



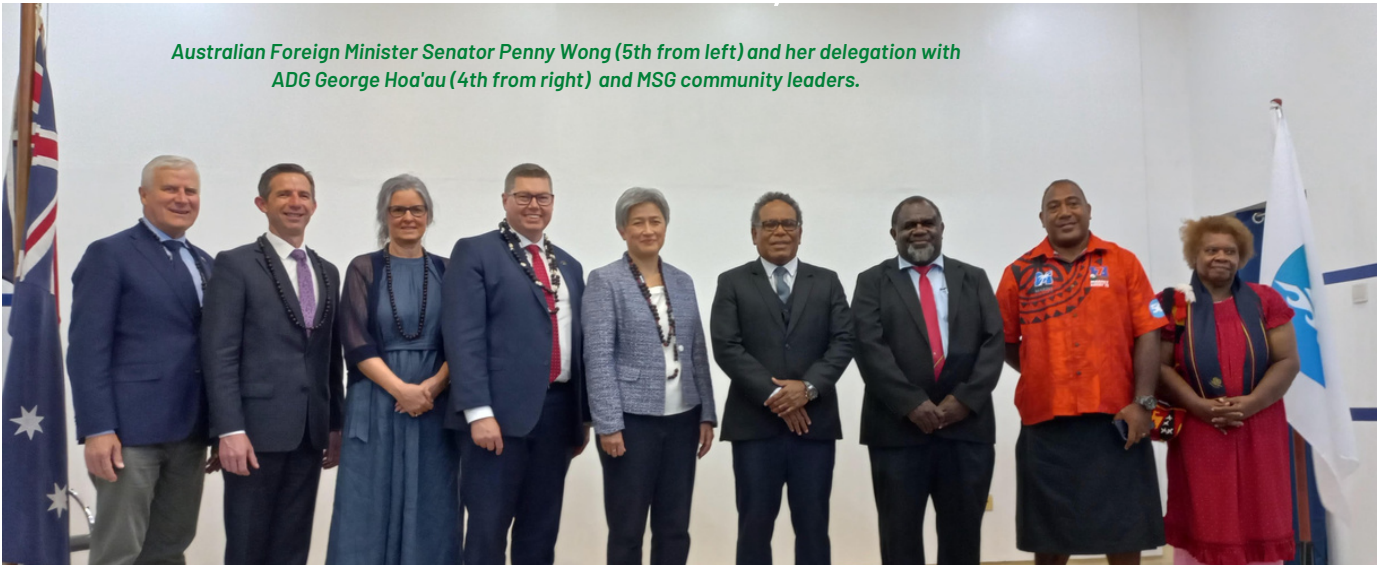
MELANESIAN *Tak*

ISSUE 18 OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2022

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, AUSTRALIA SIGN HISTORIC MOU ON GENDER COOPERATION



Australian Foreign Minister Senator Penny Wong (5th from left) and her delegation with ADG George Hoa'au (4th from right) and MSG community leaders.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Government of Australia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Development Cooperation.

This during a historical visit, marking the first for an Australian Foreign Minister, and a highly esteemed delegation from Australia since the establishment of the MSG Secretariat in 2008.

Senator Penny Wong, Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia and her delegation, which included Hon. Pat Conroy MP, Minister for International Development & the Pacific; Senator Hon. Simon Birmingham, Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs; and the Hon.

Michael McCormack MP, Shadow Minister for International Development & the Pacific, were warmly welcomed by the Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, George Hoa'au, on behalf of DG Leonard Louma. ADG Hoa'au said the MOU was a small but important step for our relationship with Australia and the MSG Secretariat deeply appreciates this.

Senator Wong acknowledged the role played by MSG in the region and of Vanuatu as current Chair. She said the partnership between the Australian Government and the MSG was about "listening to and engaging with the MSG. Senator Wong also met with staff.

