



MELANESIAN *Tak*

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A quarterly newsletter to inform our readers about key work activities undertaken at the MSG Secretariat
Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, Social Equality and Inclusivity and Sustainable Development are the MSG's core objectives as endorsed by Leaders in the "MSG 2038 - Prosperity for All Plan"

2ND MSG SPORTS MINISTERS MEETING ENDS IN FIJI



MSG Secretariat Director General, Leonard Louma, with MSG Sports Ministers and senior Sports officials at the 2nd SMM in Nadi, Fiji.

The 2nd Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Sports Ministers Meeting (SMM) ended on a high note in Nadi, Fiji with confirmation that Vanuatu will be hosting the MSG Prime Minister's Cup in September 2022.

In his opening remarks, Fiji's Minister for Sports, Hon. Praveen Bala emphasized the importance of realizing the significance of sports in our regional agenda as it has traditionally brought the people of the Pacific together.

Hon Bala noted that while the meeting provided an opportunity for the Ministers to highlight areas that needed attention in sports, it was important to share best practices and learning experiences that can assist each

other to propel sports in their respective countries.

At the 8th MSG Sports Council Meeting (SCM) which preceded the Sports Ministers Meeting, the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, called for more action on the MSG sports front and emphasized the urgent need to bring key sports cooperation initiatives to a close. The SCM concluded its meeting with a comprehensive brief provided by the Solomon Islands on the progress relating to the preparations for the 2023 Pacific Games. The preparations are on schedule and the Pacific Games will be delivered as planned, with the Opening of the Games scheduled for 19 November 2023.

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Director General,
Leonard Louma



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

Warm greetings from Suva!

The second quarter has been abuzz with activities but I would like to, at the outset, congratulate our Member Governments of Vanuatu and Solomon Islands for the re-opening of their international borders, following their forced closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic some two years ago.

As I pen this, I am in Fiji, preparing for the Special MSG Leader's Summit, our pre-eminent decision-making body, anticipating the hand-over of the MSG chairmanship from PNG to Vanuatu. This has been outstanding for some time so it is with relief that I note the planned handing over of the Chairmanship at this Special MSG Leaders' Summit in Fiji.

Another team is currently based in Port Moresby providing support for the MSG Observer Group, led by the former President of Vanuatu and Head of State, His Excellency Kalkot Matas Kelekele, to observe the Papua New Guinea national general elections. In early June, the 4th MSG Regional Security Strategy Working Group Meeting (RSSWG) concluded its deliberations in Bali, Indonesia, agreeing that a wrap-up session be held in Fiji before the end of the year to finalise the Regional Security Strategy Document. Another highlight was the signing of the MSG Host Agreement for the Melanesian Trade Adviser with the PIFS under the EU-funded SPIRIT project.

The SPIRIT project complements the MSG's Trade Economic Development Programme initiatives such as the Melanesia Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) particularly in the new areas of Trade in Services, Electronic Commerce, Private Sector Development and Regional Integration Trade Statistics. Indeed, strengthening sub-regional integration would accelerate the regional integration agenda for the Pacific. In addition, I had the privilege of officiating at the first PNG national workshop on MSG Green Trade Project, sponsored by UNCTAD and co-organised with the MSG Secretariat in conjunction with the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade and the National Trade Office. I also wish to make mention of our continued dialogue with Vanuatu-based Interchange Limited (ICL) on the progress of the Melanesian Cable Network (MCN), which could potentially benefit the region through a single network. More recently, the Secretariat was honoured to be able to sponsor new uniforms for the USP Emalus Campus Rugby Club which features a good mix of Melanesians. This initiative was part of our outreach program to the community. The second quarter culminated in the convening of both the 8th MSG Sports Committee Meeting and the 2nd MSG Sports Ministers Meeting in Nadi, Fiji and the two-day dialogue between our Members certainly saw meaningful contributions and outcomes for sports development in our region. Finally let me congratulate our national sporting teams who have of late, demonstrated some home-grown talents and continue to put Melanesia on the world sports map through their stirring performances – the Fijian and Fijiana Drua teams for their superb efforts in the Super Rugby Pacific competition; the Fiji 7s team for scooping the HSBC Singapore 7s title; Team Solomon Islands for making it into the finals of the FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Qualifiers; the PNG Kumuls at the Pacific Test and of course to Team PNG for topping the medal tally at the Northern Marianas Pacific Mini Games 2022.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Tank Yu, Tenkiu Tru & Tankyu Tumas, Merci Beaucoup, Oleti!

