



MSG Secretariat Secretariat du GFLM

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

**GENERAL REMARKS
OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE MSG SECRETARIAT
AT THE
4th MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE ARCHIPELAGIC AND ISLAND STATES FORUM
Tuesday 6th December 2022, The Westin Hotel, Nusa Dua, Bali**

(Pleasantries)

- Coordinating Minister for Maritime Affairs and Investment, H.E. Mr Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan
- Minister for Foreign Affairs, Her Excellency Mrs Retno Marsudi
- Minister for Marine Affairs and Fisheries, H.E. Mr Sakti Wahyu Trenggono
- Resident Representative of UNDP Indonesia
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Distinguished Heads of AIS Delegations
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me join others to express our gratitude to the Indonesian Government for the warm hospitality extended to us and the excellent arrangements for the Sixth Senior Officials Meeting and the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the AIS Forum.

For those that are not familiar with the MSG - it consists of a group of countries in the Pacific region that represent, excluding Australia and New Zealand, 98% of the land area, 86% of the population, 91% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), almost half of the EEZ of PIF countries and by some estimates has 91% of the natural resources. We are proud and fortunate to have Indonesia as an Associate Member.

MSG Members are archipelagic and Island states. Many of our peoples livelihoods depend on the health of the ocean and its ecosystems, as well as its sustainable development. As such, we are and keen to explore further opportunities of cooperation within the ambit of the AIS Forum.

As part of the bigger Pacific family, our leaders have expressly declared climate change as our existential threat under *the Boe Declaration*. The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent again affirms the importance we attach to sustainable development and the health of our ocean.

The theme of *“Elevating AIS Forum Collaboration for Sustainable and Healthy Oceans”* for this 4th AIS Ministerial Meeting is most appropriate. Convened on the heels of the recently concluded COP 27, this AIS gathering must serve as a clarion call for all archipelagic and island states, with our development partners, to reassess what has been agreed to and identify specific collaborative actions that we all can take to raise the level of our commitments and demonstrate the urgency of the situation.

A member of the MSG, Vanuatu, has brought to the United Nations an initiative seeking an ICJ advisory opinion on the responsibilities relating to climate change and its effects. We are pleased and grateful to note that this initiative has received the support of many of you represented here. We can only beg the indulgence of those that have yet to decide to please support the UN Resolution on this matter. It would be remiss of me not to acknowledge specifically the support of the Indonesian Government in co-sponsoring the said UN Resolution.

MSG acknowledges that progress has been made since the adoption of the Manado Joint Declaration in 2018, in the four (4) thematic areas.

MSG welcomes the efforts to enhance institutional support for collaboration programs and projects in the archipelagic and island states through strengthening of the AIS Forum framework.

We, in MSG, shall be further reviewing our MSG Roadmap on Inshore Fisheries Management, as well as the MSG Regional Security Strategy (RSS), which Indonesia is helping us implement and develop, to see where and what else we can do to add value to our partnership efforts.

We shall also be looking at our other MSG plans, that MSG Leaders have already endorsed, under the MSG Forestry Baseline Study, the MSG Climate Finance Strategy, and the MSG agreed actions in humanitarian and emergency coordination and response to disasters, to identify synergies between these MSG initiatives and the actions envisaged under AIS purview.

The significance of the nexus between the climate and the ocean to us in the Blue Pacific Ocean Continent cannot be overstated. We are concerned that COP 27, despite some positive outcome in the *Loss and Damage* conversation, failed to have *ambitious targets* to keep temperature rise below 1.5 degrees celsius.

Vanuatu, an MSG member, has proposed for a Convention on the Non-Proliferation of the use of Fossil Fuels. We hope all archipelagic and island states, that suffer the same predicament of seas encroaching into our shorelines, waves lapping at our doorsteps, the fertility of garden lands affected by rising salinity levels, bleaching of our coral reefs that adversely impact on our marine food sources, and the onslaught of extreme weather changes that result in devastating cyclones and tsunamis can support this proposition.

This proposition would force the international community to invest in alternative clean energy sources.

We feel compelled too to warn against being too over zealous on the agreement to establish a “Loss and Damage Fund”. We have seen many promises before on assistance with *global funding for adaptation and mitigation* fall far short of promised levels and expectations. We nonetheless await anxiously the details of how and when the Fund will be established, and if access to this Fund will be made easy for countries like us.

Likewise, industrialized nations proposals on carbon offsets schemes, in their net zero emissions calculations, does not provide any incentive for big polluters to undertake concrete actions to cut their emissions levels. Many are akin to “*green washing*”, designed to absolve them of their emissions reduction responsibilities.

Regrettably, in this scheme of things, the onus is ostensibly left to us in the developing world, the archipelagic and island states, to do the heavy lifting on climate change.

As we seek to magnify our focus and voices over issues of pressing concern to archipelagic and island states, let us use the AIS Forum to develop concrete, innovative and sustainable actions. AIS can be the springboard for a more unified approach in amplifying advocacy of our interests and needs in the other international fora such as in the next COP 28 meeting, and the UN Oceans Conference, etc.

Under Indonesia’s leadership and within the AIS framework we are confident of our future

We welcome the intention to convene the High-Level Meeting of AIS and anxiously look forward to meeting again here in Indonesia next year.

Bersama, kita kuat (together we are strong)

Tenk yu tru, Tang u tumas, Vinaka vaka levu, Oleti, Merci beaucoup

Terima kasih (thank you)

Sampai jumpa tahun depan (see you next year)