

DG Remarks at AIS Ministerial

11 October 2023, Bali, Indonesia

Madam Chairman

Excellencies

Let me join others in acknowledging with appreciation Indonesia, our gracious host, for the exemplary hospitality afforded us and the excellent arrangements it has put in place for this Ministerial Meeting and the High-Level Meeting tomorrow.

At the 8th AIS Senior Officials Meeting In Madagascar, in August, when talking about the Blue Economy, I emphasized that this idea of a Blue Economy is inextricably linked to the health of our oceans, seas and their eco-systems.

I likened the ocean and its whole marine eco-system to a mother. Paraphrasing what I said then, the sea is our mother – for my members consisting of Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, the sea feeds us, her health will determine what nourishment we get from her. If she is sick, we will be sick.

It reminds me of what economists say of Wall Street, When Wall Street sneezes the whole world catches the flu. Well, if we allow the sea and its eco-system to spiral into life support, then you can be sure that all Small Island States, low lying islands and atolls and their occupants, all coastal communities that we represent here today will perish.

It is for this reason that MSG subscribes to the purposes of AIS and its inclusive approach to addressing climate change and sea level rise.

We attach great importance to AIS work – which we find pragmatic and fit for purpose. We are comfortable collaborating with AIS and with others within the ambit of the AIS forum.

Innovative approaches and solutions – that AIS seeks to achieve can only serve us in good stead as we face the climate change inflicted challenges in the economic, social and political fields.

Very much informed by the discussions and conversations here within the AIS Forum, we are dovetailing our activities with other partners to complement the aims and objectives of AIS in waste management, marine pollution, plastic debris. A Yut4Melanesia Program in waste management and advocacy for respect for the environment will be rolled out in both Solomon Islands and Vanuatu early next year with funding already secured to the tune of Aus\$1.4 million.

We have already collaborated with the AIS Secretariat to run a Bluepreneur Training Program for a select number of youth and women entrepreneurs for our members. I am pleased to report that feedback from all these participants indicate that they are all doing very well in their small business activities. Word of this training program has spread and demands are being made on us (MSG Secretariat) to organize another.

Encouraged by this success, and desirous of further strengthening our cooperation with AIS, I will be signing a Statement of Intent with AIS for more collaborative efforts in the areas of advocacy of what AIS is doing, upscaling the Blue Entrepreneurship Programme and the Plastic Waste Management.

May I suggest that AIS, in whatever form it exists, continue its collaboration with regional organizations, such as MSG and PIF, to deliver its programmes in the Pacific.

MSG supports the launch of both the AIS Blue Hub and the AIS Research and Development Center, as well as the development of the Blue Economy Development Index (BEDI).

MSG is also of the view that it only makes sense, indeed a natural progression, that the AIS Forum is morphed into a Charter-based organization. We are confident that given our depth of experience with management, financing, and operations of existing organisations, we can create an AIS Charter-based organization that will best suit our needs and achieve the aims of **fostering collaboration, enabling innovation, for our ocean, and our future.**

I thank you.