MSG REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY TO BE FINALISED IN FIJI



Participants of the 4th Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Regional Security Strategy Working Group Meeting (RSSWG).

The 4th Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Regional Security Strategy Working Group Meeting (RSSWG) concluded its deliberations on Thursday 9 June 2022 in Bali, with an agreement that a wrap-up session would be held in Fiji before the end of the year to finalise the Security Strategy Document.

In his opening address, the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr Leonard Louma, OBE implored the MSG Delegates to invoke the Bali spirit of cooperation that gave birth to a landmark ASEAN regional security treaty, namely the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation to help them conclude the MSG Regional Security Strategy.

Against the backdrop of recent developments in our region's security space, he urged the MSG RSS Working Group to take a pro-active stance in addressing these security dynamics through the RSS process.

He said, "You are the drivers of this MSG Regional Security Strategy. The framing of the security architecture and narrative on security issues in our region must be determined by you". The 4th MSG RSS Working Group further refined the five strategic priorities arrived at from its third meeting in Nadi, Fiji, in 2019. These are:

- 1 Maintain safe and secure borders and maritime domains;
- 2 Strengthen governance over cyber space in the MSG region;

- 3 Enhance institutional development and regional cooperation to combat transnational crime in the region;

- 4 Develop and strengthen robust, proactive mechanisms responsive to disasters within the region;

- 5 Develop and strengthen robust, proactive mechanisms for managing climate risk, and prioritizing and coordinating climate change actions within the region.

A suggestion by Fiji to include Health as the sixth priority was noted and while agreeing in principle, the RSS Working Group resolved to have this referred back to their relevant authorities in the capitals for formal consideration before final texts from Members are formalized ahead of the wrap-up session in Fiji.

In acknowledging the priorities identified by the Working Group and enumerated in the current MSG RSS document, the Director General stated, "It is incumbent for the RSS Working Group to devise appropriate and relevant strategies to address these identified common security challenges based on our needs and common interests by contextualizing the issues and responses against global, regional and national considerations".

DG Louma acknowledged the Chair, hosts and participants for the successful hosting of the 4th RSS Working Group meeting and looked forward to working closely with Members in finalising the MSG Regional Security Strategy.

EU-FUNDED TRADE ADVISERS TO BOOST PACIFIC EXPORTS



Senior staff of the MSG Secretariat who attended the signing led by DDG Hoa'au, with senior Vanuatu Government officials. Third from left is Ms Jill Juma, the Melanesian Trade Adviser.

A new chapter of closer intra-regional partnerships in the Pacific will help to boost Pacific States' exports to the world, as this is the first time the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has deployed Trade Advisers into the sub-regions of Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia.

This has been possible through the European Union (EU) funded SPIRIT project ('Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade') under the Pacific Regional Integration Support (PRISE) Programme.

Speaking at the signing of the Host Agreements between the Pacific Islands Forum (PIFS), the Melanesian Spearhead Group and the Government of Tonga, Forum Deputy Secretary General Dr Filimon Manoni said that forging these partnerships signals "renewed hope and new beginnings for our region." While the Trade Advisers for Melanesia and Polynesia have already been appointed, the appointment of the Trade Adviser for Micronesia will be finalised shortly. Each of the Trade Advisers is tasked to assist the Pacific States in their sub-regions of assignment to facilitate the design of sound trade policies, develop and implement aid for trade projects, and benefit from WTO and other trade agreements in a way that promotes sustainable businesses and create employment.

