



## **22<sup>nd</sup> MSG LEADERS' SUMMIT**

### **"MSG, Being Relevant and Influential"**

*23 – 24 August, 2023  
Warwick Le Lagon Resort  
Port Vila,  
Republic of Vanuatu*

### **COMMUNIQUE**

1. The 22<sup>nd</sup> MSG Leaders' Summit was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2023. An official Welcome Ceremony was held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup>, August 2023 at the National Convention Centre that included a traditional welcome ceremony by the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs of Vanuatu followed by welcome remarks delivered by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu and the MSG Chair. The Leaders then proceeded to the MSG Secretariat to officially unveil individual countries' totem poles carved by MSG Carvers during the 7<sup>th</sup> Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival. The Leaders then proceeded to the Warwick Le Lagon Resort to convene their Plenary Session. The Leaders' Retreat was held at the Havanna Boat House in North Efate on the morning of Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August. The Leaders Communique was endorsed and released at the conclusion of their Retreat.
2. The Summit was Chaired by Hon. Alatoi Ishmael Kalsakau Maau'koro MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, and Chair of the MSG. Leaders in attendance at the Summit included Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka (MP), Prime Minister of Fiji, Mr. Victor Tutugoro, Spokesperson of the Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak Socialiste (FLNKS), Hon. James Marape (MP), Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, and Hon. Manasseh Sogavare (MP), Prime Minister of Solomon Islands.

3. At their Retreat, Leaders considered and reached decisions on issues submitted by the MSG Foreign Ministers Meeting (FMM). The key decisions of Leaders are summarised below;

#### A. CLIMATE CHANGE AND NUCLEAR ISSUES

4. On the issue of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion with respect to the responsibility of States vis-à-vis Climate Change, the Leaders decided to:
  - i. **Mandate** the MSG Secretariat to submit, as soon as possible, a request for participation in the ICJ advisory proceedings and, if granted, to make written submissions; and
  - ii. **Urged** all MSG Members to make written submissions to the ICJ before the due date.
5. With regards to the call for a **Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific**, the Leaders;
  - i. **Endorsed** the **Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific**; and
  - ii. **Mandated** the MSG Secretariat to provide coordination and support to members to implement and track all targets and commitments, and enable political pressure on **Just and Equitable** Transition support for all Melanesian fossil-fuel dependent sectors and national economies.
6. On issues surrounding the discharge of the **Fukushima Nuclear Treated Water** (Advanced Liquid Processing System) into the Pacific Ocean, the Leaders:
  - i. **Agreed** for the MSG to take a precautionary approach and encourage ongoing dialogue and exchange of information between PIF's Panel of Independent Experts and IAEA and Japanese Experts on the issue be maintained;
  - ii. **Strongly urged** Japan **NOT** to discharge Fukushima Nuclear treated water into the Pacific Ocean until and unless the Fukushima Nuclear treated water was incontrovertibly proven to be safe by science;
  - iii. **Noted** that the IAEA Assessment Report neither endorses nor approves the discharge of the Fukushima Nuclear Treated Water (ALPS) into the Pacific Ocean;
  - iv. **Called** on Japan to respect both the Regional and International Treaties and Frameworks which the Pacific Islands States have adopted to address nuclear issues in the Pacific Ocean; and
  - v. **Noted** the first meeting of the Pacific Islands TROIKA Outcome on 11 August 2023 in Fiji; attended by representatives of the PIF TROIKA, Hon Mark Brown, Prime Minister of the Cook

Islands, Hon. Siaosi Sovaleni, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Tonga, and Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of Fiji. These Leaders recognised the sovereignty of Members to determine their own national positions on this issue based on their assessment, science, and the needs of their own countries. Fiji is of the understanding that the PIF Chair will write to each member state on this issue.

7. On the proposed **Declaration on Climate Change**, the Leaders agreed to sign and issue the Declaration on Climate Change.