IN THIS ISSUE

- DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD - PG 2
- PARLIAMENTARY DEAL MOU - PG 4
- MSG INSHORE FISHERIES WORKING GROUP TO BE REVIVED - PG 6
- MSG AT TRADE WORKSHOP - PG 8
- MSG, PIFS DISCUSSION REGIONAL ISSUES - PG 10
- MSG AWARDS PVTC STUDENTS - PG 12
- PINKTOBER MORNING TEA - PG 14
- MSGOG ON VANUATU ELECTIONS - PG 16
- MSG DONATES TO VANUATU RED CROSS - PG 18
- MSG PM'S CUP A SUCCESS - PG 20



Leonard Louma,
OBE



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

As I reflect back on this year, I must say that 2022 has certainly sped past us like lightning - albeit fulfilling, both professionally as a corporate regional organisation, and personally since taking over the reins at the MSG Secretariat.

Firstly, I offer my best wishes to Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka for being the newly-elected Prime Minister of Fiji. We look forward to working closely with him to strengthen and advance the interests and aspirations of the MSG Group.

At the Secretariat, we wrapped up the year with the historic visit by an Australian parliamentary delegation led by the Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Penny Wong, with the signing of an MOU on Development Cooperation with the Government of Australia. The MOU's focus is mainly gender development cooperation.

MSG was also part of the Multinational Observer Group (MOG) that observed Fiji's National General Elections (NGE). In October we deployed MSG teams to observe the Vanuatu NGE as international observers.

To strengthen Parliamentary Cooperation between the New Caledonia Congress and the Solomon Islands Parliament, we facilitated the signing of an MOU between the President of the NC Congress, who is also the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) Leader, H.E. Roch Wamytan and Solomon Islands

Parliament Speaker, H.E. Patterson Oti. The provision of assistance to FLNKS in their quest for self-determination and institutional strengthening continues to be one of the fundamental and original objectives of the MSG. We were honoured as well to have received a courtesy call from H.E. Wamytan in early December. I also wish to acknowledge the Government of Indonesia for its generosity in hosting the MSG Fisheries Training Programme in the Ambon as part of our efforts to implement the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap. Indonesia then invited the MSG to participate in other important international meetings in the final quarter, such as the 4th Ministerial Meeting of the Archipelagic & Island States (AIS) Forum in Bali and the Indonesia-Pacific Forum for Development where I was privileged to be asked to be the lead panelist and Speaker on Human Security. Manifesting the growing importance with which the MSG is being held internationally, we were invited to attend the Bali Democracy Forum as well. All these engagements seek to fulfill, in one form or another, mandates provided by our Leaders. While in Indonesia, I was honoured to meet the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, H.E. Ms Retno Marsudi, and the Director General of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Abdul Kadir Djailani. Both reaffirmed the importance they attach to Indonesia's relations with MSG and gave assurances on their commitment to developing a constructive relationship with the Secretariat in working towards finding specific areas of possible joint collaborative actions.

In terms of trade, we were part of the recent Regional Training on International Merchandise Trade Statistics in Fiji. Yet another important milestone achieved recently were discussions over a potential Cooperation Agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC). We sure have had a fruitful year and look forward to an even more successful year ahead particularly in continuing to build new partnerships. Merry Christmas and happy holidays from your MSG team!

Thank you, *Merci beaucoup*, *Vinaka Vakalevu*, *Tank Yu*, *Tenkiu Tru*, *Tankyu Tumas* and *Oleti!*

MSG DG CONGRATULATES FIJI'S NEW PRIME MINISTER



The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, has congratulated Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka as Fiji's newly-elected Prime Minister.

In a letter to the office of the Prime Minister, dated 24 December, DG Louma said Hon. Rabuka's successful election to lead the country once again is testimony of

the high regard with which the people of Fiji attach to his leadership.

"Moreover, it does signify in an emphatic way a desire by the Fiji people for change which you so eloquently championed during your campaign," DG Louma stated.

For the MSG, he said, we are proud to acknowledge Hon. Rabuka's critical role in strengthening the sub-regional organisation.

"It was during your tenure as Prime Minister that you took the bold move to recognise Fiji as a Melanesian Country and officially joined the Melanesian Spearhead Group as the fifth Member in 1996," DG Louma stated.

Furthermore, the MSG, with Fiji's active participation, has since grown from strength to strength - both politically and economically.

"We look forward to working closely with you to strengthen and advance the interests and aspirations of the MSG Group," he added.

MSG PART OF MULTINATIONAL OBSERVERS FOR FIJI POLLS



The Multinational Observer Group (MOG) for Fiji's 2022 National General Elections (NGE) attended a briefing at Suva's Holiday Inn on Monday 12 December. The briefing included presentations from delegated speakers on



Electoral Observations, Electoral background and Modalities; Polling, Counting and Tabulation Procedures, among others.

