



MSG Secretariat
Secretariat du GFLM

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

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Statement by Mr. Ilan Kiloë,

Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat

**During the signing of the Host Agreement for the
Melanesian Art & Cultural Festival (MACFEST)**

17 February 2026

Suva, Fiji.

1. Hon. Minister, it is with my greatest pleasure to be able to meet with you and your good officials today, noting your busy schedule with the Parliament and Cabinet this week.
2. At the outset, I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we gather this afternoon.
3. I wish to also acknowledge with sincere appreciation, your enormous contributions towards the culture sector,

and as the Minister responsible for culture that represented the Fiji Government in the 7th MACFEST in Vanuatu, 2023 – who received the baton of the festival. This year, you will be hosting the MACFEST – a great way to round the commemoration of the festival.

4. The purpose of this introductory remarks is to provide some background on the significance of our MACFEST.

5. The Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST) is not just an event, it is the celebration of our identity as Melanesian, our cultural resilience, and the "Melanesian Way".

6. We, as Melanesians have had our civilisation with our own art & cultures, our own values and belief systems, knowledge and wisdoms that have guided us for generations.

7. Our cultures and traditions did not begin with the advent of explorers or the coming of the missionaries. Our

cultures and traditions have always been with us for ages. It is therefore very important for us to accord proper dignity and place to our Melanesian arts and cultures.

8. The MACFEST which was inaugurated in 1998 in Honiara, Solomon Islands, was conceived by the MSG leaders to promote cultural exchange, display unique arts and the Melanesian identity. The festival also provides an opportunity to promote cultural diplomacy ("vernacular diplomacies") to strengthen MSG regional solidarity and call for unity and commitment to regional cooperation.

9. But more importantly, and as we experience the onset of the impacts of globalisation and eroding societal values, in this modern age, the MACFEST becomes a significant platform to help young people maintain, conserve, and take pride in their unique identity.

10. Our cultures and traditions are the bedrock of our society. It helps us maintain social order and cohesion and relationship between our people. By educating our youth on the importance of cultures, we are investing into a

stronger cohesive community and eventually contribute to nation-building – and empowerment of Melanesians for Melanesia. – this is our Melanesian dream – the dream of our forefathers.

11. This objective aligns well with the vision stipulated under the '*The MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan*' approved by the Leaders in 2016, and I quote.

"An MSG community that is strong, integrated, Enlightened, happy, prosperous, secure and caring."

12. In light of the above statements, we can appreciate that this is, indeed, a momentous occasion for Fiji and the people of Melanesia – the signing of the host Agreement that will officially conform the privilege of hosting of the 8th edition of the Melanesian Arts & Culture Festival (MACFEST) to Fiji.

13. The Secretariat stand ready to support your Ministry and the Government of Fiji to prepare to host the 8th MACFEST.

14. With these few remarks, I wish to reiterate our sincere appreciation to the Government of Fiji and to you Hon. Minister for your commitment and for hosting the signing ceremony today.

Thank you, Vinaka Vaka Levu