**B. SECURITY ISSUES IN THE PACIFIC AND HUMAN RIGHTS:**

8. On Security Issues and the **MSG Security Strategy** in the Pacific, the Leaders;
  - i. **Noted** the progress on the **MSG Security Strategy** by the Working Group and **directed** that the MSG Security Strategy be submitted as soon as possible to the Police Commissioners Conference and the Police Ministers Meeting for consideration;
  - ii. **Endorsed** the proposal by the Secretariat to undertake consultation on the proposed MSG Security Strategy with the NGOs and CSOs of Members; and
  - iii. **Agreed** that the proposal to establish an MSG Security Force be discussed within the context of the proposed MSG Security Strategy for the promotion and maintenance of peace and security in the region.
9. On **human rights issues in Indonesia's West Papua Province**, the Leaders:
  - i. **Acknowledged** that the most appropriate fora to discuss human rights matters is at the United Nations through the UN Human Rights Council;
  - ii. **Reaffirmed** the sovereignty of Indonesia over West Papua and acknowledged that MSG Leaders have made their collective views on this matter which are fully covered in the PIF Communiqués;
  - iii. **Urged** PIF to pursue implementation of the decision of the PIF Leaders Communique of August 2019 for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a mission to West Papua and the Papuan Provinces and must take into consideration its root causes;
  - iv. **Requested** the Chair of the MSG to write to the Associate Member to allow the visit of the UN Human Rights Commissioner to West Papua and to request the UN Human Rights



- Commission to have their Report on human rights violations in West Papua, delivered in good time for the consideration of the next MSG Summit in 2024;
- v. **Directed** the Secretariat to accompany the UNCHR Commissioner on their visit and to produce a Report on any constructive socio-economic developments in West Papua and the Papuan Region and have it delivered for the consideration of the next MSG Summit in 2024; and
  - vi. **Directed** also the Secretariat to develop a dialogue arrangement through the Indonesian Government, during the formal SOM, where all relevant stakeholders can be invited to address issues pertaining to the developments in the Papuan Provinces.
10. On the proposed **Declaration on the Concord for Peace, Mutual Respect, Cooperation and Amity**, the Leaders approved and issued the Declaration on the Concord for Peace, Mutual respect, Cooperation and Amity.

### C. MELANESIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

11. On the Melanesian **Free Trade Agreement (MFTA)**, the Leaders:
- i. **Acknowledged** the progress being undertaken by the Members in completing their domestic process for signature and ratification of the MFTA;
  - ii. **Noted** the challenges to involve New Caledonia in the MFTA and directed the Secretariat to continue to investigate options, including IEPA under the EU arrangements, on engaging New Caledonia with the MFTA;
  - iii. **Agreed** to include Indonesia in the development of the MSG Travel Card;
  - iv. **Directed** the MSG Secretariat to mobilise resources with development partners to assist Members progress the implementation of the MFTA; and
  - v. **Agreed** to have the Secretariat to investigate an appropriate trade arrangement with Indonesia.

### D. THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS IN NEW CALEDONIA.

12. On the update on the decolonisation process in New Caledonia, the Leaders:
- i. **Agreed** that New Caledonia's inclusion on the UN List of decolonisation territories is protected and maintained;

- ii. **Directed** the MSG Permanent Representatives to the UN to examine and provide an advice on the proposal to seek ICJ opinion on the conduct and results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> referendum conducted in December 2021;
- iii. **Directed** the MSG Permanent Representatives at the UN to request the UN to provide the report on the 3<sup>rd</sup> referendum in New Caledonia to determine the credibility of the election process; and
- iv. **Mandated** the MSG Permanent Representatives to the UN, in consultation with FLNKS and the MSG Secretariat, to pursue the options of a UN Resolution on the legality of the 3<sup>rd</sup> referendum to the C24, the Fourth Committee and the General Assembly; and
- v. **Agreed** for the Chairman of the MSG to write to the President of France expressing strong opposition to the way the 3<sup>rd</sup> Referendum was conducted and advise that the MSG does not recognise the results of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Referendum on the basis of the PIF's Observer Report.

#### **E. APPLICATION FOR MSG MEMBERSHIP BY THE UNITED LIBERATION MOVEMENT OF WEST PAPUA.**

- 13. On the application for MSG Membership by the United Liberation Movement of West Papua the Leaders acknowledged the decision of the MSG Foreign Ministers on the various issues raised under this agenda and:
  - i. **Noted** that ULMWP does not meet the existing criteria for Membership under the Agreement Establishing the MSG that will warrant grant of membership status;
  - ii. **Noted** that ULMWP Membership application cannot be approved because consensus could not be reached by all Members;
  - iii. **Agreed** that ULMWP's application does not satisfy the Revised Criteria for full membership of the MSG which would inevitably require the review of the Agreement Establishing the MSG;
  - iv. **Agreed** for one-year moratorium on new membership to the MSG and directed the Secretariat to further refine the Membership Guidelines;
  - v. **Mandated** the Secretariat to explore ways on how MSG can establish closer collaboration with the Government of Indonesia by leveraging the Special Autonomous Arrangements to draw special focus on social, economic development and empowerment of the people of West Papua and the Papuan Provinces;
  - vi. **Tasked** the Secretariat to develop the concept of "Constructive Engagement Platform," such as an annual MSG/Indonesia Parliamentary Dialogue on developments in the Papuan

Provinces in line with Leaders' decision to create a 'space' for dialogue with the Government of Indonesia.

