



MELANESIAN *Tak*

ISSUE 14 APRIL - DECEMBER 2021

A quarterly newsletter to inform our readers about key work activities undertaken at the MSG Secretariat

Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, Social Equality and Inclusivity and Sustainable Development are the MSG's core objectives as endorsed by Leaders in the "MSG 2038 - Prosperity for All Plan"

MSG SECRETARIAT CONCLUDES SPECIAL SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat successfully concluded a Special Virtual Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) on Wednesday 24 November to deliberate on the 2022 Work Programme and Budget and to discuss the situation in New Caledonia.

In his opening statement, the SOM Chair, Ambassador Elias Wohengu, Acting Secretary, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade stressed the importance of deliberating on the revised 2022 Work Programme and Budget to ensure that the Secretariat remained operational. Following this, the Acting DG George Hoa'au, expressed his appreciation to Members for their support to the Secretariat.

The SOM deliberated on the situation in New Caledonia with regards to the Referendum. As one of the founding agendas of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, the referendum of independence for the Kanaks and the fulfillment of the Noumea Accord remains an important agenda for the Group.

For the MSG, the future aspirations of the Kanaks of New Caledonia remained that of political independence, and thus a conducive environment be provided by the Administrating Power to ensure a free referendum is conducted.

The Special SOM was also informed that the French Government maintained its decision to hold the 3rd referendum on 12 December, despite FLNKS' request for postponement due to the current COVID situation in New Caledonia. FLNKS earlier said they would not take part and stressed they would not negotiate for any agreement, except to insist for a roadmap towards independence should the Referendum continue on 12 December despite their objections.

The SOM was attended by Officials from PNG Government as the current MSG Chair, and representatives from the Governments of the Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, FLNKS, Indonesia as Associate Members and ULMWP as MSG Observers.



SOM Chair, Ambassador Elias Wohengu, Acting Secretary, PNG, Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade

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ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

THE OUTSIDE MAPS AND MIRRORS WHICH ARE FOR US



Acting
Director
General, George
Hoa'au

Warm greetings from Port Vila, Vanuatu!

Welcome to the final edition of *Melanesian Tok* for 2021. It covers work we have done in the service of our members in the last 6 months. To this end, firstly, what we continue to do is only possible because of the support, which we have been given by our members, friends and partners. So, I'd like to thank them, sincerely. On behalf of the MSG Secretariat, we would like to convey our most profound gratitude to our members and friends; and particularly our host, Vanuatu, for the support and encouragements, which they continue to offer us during these COVID times.

Second, the many lessons that we have observed so far, points to a future which has already occurred. The question, is how should we as an organization engage, embrace it and factor it into our work for 2022 and beyond.

A major takeaway is that, the usually referred to "out-of-the-box-thinking" is not good enough in a leadership context. And one of the reasons for this is simply that, we remain to measure our progress against our used boxes (ways of doing work and expending resources). However, in many ways, they unconsciously remain those various points of subtle references for work. There are pros and cons for this. Cautiously, they remain in our sight of doing things, and not outside or out-of-sight of

new organisational inward reflections.

I am of the view that, the current challenges will open opportunities to a vast array of realignments, and refinement of partnerships, which will guide how we serve our members next year. On one hand, they test the limits of who we are and what we can be. Conversely, they encouraged an organizational adaptability to maintain focus to the mandates that still define us as the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

The sum of the above is that, what we have observed and going through are an important guiding mirror into our organization. Equally important, they posit to an outside map for guiding our work in 2022. So, the challenge informed by lessons learned is to explore creating new boxes for us to think and operate from. It is not simple, but rewarding if we dare to pursue them in partnership with our members and with the resources we have, and take time to challenge ourselves to think anew.