A delegation from the MSG was in Suva as part of the MOG.

SOLOMON ISLANDS PARLIAMENT & NEW CALEDONIA CONGRESS SIGN MOU TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION



The President of New Caledonia Congress, H.E Roch Wamytan (right) and Speaker of Solomon Islands National Parliament, H.E Patteson Oti, during the signing of the MOU.

The President of New Caledonia Congress, who is also the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) Leader, His Excellency Roch Wamytan and Speaker of Solomon Islands National Parliament, H.E Patteson Oti, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen Parliamentary Cooperation between the two Parliaments.

The cooperation was facilitated by the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat through the Political & Security Affairs (PSA) Manager, Ilan

Kiloe, who was in Honiara to provide the necessary assistance.

The NC Congress had also signed MOUs with Fiji and Vanuatu Parliaments which will strengthen working relationship between the respective institutions, including training opportunities and professional development.

The provision of assistance to FLNKS for self-determination and institutional strengthening continues to be one of the fundamental and original objectives of the MSG.



During his visit to the Solomon Islands, the President of the New Caledonia Congress, H.E Roch Wamytan also paid a courtesy call to the Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare.

DG LOUMA PARTICIPATES AT 4TH AIS MINISTERIAL MEETING



The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, took part in the Archipelagic & Island States (AIS) Forum in Bali and urged participants to use it to develop concrete, innovative and sustainable actions to magnify pressing concerns to our archipelagic and island states.

He said the AIS can be the springboard for a more unified approach in amplifying advocacy of our interests and needs in the other international fora such as in the next COP 28 meeting, and the UN Oceans Conference, among other issues.

DG Louma joined other speakers in expressing his gratitude to the Indonesian Government for the warm hospitality and the excellent arrangements for the 6th Senior Officials Meeting and the 4th Ministerial Meeting of the AIS Forum.

The MSG he said, consists of a group of countries in the Pacific region representing 98 percent of the land area, 86 per cent of the population, 91 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), almost half of the EEZ of PIF countries and by some estimates has 91 per cent of the natural resources.

MSG Members are archipelagic and Island states and many of our peoples' livelihoods depend on the health of the ocean and its ecosystems, as

well as its sustainable development.

As such, we are and keen to explore further opportunities of cooperation within the ambit of the AIS Forum," he said.

He noted that as part of the bigger Pacific family, our leaders have expressly declared climate change as our existential threat under the Boe Declaration.

He further noted that the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent affirms the importance attached to sustainable development and the health of our ocean.

"The theme of "Elevating AIS Forum Collaboration for Sustainable and Healthy Oceans" for this 4th AIS MM is most appropriate. Convened on the heels of the recently concluded COP 27, this AIS gathering must serve as a clarion call for all archipelagic and island states, with our development partners, to reassess what has been agreed to..." he said.

He added it must also be used to identify specific collaborative actions that must be taken to raise the level of our commitments and demonstrate the urgency of the situation.

DG Louma also solicited support for Vanuatu's initiative to seek an International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on the responsibilities relating to climate change and its effects.

MSG INSHORE FISHERIES WORKING GROUP & TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO BE REVIVED



Participants of the 1st MSG Inshore Fisheries Training which concluded in Indonesia.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Inshore Fisheries Working Group (IFWG) and MSG Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC) will soon be reactivated as part of the MSG Secretariat's efforts for a concerted approach towards implementing the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap 2015-2024.

Director General, Leonard Louma, made the announcement while delivering his remarks on Monday 28 November, at the recently concluded Ambon 2022 Fisheries Training Programme in Indonesia.

The MSG Leaders adopted and signed the Roadmap in the Solomon Islands in 2015, which was prepared by the IFWG and cleared by the FTAC and since its adoption, MSG member countries have individually undertaken a number of actions, consistent with the priorities and actions enunciated in the Roadmap.

DG Louma said the importance of Inshore Fisheries to the MSG Membership cannot be underestimated as most of our people live in the rural areas, while others live in coastal communities along the extensive coastlines, and the many small island communities of our archipelagic States.

