



Speech by the Hon. Jotham Napat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

At the 23rd Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Leaders' Summit in Suva, Fiji from 18-23rd June 2025

Hon. Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji

Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea

Hon. Jeremiah Manele, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands

Mr, Roch Wamytan, FLNKS Representative & former President of Congress of New Caledonia

Vice Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Arrmanatha Christiawan Nasir

Fiji Council of Chiefs representatives,

Observers

Distinguish Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen – All protocols observed

Excellencies - Colleague MSG Leaders,

It is with profound humility and immense pride that I stand before you today at this pivotal juncture in our collective Melanesian journey. But let me at the outset acknowledge the traditional landowners of the land whose land we stand, and the Great Council of Chiefs for availing Vale Ni Bose for our convening. As the Republic of Vanuatu prepares to ceremonially pass the mantle of MSG Chairmanship to our esteemed brother, the Honourable Sitiveni Ligamamada Rabuka, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji, I am compelled to reflect upon the enduring legacy, the transformative power, and the indomitable spirit of our Melanesian Spearhead Group.

Let me assure you — this is not merely a handover of a title. It is the passing of a sacred flame, lit by our forebears, carried by our leaders, and fuelled by the enduring hopes of our people.

2. Since its inception in 1986 and formal establishment in 1988, the MSG has stood as a bastion of Melanesian solidarity, sovereignty, and shared destiny. It was born not merely as a political construct, but as a manifestation of our ancestral kinship, our cultural tapestry, and our collective aspiration for self-determination, peace, and prosperity.

3. Our founding ideals — mutual respect, non-interference, consensus-building, and the promotion of Melanesian values — remain the bedrock of our cooperation. The MSG is not just a regional bloc; it is a moral compass and a strategic fulcrum in the evolving architecture of the Pacific.

Colleague Leaders,

4. It is both symbolic and historic that the Republic of Fiji, under the leadership of Hon. Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, assumes the Chairmanship today. It was under your stewardship in 1997, Sir, that Fiji joined the MSG — a decision that has since enriched our collective strength. And now, like a seasoned captain returning to the helm, you take the wheel once more.

5. As I relinquish the Chair, I do so with a heart full of gratitude and a spirit emboldened by our shared accomplishments. Let this handover not be an end, but a renewal — a reaffirmation of our solemn duty to our peoples, our cultures, and our future.

6. It is therefore with full confidence, deep admiration, and fraternal joy that I now extend the gavel of Chairmanship to the Republic of Fiji — a nation whose leadership history within our region is as rich as its contributions are enduring.

7. Honourable Prime Minister Rabuka — your return to this esteemed role is not merely a matter of protocol. It is a profound full circle in the narrative of regional diplomacy. You led Fiji into the MSG nearly three decades ago; today, you return to lead it with experience burnished by time and a spirit undimmed by age.

8.

9. We pass on not just a position — we pass on a legacy. A legacy rooted in solidarity, inclusivity, and shared destiny. It is now Fiji's moment to carry that torch forward, to illuminate new paths, and to continue writing the story of Melanesian empowerment.

Excellencies,

10. As the world moves through increasing complexity and the uncertainty ahead, the relevance of our Group grows stronger, not weaker. In a time of shifting alliances, resource rivalries, and global distractions, we must remain vigilant and united. We must continue to be architects of our own future, and not bystanders to other nations' ambitions.

11. Let us remember — the MSG is not defined by the size of our populations or the scale of our economies, but by the depth of our cultural cohesion, the integrity of our intentions, and the richness of our collective wisdom.

12. The era ahead calls for bolder collaboration, smarter diplomacy, and unwavering unity. Whether facing climate volatility, technological disruption, disruptions in supply chains or global realignments, we must remain in solidarity as one Melanesian family guided by our goal of realizing the Melanesian Economic Corridor, .

13. And so, as I lay down this mantle, I do so with a full heart and an unwavering belief in the power of our union. Let this transition not be seen as the end of a role, but the renewal of our shared resolve.

15.

16. I call on each of us to extend that same unwavering support to the incoming Chair, . Let us continue to uphold the spirit of collective responsibility and shared leadership. For in the canoe of Melanesia, every paddle matters — and when we row together, we move forward with strength, purpose, and unity.

17. And to the peoples of Melanesia — it is you who inspire and ground our work. Yours are the voices we serve, the dreams we defend, and the future we strive to protect.

18. Let us continue to walk together, not as disparate nations, but as one Melanesian family — undaunted, united, and unyielding in our pursuit of peace, prosperity, and self-determination.

Let us bind our futures not with fear, but with faith in God. As we pass the baton of leadership, I wish to sincerely acknowledge the steadfast support extended to Vanuatu during its Chairmanship by our fellow member countries, —Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, and the FLNKS of KANAKY. Your collaboration, counsel, and commitment have been the wind beneath our sails, and for that, we are deeply grateful. In recognition of this please accept this traditional gesture which symbolizes our way of acknowledging you and saying thank you for your cooperation and understanding,

Tagio tumas. Vinaka vakalevu, oleti . God bless the Melanesian Spearhead Group. God bless our Blue Pacific.

Tankyu tumas – May our nations continue to flourish in friendship and solidarity.

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