Finally, during the last MT edition mid of this year, I mentioned in its foreword that it would be my last; only to realise that the events of this year has been challenging for our Leaders to pursue the appointment of a new Director General. So, it is an honour to be serving Melanesia at the MSG Secretariat as the Acting DG since March 2020. I'd like to acknowledge members and staff at the Secretariat for the support they have given me. And I look forward to giving my very best to working with the new Director General. Since it is December, again; I'd like to wish our MSG Chair, members, families and friends of Melanesia, a blessed festive season and a prosperous new year, 2022.

God bless Melanesia.

**George Dan Hoa'au,
Acting Director General**



MERRY
Christmas



AND HAPPY NEW YEAR



SEASONS GREETINGS FROM THE ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL, STAFF AND OUR FAMILIES



MSG CONGRATULATES MEMBERS ON INDEPENDENCE MILESTONE

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat congratulated the Governments of its Member States for reaching yet another year of Independence this year.

Well wishes were also extended to church leaders, chiefs, community leaders, women and men, youths, children and loving people of its Member states - Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji.

On 7 July, the Government and People of Solomon Islands marked its 43rd year of Independence. The Solomon Islands community celebrated in Port Vila beginning with a march and a flag-raising ceremony at the MSG Secretariat headquarters.

The Republic of Vanuatu celebrated its 41st Independence anniversary on 30 July.

Well wishes were also extended to the the Government and People of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea upon reaching its 46th Independence Anniversary on 16 September. The Papua New Guinea community celebrated in Port Vila beginning with a march in town and also featured a prayer and flag-raising ceremony at the MSG Secretariat headquarters.

A minute of silence was also observed to honour the late founding Prime Minister of PNG, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, who was also one of the founding Fathers of the MSG. Furthermore, the MSG Secretariat congratulated Fiji for having reached its 51st Independence Anniversary on 10 October.



Hon. Bob Loughman Weibur
Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu



Members of the Solomon Islands community celebrated the 43rd Independence Anniversary after the flag-raising ceremony at the MSG Secretariat.



Members of the Papua New Guinea community in Port Vila marked her 46h Independence Anniversary on 16 September.



Fiji's 51st Independence Anniversary was celebrated at the MSG Secretariat by staff, friends & members of the Fijian community.

MSG SECRETARIAT EXPLORES OPTIONS ON SUSTAINABLE USE OF MARINE ECOSYSTEM

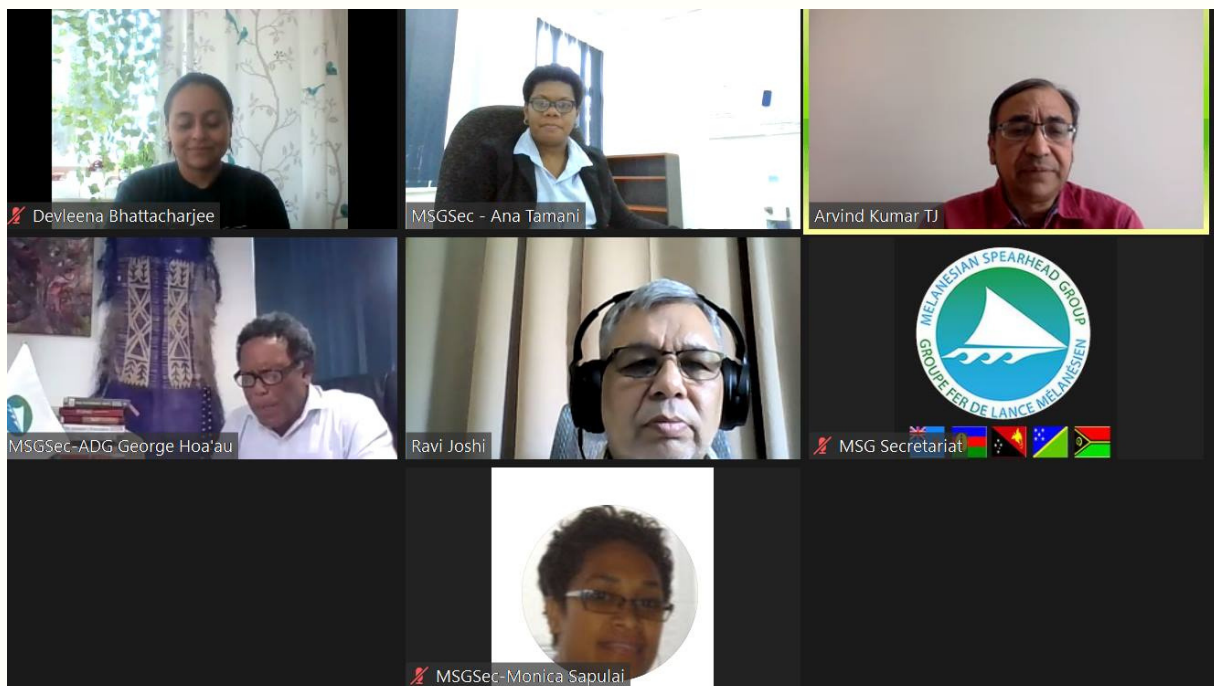
The Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has begun virtual discussions on an MSG Climate Change proposal with Numer8 Analytics, a geo-data science company in an effort to promote the sustainable use of the region's marine ecosystem.

Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, said the talks were timely given that the MSG Secretariat has an existing agreement with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), to support the implementation of the objectives of the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015 – 2024, a standing mandate of the MSG Leaders.

Ms Devleena Bhattacharjee, Chief Executive Officer of Numer8, in her presentation

talked about how the OFish app worked, which can help fishermen not only fish sustainably but track the supply chain, buy and sell to markets around the world and have access to real-time weather data, among a few features.

Further discussions are expected to take place to identify the best way forward in which the MSG Secretariat can secure this initiative, for the sustainable use of the marine ecosystem in the region. The talks were initiated by Professor Ravindra Chandra Joshi, an Independent Consultant on invasive species, climate change, biodiversity loss, and food and nutrition security, based in the Philippines. He has previously worked as Senior Advisor to the Solomon Islands Ministry of Agriculture, SPC and University of the South Pacific.



MSG Secretariat staff led by the ADG, George Hoa'au, in virtual talks with representatives from Numer8 Analytics.

USP LAW STUDENTS COMPLETE INTERNSHIP AT MSG SECRETARIAT

A total of eight law students from the University of the South Pacific's Emalus Campus successfully completed their internship programme at the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in May. The interns were supervised by the Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs (PSA), Ilan Kiloe, for a period of ten (10) weeks, where they undertook legal practice under the different programmes of the MSG Secretariat.

They also researched key issues around socio-economic, trade, sustainable development, security and human rights, among others.

During their concluding presentation, the students shared how they appreciated the opportunity to understand some of the issues that governments of the MSG region were engaged in, which they needed to address from a legal perspective. Some of the interesting issues that emerged

during the presentation was how the economies of the MSG members are being severely affected by COVID-19, and how policies and regulations are being formed to address the challenges.

The student interns also reflected on their experiences working at the MSG Secretariat as an intergovernmental organisation, saying it was an eye-opener and a career pathway to working in the region. Other issues highlighted was that the MSG was a model for sub-regionalism in the Pacific and how it is so important to engage in networking in a professional setting.

Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, congratulated the students for completing their programmes and encouraged them to continue to aim high in their education pursuit.

He added that for many years the MSG Secretariat has hosted this internship programme and it was pleasing to be able to see it continue.



USP law interns after successfully completing their internships at the MSG Secretariat earlier this year.

MSG SECRETARIAT OBSERVES 2021 VANUATU PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

A team from the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat observed the Vanuatu Provincial Elections which was held on 12 May 2021.

The team was mobilised following a formal invitation by the Vanuatu Government, through the Vanuatu Electoral Office.

The Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, said, "We are indeed grateful to the Government of Vanuatu for the invitation extended to the MSG Secretariat to participate in observing the provincial elections".

This he said, is the first time for the Secretariat as international observers, to participate in the observation of elections at provincial level.

