



MSG Secretariat **Secretariat du GFLM**

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

REMARKS AT THE REGIONAL SEMINAR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL COMMUNITY BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT (CBFM) IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINE

“Giving meaning to the MSG Inshore Fisheries Management Roadmap”

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Director General of the MSG Secretariat

MSG Conference Room, Wednesday, 1st February 2023

(Pleasantries)

Let me start by doing the proper thing and acknowledge the landowners on whose soil we are currently gathered.

Let me also acknowledge the presence of the following people:-

- Ms Rika Uemura, Resident Representative of JICA in Vanuatu, and all her colleagues from JICA
- Mr Tony Taleo, Acting Director of Fisheries Ministry of Vanuatu
- Dr Akiya Seko, Head of the Grace of the Sea Project and his GoS Project Team
- Mrs Mia Rimon, SPC Regional Director for Melanesia and her colleague Mr Watisoni Lalavanua
- The Fisheries Officials from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, PNG, Samoa and the Kingdom of Tonga
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

Gud morning olgeta

Welcome to the MSG Secretariat

Introduction

Let me thank the Government of Japan, through JICA, and the Government of Vanuatu, through the Fisheries Ministry, for hosting this “Regional Seminar for the Development of a Regional Community-Based Fisheries Management Implementation Guideline”.

I must thank JICA for agreeing to have SPC join in this Seminar. SPC is the regional institution that is custodian to scientific data, technical knowhow and overseer of many broad fisheries policy frameworks adopted by Pacific Leaders. It therefore makes sense to have them involved in this exercise. I am also thankful for their generosity in agreeing to have additional participants for this Seminar.

It would be remiss of me not to express gratitude for the visit yesterday to the Roau Mariculture Community Hatchery. It provided me the opportunity to see firsthand certain aspects of how the Grace of the Sea Project (GOSP) is implemented – an exercise in Community-Based Fisheries Management.

The multi-faceted management approach is impressive. The other aspects that excited me about the GOSP include the “fit-for-purpose” scale of the Project, the incorporation of teaching children the importance of looking after the sea resources, the positive concept of “do this” as opposed to “don’t do this” to achieve the desired sustainable development results. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the “don’t do this” approach may not be working well in the region to achieve sustainable development objectives. It is time we seriously tried the “do this” approach.

The Seminar itself

The MSG Secretariat sees this Seminar, to develop a Regional CBFM Implementation Guideline, as part of our plans to have the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015 – 2024, dusted off the shelves of the Secretariat, and implemented in a steady and practical way. And hence the theme of my Remarks today, **“Giving meaning to the MSG Inshore Fisheries Management Roadmap”**

I am convinced that informed by the Grace of the Sea Project (GOSP) experience, and further enriched by your own experiences, which I note you will be sharing later today, you will be able to address our ailing inshore fisheries. And it is on “critical support” in many areas in our countries.

The Seminar also, in more ways than one, gives practical application to the 2020 MSG/JICA Memorandum of Cooperation.

I will take advantage of the opportunity provided on this occasion to speak to certain aspects of the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap, its importance, the need for its implementation and the necessity for greater cooperation between MSG countries themselves, and between the MSG and the broader Pacific.

I will, from a layman’s point of view, share with you my own observations of developments in the inshore fisheries sector from briefs that have come across my desk.

Importance of Inshore Fisheries in MSG

The importance of Inshore Fisheries to the MSG Membership, and indeed the Pacific, is enormous. More often than not, it is understated - largely due to the focus on high-value tuna fisheries. Most of our people in MSG live in the rural areas, and many live in coastal communities along the extensive coastlines, and the many many small island communities of our States.

Many of our people in MSG and the broader Pacific are dependent on the inshore fisheries for their sustenance and economic needs. The SPC Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up Community-based Fisheries Management 2021-2025 is acknowledgement of this fact.

For the MSG Membership in particular, briefs provided to me suggest that in terms of the contribution of inshore fisheries to the respective national GDP's, subsistence inshore fisheries contribute no less than 70% of the GDP's in Fiji (82%), FLNKS/New Caledonia (70%), and Vanuatu (96%). For the other two members, namely PNG and Solomon Islands, the figures are less but still significant at around 28% and 38% respectively.

In other words, inshore fisheries is not an inconsequential fishery. It constitutes a very important sector in the MSG sub-region.