For instance, they will help implement the interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA) signed between four Pacific States and the EU, including providing technical assistance to the other Pacific States, such as Tonga and Timor Leste, seeking to accede to the Agreement.

Chargé d'affaires/Acting Head of Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific, Dr Erja Askola, expressed satisfaction with the programme.

"Today, I am delighted to witness the reinforcement of local capacities to make trade a real driver of development in the Pacific. This will make our Pacific partners better equipped to use the generous market access opportunities the EU offers."

Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat, Director General, Mr Leonard Louma said the MSG's sub-regional integration agenda is a forerunner to achieving regional economic integration in the Pacific.

"The SPIRIT project complements the MSG's Trade and Investment Programme initiatives such as the Melanesia Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) particularly in new areas of Trade in Services, Electronic Commerce, Private Sector Development and Regional Integration Trade Statistics. Strengthening sub-regional integration would accelerate the regional integration agenda for the Pacific."

FORMER VANUATU PRESIDENT LEADS MSG OBSERVER GROUP TO PNG NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTIONS



Former President of Vanuatu H.E Kalkot Mataskelekele (middle) is leading the MSGOG to PNG. On the left is PSA Programme Manager Ilan Kiloe with Manager Corporate Services, John Palmer.

The Government of Vanuatu has nominated its former President His Excellency Kalkot Mataskelekele to lead the Melanesian Spearhead Group Observer Group (MSGOG) to observe the 2022 Papua New Guinea National Elections, scheduled for July.

The MSG Observer Group comprises highly respected citizens from the MSG Members - Fiji, Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu and is supported by the MSG Secretariat support team.

H.E Mataskelekele, a lawyer by profession having obtained his degree at the University of Papua New Guinea, has previously served as first indigenous Solicitor General and Supreme Court Judge.

H.E Mataskelekele was briefed by the Secretariat's Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs (PSA), Ilan Kiloe and Manager Corporate Services, John Palmer, who will be part of the MSG Secretariat support team.

On behalf of the Director General, Leonard Louma, Mr Kiloe conveyed the MSG Secretariat's profound appreciation to the Government of Vanuatu for their unwavering commitment to MSG and for nominating H.E Mataskelekele, one of its finest and former Head of State, to lead the MSG Observer Group.

Election Observation is an activity of the Political

Affairs programme under 'Democratic processes supporting Elections' as one of its strategic priorities. The MSG has over the years, since 2014, dispatched observer election missions to observe national elections in member countries.

It has successfully observed subsequent elections of Member Countries including the Vanuatu Snap Elections in January 2016, the PNG Elections in July 2017, the Fiji National Elections in November 2018, and more recently the Vanuatu elections in 2020. Also in November 2018, an MSG Observer Group participated in the New Caledonia Referendum.

The MSGOG is working closely with the PNG Electoral Commission to establish the necessary logistical arrangements in Port Moresby before the deployment of the teams to various locations throughout PNG.

The focus for the MSG Observer Group is on the Women candidates, which is consistent with the desire of our MSG Leaders to improve representation of women in our respective National Parliaments.

This will also enable the MSG Observer Group to make recommendations on what can be done to facilitate women's aspirations to accede to representative office in the Legislature.

DG LOUMA OFFICIATES AT 1ST PNG NATIONAL WORKSHOP ON MSG GREEN TRADE PROJECT



Participants of the first National Workshop on the MSG Green Trade Project at the Lamana Hotel in Port Moresby, PNG.

International trade offers pathways to enhancing people's livelihoods through activities that seek to boost the exports of green products. If the MSG Green Trade Project is well implemented, achievement of the Green Growth goals can transform Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) economies in many ways, including through employment creation, income generating activities and anchoring the sustainable development of the MSG region.