"We consider it an opportunity to get involved as our aim is to contribute to the overall strengthening of the electoral system and promoting greater democracy in Member countries," he said.

In the past, the MSG had observed national elections in Vanuatu during the 2016 Snap Elections and the 2020 National General Elections. On each occasion, detailed

reports with recommendations were produced and submitted to the Government of Vanuatu.

"We understand that Vanuatu is in a transition period towards integrating ID card and electoral card system into an electronic voting system, and we are excited to be able to observe excellent improvements to this electoral system," Mr. Hoa'au added.

Mr. Hoa'au congratulated the team for their commitment in ensuring that the Observer Mission was a success. Due to time constraints, the team was deployed to observe the election in nearby constituencies which included Efate Constituency, Lelepa/Moso constituency, Nguna/Pele Constituency and Emau Constituency. The teams also observed the pre-election and the post-election (counting) periods to ensure a holistic observation of the election.

The Election Observation activity has been part of the Secretariat's work under the Political and Security Affairs (PSA) Programme since 2014, led by Mr. Ilan Kiloe.



Large crowds gathered at the Polling Station in Teouma during the Vanuatu Provincial Elections on 12 May.

MSG SECRETARIAT PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON EDUCATION, CULTURE & IDENTITY

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was part of a two-day international symposium in April geared towards the integration of education and training, on cultural knowledge and vernacular into the Vanuatu Education system.

Hosted by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the Vanuatu Ministry of Education at the Malvatumauri House from 14-15 April, the MSG Secretariat was represented by Simone Tuimalega, the Arts and Culture (A&C) Officer of the MSG Secretariat.

The symposium he said, had significant relevance to one of the strategic priorities for the Secretariat's A&C programme.

He said the ongoing discussions contributed to the need to relook at the link between our Melanesian Arts and Culture and assess how we can use our Education system to safe-

guard our customs and language.

Mr Tuimalega said that the MSG Secretariat "is also proposing to facilitate a national symposium with possible themes, that are directly connected to our unique Melanesian arts and cultural items such as mats, carvings and traditional house building, and others".

The international symposium provided the platform to gauge and further plan the proposed MSG symposiums.

Among other issues discussed at the symposium in Port Vila were an awareness on archaeology and its contribution to cultural heritage in Vanuatu; work done in the area of safeguarding language and customs in Vanuatu; expeditions that were carried out by early colonisers in Vanuatu; and the advancement of language policy for Vanuatu.



MSG Secretariat Arts & Culture Officer, Simone Tuimalega (2nd from left), President of the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs, Chief Willie Gray Plasua (middle) and VNU Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Jean-Pierre Nirua (back, right) with participants of the International Symposium.

MSG SECRETARIAT SUPPORTS YOUNG MELANESIANS

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was pleased to host Ulina Marawa, a year 11 student of Port Vila International School (PVIS) for her week-long attachment in April.

The Stage 2 Workplace Practices course at PVIS is basically an introduction to the nature of modern workplaces and assists students by preparing them for future employment.

An elated Ulina said that while the attachment was brief, it was a week of discovery and learning new things, adding that her experience helped to meet the objectives of the course.

"I enjoyed every bit of it from meeting people daily, learning from the staff who are very kind, answering phone calls, and finding data and statistics," she shared. To successfully complete the course, a formal requirement is that students complete a 40-hour work placement, giving them the opportunity to see a workplace in practice.

Other issues covered in the course included strategies for finding and securing employment, the impacts of technology and globalisation, and work health and safety. As an organisation set up for the aspirations of Melanesians, the MSG Secretariat usually seizes such opportunities to support learning and development aspirations of our young people.



MSG SECRETARIAT RECEIVES VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTION FROM THE UNITED LIBERATION MOVEMENT FOR WEST PAPUA (ULMWP)

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat recently received a voluntary contribution of VT1M by the United Liberation Movement for West Papua (ULMWP). ULMWP attained its Observer Status to the MSG since 2015 and as Observers, may propose to make voluntary contributions.