For the MSG Membership in particular, he noted from briefs provided, that in terms of the contribution of inshore fisheries to the respective national GDP's, subsistence inshore fisheries contribute no less than 70 per cent of the GDPs in Fiji (82 per cent), FLNKS/New Caledonia (70 per cent), and Vanuatu (96 per cent).

For the other two members, PNG and Solomon Islands, the figures are still significant at around 28 and 38 per cent respectively," he said. Inshore fisheries he added, is not inconsequential and constitutes a very important sector in the MSG sub-region.

"But, regrettably, the health of this inshore fisheries in Melanesia is not in a very good condition. In some cases, this fishery has been over-exploited in ways that threatens its sustainability. And in many cases, the anthropogenic effects of development have been devastating on the inshore fisheries," he said.

Finally, he urged participants to understand each other and assist the MSG to finetune and implement the Roadmap, considering that Indonesia and MSG countries are Archipelagic States and share many similar challenges in inshore fisheries.

DG LOUMA AT INDONESIA-PACIFIC FORUM FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, attended the Indonesia-Pacific Forum for Development in Indonesia. Below are some photos from the event.



MSG AT INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS WORKSHOP



INTERNATIONAL MERCHANDISE TRADE STATISTICS WORKSHOP ON COMPILATION, ANALYSIS, DISSEMINATION, INDICATORS AND USES

5TH - 10TH DECEMBER 2022, NADI, FIJI



PACER Plus
IMPLEMENTATION UNIT



**Oceania Customs
Organisation Secretariat**



Pacific Community
Communauté
du Pacifique

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was part of the Regional Training week-long workshop on International Merchandise Trade Statistics Compilation, Analysis, Dissemination, Indicators and Uses in Nadi, Fiji.

Organised by the Pacific-Community-SPC in collaboration with the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD), Stats NZ, Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) and PACER Plus, the Secretariat was represented by the Trade & Economic Development (TED) Manager, Sovaia Marawa.

Mrs Marawa conducted a session on the MSG Trade Agreement, how the Agreement benefits MSG Members and the importance of trade statistics in monitoring the

Melanesian Free Trade Area.

Participants who included trade statisticians, customs officials, partners, central banks and planners, discussed the latest developments on the revision of international recommendations on IMTS, newly released SPC trade compilation guidelines and the setting up of the Pacific Customs Commodity Trade database.

The workshop covered sources of trade data for instance, United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD's) role in assisting Customs with Automated Systems for Customs Data (ASYCUDA); Classification framework: Pacific Harmonised System (PACHS System) and methodology to compile IMTS, among others.

PROMINENT FLNKS LEADER & PRESIDENT OF NEW CALEDONIA CONGRESS VISITS MSG SECRETARIAT



The FLNKS delegation with Leader & President of the New Caledonia Congress, Roch Wamytan (middle) and Acting DG George Hoa'au (2nd from right). To the far left is Ilan Kiloe, MSG Secretariat's Political & Security Affairs Manager.

Prominent leader of the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) of New Caledonia (NC) and the current President of the NC Congress, Roch Wamytan, paid a courtesy call at the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat on Monday 5 December 2022.

The delegation was welcomed by the Acting Director General, George Hoa'au, who mentioned that the MSG Secretariat remained committed to

the aspirations and original goals for which it was established.

MSG was formed in 1986 to support the self-determination movement in New Caledonia through the FLNKS.

The delegation was also briefed by the Political Affairs Manager, Ilan Kiloe, on the priorities and work plan of the MSG Secretariat for 2023, with regards to support for the FLNKS.

MSG & UNCTAD MEET BRIEFLY ON GREEN TRADE PROJECT



Online participants of the MSG meeting with UNCTAD

A meeting was convened between the MSG Secretariat and the United Nations Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD) on Friday, 16 December 2022.

Representing the MSG was the Secretariat's Programme Manager Trade and Economic Development, Mrs. Sovaia Marawa, who joined alongside UNCTAD's Regional Coordinator, Mr. Julienne Bliesener. The meeting was held to update the MSG project team on the status of the UNCTAD MSG Green Trade Project.

MSG, PIFS HEADS DISCUSS REGIONAL ISSUES



DG Louma and SG Puna following their meeting in Port Vila.

