*

**High Commissioner of Australia to the Republic of Vanuatu H.E Heidi Bootle,
The United Nations Special Advisor on the Responsibility to Protect Mr George Okoth-Obbo,
Excellencies,
Invited guests and senior official of the Vanuatu Government,
Delegates from MSG Members countries,
Representatives of Asia – Pacific Centre for Responsibility to Protect (R2P),
Ladies & gentlemen,**

I am pleased and honoured to deliver this closing statement, on behalf of the Secretariat, on this auspicious occasion of the "Launching Ceremony of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Framework for Action".

Others that are more knowledgeable on the issue have spoken. I can only share the sentiments that they have expressed on the issue of R2P.

I note that this launching of the R2P Framework here at the MSG Secretariat is the first for the Asia Pacific region. The MSG Secretariat is proud and honoured to co-host the event. I wish to express deep appreciation to the Asia – Pacific Centre for Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) for agreeing to have the MSG Secretariat partner it to launch this important framework document here today.

I firmly believe that the R2P framework will assist provide practical tools to assist our governments contribute to monitoring, risk assessment and early warning on atrocities. The Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on R2P, Mr George Okoth-Obbo, has already underscored the importance of early attention to warning signs.

I am aware that cynics would attempt to diminish the significance of actions contemplated or undertaken within the R2P framework as over the top. And while I will admit that our part of the world has not yet experienced the levels of atrocities as that experienced elsewhere (as I mentioned in my remarks this morning), we would do well to keep a close watch on trends developing and seek to address "enablers" of atrocities now.

The Special Advisor has, again, offered his wise counsel and it would pay to abide by the old saying, prevention is better than cure.

I wish to express our appreciation to the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E Heidi Bootle, for accepting our invitation to deliver the opening statement during this launching ceremony and for the positive disposition Her Excellency continues to kindly show towards having Australia consider supporting the activities of the MSG.

We, in the MSG, are fortunate, and thankful, that Australia continues to maintain robust bilateral programmes in many sectors in our countries, and, as it relates to R2P, in the area of respect for the rule of law, in good governance and in law and order sectors.

I would also like to thank the UN Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on R2P, (whom I am aware is a strong supporter of practical implementation of R2P) for delivering the keynote address and for eloquently articulating the key elements of the framework that states are obligated to adhere to and implement.

Furthermore, let me thank members of the Diplomatic Corps and senior government officials from the Vanuatu Government for responding positively to our invitation to join the launching of the R2P framework this afternoon.

Finally let me acknowledge the presence of delegates from our MSG member countries attending the Inaugural R2P workshop to witness the launching ceremony of the R2P framework for action today.

Ladies and gentlemen, the launching of the R2P framework for action here at the MSG Secretariat is historical. It is a milestone achievement that will elevate the profile of the MSG.

I have no doubt that the R2P framework for action will provide our government officials as well as MSG Secretariat insights into State commitments that aims to protect populations from atrocities, war crimes, and crimes against humanity in Melanesia. As I mentioned this morning, there are already certain insidious actions taking place in our countries, that if not arrested now, will easily have us on the proverbial slippery slope towards serious cases of atrocities.

The potential mass displacement of population in the MSG region, as a result of Climate Change and sea-level rise, is an important subject matter that I want the MSG to focus on this year and beyond.

Finding meaningful solutions to address the impacts of climate change on the livelihood of our people is a priority for us at the MSG Secretariat.

I want to ensure that the MSG Security Strategy clearly identifies action plans that aims to address impacts of climate change and ways we can be able to effectively mitigate them.

To this end, the MSG Secretariat looks forward to strengthen our collaboration with APR2P Centre in advancing the key commitments identified under the R2P framework and to continue to provide necessary assistance and training to our members on how to address challenges that threatens the lives of our people in Melanesia.

I am confident that with the assistance of our expert and learned facilitators, our Members and the MSG Secretariat can be able to develop appropriate recommendations on the implementation of the commitments contained in the R2P framework for action.

Now is the time for action. We must walk the talk.

In closing I wish to reiterate my deep appreciation to the APR2P Centre and all of you for joining us to witness the launching of the R2P framework for Action this afternoon.

Thank you, Merci beaucoup, Tenku tru, Tangio tumas, Vinaka vaka levu, Oleti!

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