The voluntary contribution was handed over by Chief Marikorr (Mr. Freddie Waromi), ULMWP Office representative in Port Vila, Vanuatu, on behalf of the ULMWP.

Mr. Waromi stated that the ULMWP, in making the voluntary contribution to support the work of the Secretariat, recognised the vision of the MSG leaders and the true spirit of Melanesian brotherhood and respect. ULMWP has voluntarily contributed to the MSG Secretariat in the past. The Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, acknowledged the voluntary contribution from the ULMWP, as an Observer to the MSG.



JICA REASSURES SUPPORT FOR MSG ROADMAP FOR INSHORE FISHERIES

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has been reassured of the commitment of the Japan International Cooperation Agency, (JICA) on the way forward for the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015-2024.

In June, a courtesy call was made to the Acting Director General (ADG) George Hoa'au, by the JICA Resident Representative Uemura Rika, and the Assistant Representative (Project Formulation) Motegi Akihito.

The two organisations are working on implementing the Roadmap.



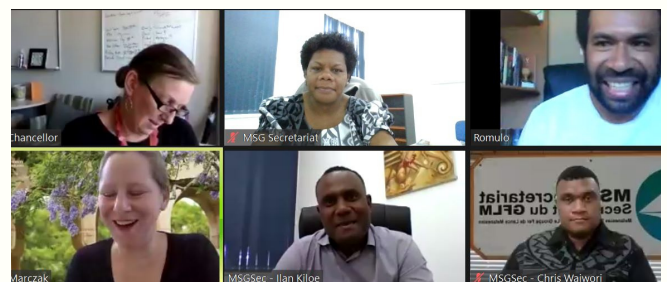
JICA Resident Representative Uemura Rika (R), and the Assistant Representative (Project Formulation) Motegi Akihito (L) with ADG, George Hoa'au.

MSG SECRETARIAT & APR2P PAVE WAY FORWARD FOR SECURITY IN THE REGION

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has resumed talks with the University of Queensland's (UQ) Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) on possible areas of collaboration. Mr Ilan Kiloe, Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs (PSA) briefed the UQ team on initial discussions with their Pacific Director, Romulo Nayacalevu, where potential areas had earlier been identified. Some of the areas include training, research and workshops, particularly training support for MSG States and officials in line with the Regional Security Strategy (RSS) priorities, on the prevention of Climate Change-related atrocities that transcends national borders.

The UQ team, which comprised Ms Arna

Chancellor, APR2P Centre Manager, Ms Nikki Marczak, APR2P Atrocity Prevention Coordinator and Mr Nayacalevu, were very supportive and shared their excitement in working with the MSG Secretariat on the identified areas. The possibility of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will soon be drawn up to formalize the working relationship between the two parties.



The MSG Secretariat and the APR2P will soon move towards signing an agreement to formalise its working relationship.

MSG SECRETARIAT CELEBRATES FIJI'S OLYMPICS 7S RUGBY WIN

Staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat celebrated Fiji's golden victory at the recent Olympics 7s Rugby on 29 July 2021.

It was both an exciting and special morning as they shared in the joy and triumph of Fiji's 7s victory, bagging her second Olympics Gold Medal 7s Rugby win in Tokyo, Japan.

Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, said the MSG Secretariat shares the achievements of our Members and are always there to support and

strengthen each other as one big Melanesian family.

"Thank you also to the members of the Fijian community who turned up to celebrate with us," he added. The Fijian staff of the MSG Secretariat hosted the morning tea.

The MSG Secretariat congratulated "our 7s world champions and we are indeed proud that you're bringing home yet another well-deserved gold medal!"



MSG Secretariat staff celebrated Fiji's Olympic 7s Rugby gold medal win.

MSG SECRETARIAT & PACIFIC COMMUNITY SEEK WAYS TO COLLABORATE

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Pacific Community (SPC) office in Vanuatu have begun discussions to explore ways on how their work can complement each other amidst this COVID-19 pandemic.

Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, said he welcomed the opportunity to work in partnership with the SPC in a mutually beneficial way and in common areas of interest in the region.



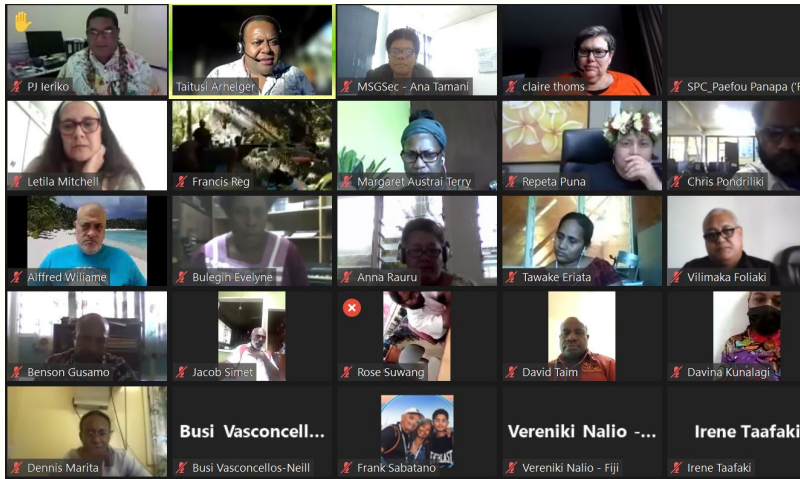
Further talks will lead to exciting and more meaningful collaboration between the two organisations on areas of common interest.

MSG SECRETARIAT AT ACP-EU SMALL GRANT SESSION

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was part of the information-sharing session on the ACP-EU Programme (Pacific) Enhancing capacity for the sustainability of cultural and creative industries Grant scheme on 4 August 2021. This follows our submission for an Expression of Interest (EOI) earlier in

July for technical capacity-building for Artists & Cultural Performers and Practitioners for the 7th Melanesian Arts & Cultural Festival, scheduled to be held in Vanuatu in 2022.

The MSG Secretariat will make a submission in February.



Participants who were part of the information-sharing session on the ACP-EU Programme (Pacific) Enhancing capacity for the sustainability of cultural and creative industries Grant scheme.

SECRETARIAT HOSTS TALKS ON MSG MUSIC FESTIVAL GUIDING DOCUMENT

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat held a National Consultation on the Draft MSG Music Festival Guiding Document at its headquarters in Port Vila on 16 September 2021.

The aim of the consultation was to get ideas from selected Vanuatu musicians on the draft MSG Music Festival Guideline, which was endorsed during the 7th MSG Arts and Culture Ministers Meeting in Kokopo, East New Britain, PNG.

Participants were divided into small clusters where discussions took place against several guided questions. Suggestions by the Vanuatu musicians will now be used to inform the draft MSG Music Festival Guideline across eight key areas.

These include Production and Event Operations, Volunteers, Media & Promotion Entertainment and Programming, Sponsorship, Fundraising, Overall Management of the Festival and Financial Management.



Participants of the National Consultation on the Draft MSG Music Festival Guiding Document.

MSG SECRETARIAT FAREWELLS LONG-SERVING STAFF

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat recently farewelled a long-serving senior staff at a private dinner.

Mrs Monica Abau-Sapulai, from Papua New Guinea, served at the MSG Secretariat as its Information Technology and Website Officer (ITWO) for the past nine years.

Speaking during her farewell, Acting Director General (ADG), Mr George Hoa'au, said the Secretariat was indebted to her saying that her contribution to the Secretariat and the MSG region is highly valued, particularly as the custodian of information.

"You have given your very best to our Melanesia, and you have my uttermost respect," he said.

Manager Corporate Services, Mr John Palmer, also commended Monica's commitment,

dedication and sacrifice to her work at the Secretariat.

In reciprocating this, an emotional Mrs Sapulai acknowledged ADG Hoa'au for the opportunity to serve the region saying she had indeed learnt a lot and most of what she has been able to grasp during her tenure are now life-long lessons. She also acknowledged former staff of the Secretariat.