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, and Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Henry Puna, met recently in Port Vila to discuss areas of mutual interest for the Pacific region.

Ideas on how the two organisations can further enhance their cooperation in the prosecution of Pacific Regionalism, within the ambit of the MSG's 2038 Prosperity for All Plan and the PIF's 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, were discussed at length.

The meeting took place on Thursday 24 November 2022, during the CRGA and SPC Conference at the Warwick Hotel. The duo acknowledged the existing cooperation between the PIF and the MSG particularly in the areas of trade and economic integration. This was manifested in such partnerships as the Pacific E-Commerce, the Pacific Trade Facilitation Strategy and the Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional & International Trade (SPIRIT) Project.

DG Louma reaffirmed his desire to have MSG Secretariat become a member of the Council of

Regional Organisations for the Pacific (CROP) and sought clarification as to the process in seeking this status.

SG Puna was reminded that the MSG Secretariat was awaiting feedback on a draft PIF/MSG Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) adding that this would provide a good basis with clear ground rules and the parameters for cooperation between the two organisations.

Other issues discussed included the 2050 Blue Continent Strategy Implementation Plan, Regional Architecture Review, MSG Regional Security Strategy, New Caledonia, Bougainville, West Papua and Climate Change, particularly concerning COP 27 outcomes, among others.

DG Louma indicated his strong desire for MSG Secretariat to be involved in conversations on the Implementation of the 2050 Strategy as well as the Regional Architecture Review. He advanced that as an organisation that represents the region with the largest and biggest in terms of land mass, population, resource endowment and GDP, it would be ideal for the MSG to be at the table helping frame and define regional cooperation initiatives.

MSG SECRETARIAT DG MEETS WITH INDONESIAN DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN JAKARTA



DG Louma with Ambassador Abdul Kadir Djailani, the DG of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs at a luncheon in Jakarta.

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, met with the Director General of the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Abdul Kadir Djailani at a luncheon hosted by DG Djailani in Jakarta on Sunday 27 November, 2022.

Both Director General's acknowledged the importance of developing a constructive relationship between the MSG and Indonesia and committed themselves to working towards finding specific areas of possible joint collaborative actions.

Issues canvassed over lunch included greater focus on trade and economic cooperation efforts, the need for more regular sports exchanges, the desirability of increased, more enhanced arts and cultural interactions and strengthening of the institutional capacity of the MSG Secretariat.

DG Louma commended the Indonesian Government for its kind assistance towards the development of the MSG Regional Security Strategy (RSS) and the MSG Fisheries Training Programme generously hosted by the Indonesian Government in Ambon, Maluku Province.

He stated that with respect to the RSS, part of the funding provided by Indonesia will be used to undertake MSG in-country consultations on the document. This he said, will allow an opportunity for non-government organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) to comment on it before it is finalised and presented to the MSG Governing Bodies for endorsement.

With respect to the Ambon Fisheries Training Programme, DG Louma emphasised that this was part of his broader efforts to have the MSG 2015-2024 Roadmap on Inshore Fisheries Management implemented after a long lapse.

"It is time to start implementing this overarching Roadmap on Inshore Fisheries in a deliberate and concerted fashion," he said.

As it relates to strengthening the capacity of the MSG Secretariat, DG Louma was encouraged with the positive disposition shown by the Indonesian Government to assist and stated that he will further pursue discussions with the appropriate authorities in the Indonesian Foreign Affairs Ministry to determine how best this assistance can be delivered.

MSG SECRETARIAT AWARDS GRADUATING PVTG STUDENTS



Acting DG George Hoa'au (sitting 4th from right) with other guests, teachers and students. Photo: Pacific Vocational Training Centre.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was once again part of the 2022 Graduation ceremony for the Pacific Vocational Training Centre (PVTG) in Port Vila.

Deputy Director General, George Hoa'au, was on hand to award three students with the MSG Award

on behalf of the DG, Leonard Louma. The Secretariat's involvement with the PVTG started in 2018, when it gave trophies for best students' awards, and later handed over unused computers for students during their practical sessions in 2020 and 2021.

PACIFIC AID MAP PRESENTATION BY LOWY INSTITUTE



DG Louma and senior staff listen in on the presentation by Lowy Institute.

