



**MSG Secretariat**  
**Secretariat du GFLM**

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

**Director General MSG Secretariat's Remarks  
at the  
Closing Ceremony of the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST  
Saralana, Port Vila, Vanuatu  
Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

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Prime Minister Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau Maau'koro  
Deputy Prime Minister, Hon Jotham Napat  
Minister for Justice, Community Services & Culture, Hon. John Still Tari Quetu (and Host of 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST)  
Paramount Chief Teriki Paunimanu Mantoi Kalsakau III and Ifira Chiefs  
President of Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs and Members of the Council of Chiefs  
Lord Mayor of Port Vila  
Former Heads of State and Heads of Government of Vanuatu  
Participating contingents from MSG Countries  
Invited Melanesian Communities from Indonesia and Australia  
Invited Participants from NZ and China  
Church Leaders  
People of Vanuatu

Happy 43rd Independence Anniversary Celebrations.

I must confess it is with a tinge of sadness that I address you today to mark the closing of the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST. As we rightfully celebrate the 43<sup>rd</sup> Independence Anniversary Celebrations with exuberance, I stand before you with the somber realization that we have now come to the closure of what is probably one of the most memorable occasions that I have experienced since assuming office as Director General of the MSG Secretariat.

Vanuatu, you have done all of us in Melanesia proud.

Prime Minister Ishmael Kalsakau and the Government of Vanuatu, Paramount Chief Teriki Paunimanu Mantoi Kalsakau III and Ifira Chiefs, President of Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, Willie Gray Plasua, and Members of the Council of Chiefs, Lord Mayor of Port Vila, and Minister for Justice, Community Services & Culture, Hon. John Still Tari Quetu, on behalf of all the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST participating contingents, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for allowing us the honour and privilege of showing off to the world the rich Melanesian cultures and traditions.

The Prime Minister, this morning, mentioned in his statement at the Independence Park something which I think is worth repeating here. Vanuatu is known the world over as one of the happiest countries in the world. It was voted consecutively as the happiest place in the world. You have affirmed this in a

very emphatic way during this 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST. You have also spread that happiness to all Melanesian communities all over the world.

And I know those that joined us for MACFEST will be returning to their homes with many pleasant memories of their stay here in Vanuatu. Friendships have been created and I know they will last for many many years in their lifetimes.

Hosting this large event soon after COVID 19 and the two (2) devastating tropical cyclones, you have also demonstrated that you are not only a happy people BUT you are also a VERY RESILIENT PEOPLE. Bravo!

Vanuatu, you have shown to the world that you are courageous in the task of uniting the Melanesian communities. You have brought together Melanesian communities from the MSG membership, and invited Melanesian communities beyond the MSG Membership, welcomed other communities that have links to Melanesia to come and share with us the joy of celebrating our respective identities.

As I said in my remarks at the Opening Ceremony, we must dispel the notion that Melanesian communities only live in Fiji, New Caledonia, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Let us continue to acknowledge and include our other Melanesians that live elsewhere. Melanesia is a melting pot of many cultures. That is what makes Melanesia culture rich.

Vanuatu, I cannot say this enough, you have done us proud. The MSG is the stronger from here onwards.

On behalf of all MSG Members, all participating contingents, invited guests, I wish to thank the Vanuatu Government and the Local Organising Committee, the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs for all the arrangements they have made to enable the hosting of the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST.

As I mentioned earlier, this has come about despite the fact that COVID 19 and the two devastating tropical cyclones had dealt you an unfair hand and threatened to disrupt preparations for this cultural event.

In this regard, it would be remiss of me not to thank the many sponsors that have contributed so generously towards the hosting of the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST.

My appreciation goes out to all MSG participating contingents for travelling to Vanuatu for the 7<sup>th</sup> MACFEST.

I thank too, with deep gratitude, the Vanuatu Provincial contingents that have journeyed into Port Vila to help celebrate with us our Melanesian Cultural heritage. You have made the occasion more enriching.

Prime Minister, Vanuatu Government and its people have shown, once again, it has no peer, when it comes to advocacy for, and promotion of Melanesian rights, Melanesian customs, Melanesian values, etc.

During this MACFEST, you have successfully brought together Melanesians of different political and religious persuasions, different economic and social circumstances to celebrate our smorgasbord of Melanesian cultural heritage, in ways that promote better relationships amongst us.

MSG can only gain from this.

And just as you entreated Vanuatu to soar like the eagle in your Independence message this morning, MSG under your guidance as Chair will ride on the back of that eagle to greater heights.

Tenk yu tru, Tangio tumas, Vinaka vakalevu, Oleti, Merci beaucoup.