These were the sentiments expressed by the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, during Papua New Guinea's first National Workshop on the MSG Green Trade Project at the Lamana Hotel in Port Moresby on Tuesday, 31 May 2022.

While thanking the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) for the financial support towards the MSG Green Trade Project, DG Louma paid special acknowledgement to a son of PNG, the late Mr. Bonapas Onguglo, who worked for UNCTAD in Geneva for many years as an economist, for his contribution towards the conception of this MSG Green Trade Project. He noted that initial discussions held then with Mr. Onguglo revealed his keen interest to channel potential projects to the Pacific which led to the MSG Green Trade Project.

DG Louma said the MSG Secretariat has developed a strategic partnership with UNCTAD resulting in the

implementation of the MSG Green Trade Project. This is with a view to have MSG countries adapt to the challenges of sustainable green trade. The Project is aimed at building Members' capacities to capitalize on strengthening development of green products, in order to achieve inclusive and sustainable growth through quality-based green exports that meet international standards.

Green trade for the MSG region includes products originating from agriculture, fisheries, forestry and eco-tourism-based industries.

DG Louma emphasised the importance of ensuring closer coordination of project activities within PNG in other sectoral and national projects, adding that lessons learnt at the national level will guide the formulation of a broader MSG action plan, to integrate green trade promotion into sustainable development policy coordination at the MSG level.

The workshop was sponsored by UNCTAD and co-organised with the MSG Secretariat in conjunction with the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade and the National Trade Office. Remarks were also delivered by PNG's Chief Trade Officer, Mr. Richard Yarkam and the UNCTAD Officer-in-Charge of the Trade Analysis Branch, Mr. Ralf Peters.

MSG SECRETARIAT SPONSORS NEW USP EMALUS RUGBY CLUB UNIFORMS



DDG George Hoa'au (middle) with the USP team executives and some of the players showcasing their new uniforms.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat recently handed over new uniforms to the University of the South Pacific's (USP) Emalus Campus Rugby Club in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Deputy Director General, George Hoa'au, on behalf of DG Leonard Louma, officially handed over the uniforms to the USP Team Manager, Joeli Tamani, in the presence of staff and USP Rugby players and executives.

During the brief event, Mr. Hoa'au said the MSG Secretariat was pleased to sponsor USP Rugby Club's new uniforms.

In the past, similar support has been given to the Vanuatu national sevens women's team. Importantly, such outreach comes under the responsibilities of the Director General's office. To this end, this sponsorship has the full support of the Director General. Above all, with regards to this support, it comes with a responsibility to always uphold good sportsmanship, coupled with a duty to be good ambassadors on and off the field in Port Vila.

On one hand, "We trust that you will carry out these responsibilities diligently," he said. Conversely, "you now carry a double portion of responsibility - in that your new uniforms carries both the USP (the regional educator of Pacific islanders) and MSG logos.

"However, I am confident that you will carry these to heart."

USP Team Manager, Joeli Tamani acknowledged the MSG Secretariat for the tremendous support saying this huge contribution would definitely boost the teams' moral.

"We are excited about this sponsorship and are indeed grateful to the MSG Secretariat for reaching out to us this way," he said.

"As a team we laugh and cry together, we all have our differences but at the end of the day our Melanesian bond is stronger and we remain a family, representing both Melanesia and the Pacific," Mr Tamani said.

The USP Emalus Rugby Club comprises mainly of players from the Melanesian region - Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

MSG SECRETARIAT PARTICIPATES AT VANUATU NATIONAL TRADE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING



Photo Credit: Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business

The first National Trade Development Committee (NTDC) meeting took place on Wednesday 15 June in Port Vila, with the convergence of Vanuatu's key stakeholders from Government and the private sector, including development partners.

Our Programme Manager, Trade & Economic Development, Sovaia Marawa and the Melanesian Trade Adviser, Jill Juma, attended

the meeting. Some of the highlights of the meeting included updates of Aid for Trade initiatives; Trade Facilitation, negotiation and agreement such as the MSG trade and an update on Vanuatu's productive sector.