Senior staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat were recently briefed by representatives from the Lowy Institute on the Pacific Aid Map. The map is an analytical tool

designed to enhance aid effectiveness in the Pacific by improving coordination, alignment and accountability of foreign aid through enhanced transparency of aid flows.

MSG SECRETARIAT AT INAUGURAL VANUATU FEMINIST FORUM



Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma (sitting, middle) with participants of the Forum.

The Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, recently attended Vanuatu's first ever National Feminist Forum in Port Vila. Topics discussed at the Forum covered Gender in

Climate Justice and Climate Change; Intergenerational Dialogue and Inclusive Collaboration; and Women's Access to Quality Sexual Reproductive Health Care, among others.

MSG SECRETARIAT PLANS FOR YEAR AHEAD



The senior staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat led by the Director General, Leonard Louma, has for the past few weeks been reviewing its work plan and budget for 2023.

MSG SECRETARIAT HOLDS PINKTOKBER MORNING TEA



Staff and friends of the MSG Secretariat marked Pinktober with a morning tea.

It was a morning tea with a difference for staff and friends of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat who gathered on 31st October to mark Pinktober, the annual breast cancer awareness month.

The event began with a word of prayer and featured guest speakers to raise awareness on this disease, a common cancer that affects most women in the region.

A nurse from the Vanuatu Family Health Clinic, Claude John, talked about the importance of regular check-ups for women and emphasised that early detection of cervical cancer can reduce associated risks. She confirmed that while the clinic continues to do papsmear tests, they will be running HPV testing for women aged between 30-54 from next year.

Founder of the IKKANA Cancer Society in Vanuatu, Max Albert, shared similar sentiments saying that the early detection of breast cancer will avoid it progressing into a late stage.

A survivor, Rosemary emotionally shared how she suffered when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer two years ago. She stressed the importance of a strong support system, being positive throughout treatment and the fact that it can be cured, if detected early.

Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, acknowledged the speakers saying there is yet hope that cancer can be cured. He said that considering the agony and humungous challenges associated with someone having to go through cancer, "we must all rise up to this occasion and find ways to continue to encourage and support our women".

He added that as an organisation, "we must shift the discussion and frame the conversations in ways that will address the real health issues of our people".

The MSG Secretariat Social Club donated VT30,000 to the IKKANA Cancer Society in Vanuatu.

PNG UNIVERSITY PLANS TO SET UP IN VANUATU, ALIGNING TO MSG 2038 PLAN & LEADERS' ASPIRATIONS



The graduating ni-Van students with the Vice-Chancellor Dr Teng Waninga; Guest of Honour, PNG Consul Eileen Nganga; and Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma.

The University of Goroka (UoG), Papua New Guinea's third largest University, is planning to set up a campus in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

This was revealed by UoG's Vice-Chancellor, Dr Teng Waninga during the University's inaugural Vanuatu Graduation Ceremony in Port Vila, where 15 students were conferred their degrees after completing four years of study. They were awarded their academic papers in a packed conference room at the Ramada Hotel in front of their proud parents, family members and community elders.

Dr Waninga said he was proud to reveal that, overall, the Ni-Van students topped the high-achiever awards given out by the University of Goroka to its graduating students. He also emphasised that, like other Universities and Higher Learning Institutions in Papua New Guinea, the UoG had a long history of building the human resources of Vanuatu and was committed to continuing this service.

He noted that some members of the Ni-Van Goroka University alumni were present to witness the graduation occasion.

"We have a vision to establish a campus here, not

to challenge or compete with other universities that are already here in Vanuatu but to simply bring in our expertise in the area of teacher training and contribute to the development of Vanuatu's human resources," he noted.

"We want to bring our service to Vanuatu to reduce costs and make it more affordable to all stakeholders," he added.

The Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, who was a guest at the occasion, welcomed the move saying that this initiative by the UoG is consistent with what the MSG Leaders envisage in their desires to see greater cooperation amongst MSG members. It is in line with one of MSG's core objectives as endorsed by Leaders in the "MSG 2038 - Prosperity for All Plan", to develop human resources through increased education investment and quality training.

"This is a very encouraging move where universities can cooperate to avoid duplication of work and focus on their strengths in order to develop human capital in the context of an increasing MSG population."