"As a part of Melanesia, I will always carry it in my heart and consider myself blessed to have served at our Secretariat. You all have become family," she said.

Mrs Sapulai has served under two Director Generals. She returned to her homeland with her daughter Georgina and the Secretariat wishes them well.



Mrs Monica Abau-Sapulai received her Long-Service Commendation Award from the ADG, George Hoa'au, after serving the MSG Secretariat for nine years.

MSG SECRETARIAT AT TRADE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat participated in the National Trade Development Committee (NTDC) Meeting in Luganville, Santo on 17 November 2021, which saw the convergence of Vanuatu's key stakeholders from government, private sector and development partners.

The major objectives of the meeting were to monitor the implementation of past NTDC decisions and to be updated on Vanuatu's Aid for Trade initiatives; National Economy; Trade Facilitation, Negotiation and Agreement; Investment and Vanuatu's Productive sectors.

The Programme Manager Trade and Economic Development (TED), Sovaia Marawa, highlighted that the Ministry of Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business is responsible for implementing Trade Mainstreaming Agenda, contributing towards the national development agenda of Vanuatu.

Mrs. Marawa updated participants on proposed regional actions to strengthen trade capacity-building programmes and initiatives in focal areas of Trade Facilitation, Regional E-Commerce Strategy, Pacific Quality Infrastructure and Green Trade.

The MSG Secretariat is working through joint collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, UNCTAD and other regional partners and is therefore expected to benefit from the EDF11 PRISE Programme and UNCTAD Green Trade for Sustainable Development of MSG in 2022. The Political Advisor, Mr Maurice Michel, officially opened the NTDC meeting on behalf of Honourable James Bule, Minister for Tourism, Trade, Commerce and Ni-Vanuatu Business (MTTCNVB).

He stated that the NTDC was convened to progressing Vanuatu's trade development agenda and set directions to assist Government to successfully implement its development and address current issues. He emphasised Vanuatu's goals on the importance of ensuring that trade benefits does not widen the gap between the rich and the poor.

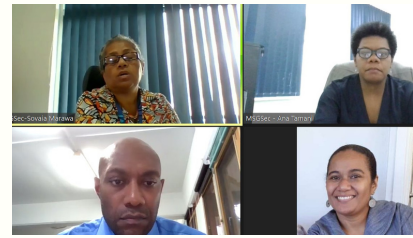
The MSG Secretariat team led by Mrs Marawa, was accompanied by Ilan Kiloe; Programme Manager, Governance and Political Affairs; Christopher Waiwori, Senior Executive Officer; and Ana Tudrau-Tamani, Communications & Media Officer.



The MSG Secretariat team to the National Trade Development Committee (NTDC) Meeting.

**BRIEF
UPDATES**

Officials from the MSG Secretariat and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat touched-base on labour mobility modalities for the MSG region.



Our internal COVID-19 Advisory Committee met after the discovery of COVID-19 community transmission, and in light of the lockdown of Efate in April.



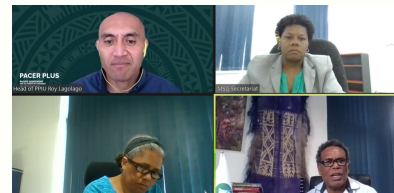
The MSG Secretariat was part of talks at the IFACCA Pacific Chapter meeting, where key challenges for Arts & Culture in the region post-COVID was shared.



As a show of gratitude to our host, the ADG George Hoa'au, presented a small contribution to the Shefa Provincial Office to mark Shefa Day 2021.



We had talks with the PACER Plus Implementation Unit where we relayed our wish to collaborate in areas of mutual benefit for our members.



We were invited to be part of talks on the Vanuatu National Music Policy which saw the convergence of stakeholders on the draft Music Policy.



Two student interns from the University of the South Pacific's Emalus Campus who recently successfully completed their internship presented the lessons they learnt during their two-week programme.



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