Regrettably, the inshore fisheries in MSG is in bad health and needs urgent attention. This fishery has been over-exploited in ways that threatens its sustainability. And in many cases, the anthropogenic effects of development have been devastating on the inshore fisheries. This gives us more reason to develop "people-centric" solutions. Community-based approaches such as that adopted by the Grace of the Sea Project (GOSP) falls right into that ambit of people-centric solutions.

This is important because our Leaders have called on us to do this. At the heart of the approach to the Blue Pacific Continent (BPC) is "people centred development". For MSG, one of our Mission is to "use resources sustainably to maximise returns to the owners of these resources and to build wealth".

The GOSP template offers us a feasible pathway to implementing our MSG Fisheries Roadmap.

MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015-2024.

It is my strong intention to see the implementation of the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development. The GOSP template has attracted my attention in ways that egg me to aggressively seek out if and how JICA can help me replicate this in my other MSG countries.

I am very much aware that the efforts to develop a Roadmap, that could provide an overarching guide for MSG Members to use in their efforts to address the sustainable management and use of the inshore fisheries in the MSG region, started way back in 2012.

In June 2015, in the Solomon Islands, MSG Leaders adopted and signed the Roadmap which was prepared by the MSG Inshore Fisheries Working Group (IFWP) and cleared by MSG Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC).

As part of the Secretariat's efforts to develop a concerted approach towards implementing the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap, I will be re-activating both the IFWG and FTAC.

Since the adoption of the Roadmap in 2015, it is fair to say that MSG member countries have individually undertaken a number of actions, consistent with the priorities and actions enunciated in the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap 2015-2024 and in concert with the objects of the SPC Pacific Framework for Action on Scaling-up Community-based Fisheries Management. All with varying degrees of success.

All the efforts have the basic objective of providing long term economic, social, ecological and food security benefits to the communities. Efforts towards aquaculture, to reduce pressure on wild fisheries stocks, and alternative income generation projects, through development of multi-products for communities can only be commended. Experiences have been different in the MSG countries.

I find it very encouraging that the idea and approach of Community-Based Resource Management (CBRM) has been embraced and is gaining good traction in the MSG countries. Let us continue on that tract.

These encouraging actions were not undertaken in any deliberately coordinated MSG multi-country manner, but were more a result of your own Governments independent policy decisions based on your assessed needs in the inshore fisheries sector.

Many of you gathered for this Seminar have been involved in the development of these actions in your respective countries - with differing results and varying degrees of success. It is my hope that you would use this opportunity to share experiences and establish a strong professional network amongst yourselves to help each other with the development of appropriate sustainable management schemes for the inshore fisheries.

Melanesian Partnership Approach

One of the guiding principles of the MSG Inshore Fisheries 2015-2024 Roadmap is – “A Melanesian partnership approach, which builds on and shares the diversity of experiences, while recognising the differences between MSG members, socio-cultural settings, species and stock status.”

MSG Leaders have made it emphatically clear that MSG is part of the bigger Blue Pacific Continent Family. In prosecuting our interests, we are to do it within this context and parameters. Pillar 10 of our MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan, calls for us to reach out to the rest of the Pacific as an extension of our Melanesian inclusiveness.

I can't thank JICA and the Vanuatu Government enough for manifesting this by inviting Samoa and Tonga to be of this Seminar. At this juncture, it is pertinent to remind ourselves that Tonga provided the initial “seedlings” for the GOSP. A nice touch of regional cooperation. Thank you Tonga.

Help each other understand and avoid the mistakes and failures in the approaches and actions that you may have attempted in the past. Build the profile and promote the success stories, like the Grace of the Sea Project, in sustainable management of inshore fisheries. This should help you develop an appropriate template for a Regional CBFM Implementation Guideline. A Guideline that could be adjusted to account for peculiarities of individual countries.

It is my fervent hope, that this would be but the beginning of many more cooperative initiatives that can be organised between the MSG countries and JICA to further the already robust relationship between the two parties.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by encouraging all of you to take advantage of the opportunity presented by this Seminar to share experiences and learn from each other the most appropriate approaches to developing and managing the fisheries resources and sectors in our Melanesian communities.

People-Centric is the way to go. For us at the MSG, the GOSP is the vehicle to give meaning to the MSG Inshore Fisheries Management Roadmap. We are ready and keen to utilise that vehicle.

Best of luck and may you have robust and constructive exchanges for the betterment of our ordinary people in the Pacific in the next few days.

Thank you, Merci beaucoup, Tank yu tru, Tang yu tumas, Vinaka vaka levu, Arigatou gozaimasu.