- vii. **Reinforced** that the Membership of the MSG must be limited only to Sovereign and Independent States with the special arrangements for FLNKS;
- viii. **Agreed** to request the MSG Chair to write to PIF's Chair to ensure that the visit of the UN Human Rights Commissioner to Indonesia is undertaken;
- ix. **Agreed** to request the Associate Member to allow the visit of the UN Human Rights Commissioner to West Papua and to have the Commissioner's Report on human rights issues in West Papua delivered for the consideration of the next MSG Summit in 2024; and
- x. **Agreed** for Leaders to undertake visits to Paris and Jakarta and make representations on the decolonisation process in New Caledonia and the developments in the Melanesian provinces in Indonesia.

#### F. PROGRESS REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR GENERAL.

- 14. On the **Progress Report of the Secretariat**, the MSG the Leaders;
  - i. **Expressed** appreciation with the performance and efforts of the Secretariat in strengthening its operations and streamlining its work programme and budget to implement the Leaders Mandates;
  - ii. **Tasked** the Secretariat to develop a timeline data for the information of Members that tracks the progress of the implementation of Leaders Mandates;
  - iii. **Directed** the Secretariat to continue to align its work programme to the prosperity for All Plan and the 2050 Blue Pacific Continent Strategy; and
  - iv. **Approved** to have the MSG Budget Meeting to be held in November and the Leaders' Summit to convene on April/May at each financial year.
- 15. On the desire of the MSG Secretariat to become a Member of the Council of Regional Organisations of the Pacific (CROP), the Leaders:
  - i. **Approved** for the MSG Secretariat to seek Membership of the CROP;
  - ii. **Directed** MSG Forum Officials Committee (FOC) Members to make demarches to the PIF Secretariat and appropriate bodies of PIF in support of the Secretariat's bid to become a member of CROP; and



- iii. **Agreed** for the MSG Chair to write to the PIF Chair in support of the MSG Secretariat's bid for CROP Membership.

#### **G. PROPOSAL FOR A STANDING CHART TO APPOINT MSG CANDIDATES FOR REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS.**

- 16. On the proposal by Solomon Islands to develop a standing chart to manage appointment of MSG Candidates for regional and international positions, the Leaders;
  - i. **Approved** the establishment of an MSG Guideline which would include enabling the creation of an Election Chart for the MSG;
  - ii. **Directed** the Secretariat to establish an election chart, in close consultation with Members, and have it tabled to the next meeting of the SOM;
  - iii. **Agreed** for MSG to seek observer status at the United Nations and other International Organisations.

#### **H. CANDIDACY FOR THE REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC OFFICE OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION (WHO).**

- 17. The Leaders **endorsed** the candidature of Dr Jimmie Rodgers from Solomon Islands for the post of the Regional Director for the World Health Organisation (WHO) Western Pacific Office in Manila, Philippines.

#### **I. CANDIDACY FOR THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF FORUM FISHERIES (FFA).**

- 18. The Leaders **endorsed** the candidature of Dr. Pio Emosi Manoa, Fiji's Candidate to be the next Director General of the Forum Fisheries Agency in Honiara.

#### **J. VANUATU'S BID TO HOST THE PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM (PIF) LEADERS MEETING IN 2030**

- 19. The Leaders **approved** to support Vanuatu's bid to host the PIFs Leaders Meeting in 2030 to coincide with Vanuatu's Golden Jubilee and to mark the ending of the National Sustainable Development Plan (People's Plan).

#### **K. SPECIAL GUESTS**

20. The Leaders welcomed the decision taken by the MSG Chair to invite Australia and China as Special Guests.

21. The Leaders also noted the interest expressed by Australia to seek a stronger arrangement for engagement with the MSG.

#### **L. CONCLUSION**

21. The MSG Chair thanked all the Leaders, FMM and SOM for their support and contributions during the 22<sup>nd</sup> MSG Leaders' Summit and its related meetings. The MSG Leaders further expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of Vanuatu for the warm hospitality extended to all the visiting MSG Leaders and their delegations.

#### **M. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MSG LEADERS MEETING**

22. The MSG Leaders welcomed the confirmation by Fiji to Chair the next MSG Leaders' Summit and agreed to Convene the MSG Leaders' Summit in April 2024 in Suva, Fiji.