It was also an opportunity for the Tourism Sector Update on preparations towards international border re-opening in July 2022. Other topics related to trade was also covered.

SENIOR STAFF MEET AUSTRALIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER



Senior staff discuss areas of mutual interest with H.E Heidi Bootle and colleagues from the SPC Regional office.

Our senior staff joined colleagues from the Pacific-Community-SPC Regional Office to an evening hosted by the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Her Excellency Ms Heidi Bootle. It was an opportunity to share views on important issues concerning the region like COVID-19 and its impact on regional trade, economic integration and other development issues.

MSG SECRETARIAT INVITED TO OBSERVE PAPUA NEW GUINEA 2022 NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTIONS



*Director General of the
MSG Secretariat, Leonard
Louma (left) and
Secretary PNG Foreign
Affairs and International
Trade, Elias Wohengu.*

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was one of the International Organisations invited to observe the Papua New Guinea (PNG) National General Elections (NGE) from late April to late July.

Following consultations between the PNG Electoral Commissioner, Simon Sinai, and the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, in Port Moresby, the official invitation was issued to the Director General by the Secretary for PNG Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Elias Wohengu.

In a follow-up meeting with Mr Wohengu, it was emphasised that the MSG cooperation in the area of Election Observer Missions, has helped inform the MSG Election Management Bodies (EMB), in their discussions on how and what to improve on, in the carriage and management of NGE in their respective jurisdictions.

Meetings of the MSG EMBs have provided opportunities to exchange best practices.

DG Louma said this invitation represents the ongoing value that the PNG Government places on the work of the MSG Secretariat, as well as other International Observers, in ensuring that the NGE are held in a manner that allows for

eligible voters to choose their Parliamentary Representatives in a fair and unfettered way.

DG Louma advised Mr Wohengu that the focus for the MSG Observer Team is on Women candidates, consistent with the desire of our MSG Leaders to improve representation of women in our respective National Parliaments. "Focus on women candidates will enable the MSG Observer Team to make recommendations on what else can be done to facilitate the aspirations of the second half of the population - WOMEN - to accede to representative office in the Legislature," DG Louma stated.

The MSG Secretariat has been observing NGEs in Member Countries since 2014, in line with Leader's mandate to uphold democratic principles in Melanesia, as enshrined in the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

For PNG in particular, it will be the second time that the election observation will be conducted, the first of which was done in 2017. Other election observation missions included Fiji Elections in 2014 and 2018, the Solomon Islands Elections in April 2019 and in Vanuatu in 2016 and 2020.

WORK ON MELANESIAN CABLE NETWORK PROGRESSING WELL



ICL General Manager, Willie Karie (bottom right) briefing the MSG Secretariat team.

A zoom meeting was conducted in April between the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and Vanuatu-based Interchange Limited (ICL) to discuss how furthering work on the Melanesian Cable Network (MCN) could benefit the region through a single network.

Deputy Director General, George Hoa'au, welcomed ICL's General Manager, Willie Karie saying the interconnectedness of the MSG is critical to the region's socio-economic development.

The MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan outlines the benefits of the MCN including standardized pricing across the region; better servicing of existing local telecommunications market; attraction of more foreign investments that will increase demand for international wholesale bandwidth capacity; data storage centre and data processing firms; credit

card processors e-commerce, digital economy; and international call centres.

The MCN project which has already begun, will connect Suva (high-capacity Southern Cross cable), Port Vila, Honiara, Port Moresby and Noumea.

Mr Karie confirmed that ICL continues work on the project and is now completing Interchange Cable Network 2 (ICN2) from Vanuatu to Solomon Islands, extending to PNG and ICN3 from Vanuatu to New Caledonia.

To ensure proper completion of the project, all MSG governments under the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan, are required to provide support to Interchange in securing telecommunications licenses in MSG capitals.

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