



REMARKS BY MSG DIRECTOR GENERAL ON MSG DAY

**MSG Secretariat, Port Vila, Vanuatu**

**Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Prime Minister and Chairman of the MSG

Members of the Council of Ministers (COM)

Representatives of our MSG Members

Invited Guests

All Protocols Observed

Let me at the outset acknowledge and thank the landowners on whose land the Secretariat is situated.

It is an honour to receive you, Prime Minister and your entourage to the MSG Secretariat today, on the occasion of the MSG Day. Welcome! Bienvenue!

Prime Minister, today's occasion is made extra special and significant because you are also here in your capacity as Chairman of the MSG, and moreso, because you are also a Chief of the land on which the Secretariat is built.

In a few moments you will be addressing all of us in the conference room. The address will be live streamed and the Secretariat has arranged for our MSG members to also watch and listen via zoom.

And because you will be the only one speaking in the conference room let me take this opportunity to make a few remarks about the MSG from my point of view as the administrative Head of the organization.

It is now 35 years since our founding fathers decided to take the leap into the future and establish our Organisation – called MSG. It was established (Art 2 of Agreement) to promote and

strengthen inter-membership trade, exchange of Melanesian cultures, traditions and values, sovereign equality, economic and technical cooperation between States, and the alignment of policies in order to further MSG members' shared goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.

There was no shortage of doubters as to whether MSG would be viable. The extreme of these cynics even questioned our relevancy.

The Secretariat, the administering arm of the organization, was established in 2008 to help coordinate implementation of joint activities emanating from the MSG Leaders decisions, and in fulfillment of the Mission described under Article 2 of the Agreement establishing the MSG.

While many cynics would want to have us believe otherwise, MSG has had its successes and remains relevant today in the midst of constant flux and change.

Could we have done better? Yes! Have we failed in our Mission? Absolutely, NO!

MSG successfully maneuvered to have New Caledonia re-enlisted as a Non-Self-Governing Territory on the UN Committee of 24 list (and it continues to be an ongoing concern of MSG), MSG was in the vanguard of action to bring about the Nuclear Free Pacific as embodied in the Rarotonga Treaty, MSG is the only sub-regional organization that has a Secretariat (thanks to Vanuatu), MSG is the only sub-regional organization that has a working trade in goods agreement amongst its members and we are improving it with a new MSG FTA. MSG companies are increasingly investing in our MSG countries and our countries continue to offer educational and training assistance to each other.

MSG sub-region is the only one that has a Treaty on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture, a Treaty on Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgements and a Treaty on Custody and Maintenance of Children.

Not bad for an Organisation that many thought had little value when it was formed 33 years ago.

MSG sporting contacts was given a boost last year when Vanuatu successfully hosted the MSG Prime Minister's Cup. Our cultural flagship event, MACFEST, will be held for the seventh time later this year in Vanuatu.

We, at the Secretariat, are unpacking the 2038 Prosperity for All Plan and the MSG Climate Finance Strategy 2019-2021 to determine what we can implement within the resources that are at our disposal. We are reviewing the MSG Forestry Baseline Study of 2016 to identify what we can implement immediately and develop an implementation strategy on those matters that would require a medium to long term approach.

With identified development partners, we are now actively implementing the Inshore Fisheries management and sustainable development Roadmap adopted in 2015.

Our efforts towards more enhanced MSG Regionalism, as espoused in the 2038 Prosperity for All Plan, is being pursued with deliberate urgency and focus. With the help of our EU, through PIF, and UNCTAD partners we are implementing the SPIRIT and PRISE projects that seek to facilitate trade, improve our trade capacity and bolster the marketability of our products.

As a Secretariat, we are not naïve not to acknowledge that there are many more challenges that we must address to ensure our peoples interests are promoted and protected. There are also many decisions of the Leaders yet to be implemented. Implementation of these decisions are work in progress. We are committed to the object of finding the means and wherewithal to implement these decisions.

In this regard, let me assure the MSG membership that your Secretariat is positioning itself to meet the challenges of our times. Our 2023 Work Programme and Budget, as well as our 2022-2025 Corporate Plan, are being finalized and we are asking the SOM and the FMM to meet later this month to consider and approve them. Soon after that we will be asking the Governing Bodies to convene policy meetings, including the MSG Leader's Summit to meet, to discuss and endorse the recalibrated directions and priorities for the MSG.

But, today is an opportunity to celebrate our achievements. I would encourage us NOT to dwell too much on what we were not able to achieve. Challenges will be there and we will address them along the way.

Prime Minister and Chairman, we at the Secretariat are confident that under your Chairmanship we can take our cooperative relationship in MSG to a higher ground.

Vanuatu has been a leader, in its own right, within the MSG. Under your leadership and chairmanship, I know that the "spearhead" in the MSG spear will be sharpened again to defend

and protect our interests. But more importantly, if needed, can be used to pierce through blockages in search of solutions to challenges that confront our membership.

MSG has a proud history of enterprise; pushing through issues in our region that may seem too difficult for others to subscribe to or comprehend. MSG has successfully prosecuted those difficult issues.

The Secretariat has noted that Vanuatu has proposed two very noble initiatives that fall in the same 'pedigree' of difficult issues - the ICJ initiative on climate change responsibility and the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuel. The Secretariat is excited over these two issues and will do whatever it can to assist the MSG membership support these initiatives.

Mr Prime Minister and Chairman of the MSG, before I ask you to go up to the Conference room to deliver your address, let me seek your understanding to accept the gifts that have been prepared to welcome you to the Secretariat.

This is your first time to visit us in your capacity as Prime Minister and Chairman of the MSG. In the true spirit of the Melanesian customs and ways, we want to acknowledge with humility the honor that you have bestowed on us today. As your servants and subjects we feel privileged.

I ask that you accept these gifts to enable us to feel at ease to escort you into the Secretariat building.

Long Live MSG!

Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Tangio Tumas.