MSG OBSERVER GROUP COVERS VANUATU SNAP ELECTIONS

The Melanesian Spearhead Group Observer Group (MSGOG) was deployed across Vanuatu as international observers to observe the Vanuatu Snap Elections 2022 on 13 October 2022.

Teams on the ground observed the Efate Rural and Port Vila Constituencies; Santo, Luganville and Malekula Constituencies.

The MSGOG observed various polling stations and monitored the electoral processes, including

pre-polling, opening of the poll and the voting process.

Closing of voting and counting of the ballots was also observed.

Similar to other international observer groups, the MSGOG will provide recommendations for the government's consideration and strengthening of the conduct of future elections.



MSG Secretariat staff observed the Efate Rural and Port Vila Constituencies; Santo, Luganville and Malekula Constituencies.



MSG SECRETARIAT STAFF MARK FIJI DAY



DG Louma with staff & friends of the MSG Secretariat marked Fiji Day with a morning tea.



The staff of the MSG Secretariat marked Fiji's 52nd Independence Anniversary with a morning tea on 10 October 2022.

They were also joined by a team from the Pacific Community in Suva.

MSG SECRETARIAT & GGGI DISCUSS POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIP



DG Louma with representatives from the GGGI.

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, met with representatives from the Global Green Growth Initiative (GGGI) on 24th October 2022.

The introductory meeting was a positive one which discussed the possibility of a potential partnership between the MSG Secretariat and the GGGI.

MSG SECRETARIAT DONATES TO VANUATU RED CROSS



DG Louma handing over the cheque to Ms Jamila Sese, VRC Senior Resource Mobilisation Officer.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat handed over 50,000VT to the Vanuatu Red Cross (VRC) on 18 October 2022.

This was in response to a request by VRC for sponsorship of the annual VRC 40th Anniversary Gala Night 2022, which was scheduled for 21st October at the Holiday Inn. The funds came from various staff fundraising activities post-Cyclone Pam. In handing over the cheque, DG Leonard Louma said, "we are a corporate citizen that appreciates and supports the work of the Red Cross and we are glad that these funds can be

utilised for a worthy cause".

"We all know that whenever we are struck with disasters, Red Cross is always the first respondent on the ground so this is a show of appreciation for your work," DG Louma said.

In receiving the donation, VRC Senior Resource Mobilisation Officer, Jamila Sese, acknowledged the contribution adding that any such support from regional organisations is always greatly appreciated.

The annual gala event is a fundraiser to assist Red Cross continue its humanitarian work.

SOLOMON ISLANDS' U-NIK 7 BAND PAYS COURTESY CALL ON DG LOUMA

The U-Nik 7 Band from the Solomon Islands paid a courtesy visit to the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, on 11 October 2022.

DG Louma welcomed them to the Secretariat. He also encouraged them to continue to spread the powerful message of love, unity and peace through music as MSG Wansolwara.

U-Nik 7 Band represented the Solomon Islands in the recent Fest Napuan Music Festival in Port Vila.



The U-NIK 7 Band

MSG SECRETARIAT PURSUES PARTNERSHIP WITH CHINA

DG Louma with the Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Vanuatu, His Excellency Li Minggang



The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Chinese Embassy in Vanuatu recently held discussions for a potential Cooperation Agreement with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, welcomed the Ambassador of the PRC to Vanuatu, His Excellency Li Minggang, and acknowledged PRC's kindness in the construction of the Secretariat building in 2007.

"Without your people and Government's foresight and kind consideration to build this facility it would not have been possible for us at the MSG to be as unified in our approach to regional matters," DG Louma acknowledged.

The Secretariat he said, has enabled Members to be more coordinated in their approach to both political and economic issues that the region is confronted with.

DG Louma stated that the MSG Membership have always regarded the PRC as a very important partner. All of the four member States have diplomatic relations with PRC and that is testimony of the importance placed by MSG members on this relationship, he added.

DG Louma said the Secretariat is merely a vehicle to translate MSG Leaders mandates into practical actions, of which its main function is the coordination of policy advice.

Ambassador Li reciprocated DG's welcome saying he felt at home at the MSG Secretariat and expressed his delight in meeting with DG Louma.

He said that as a matter of principle, the PRC treats all countries equally. As a developing country itself, China feels it has a responsibility to look out for its Pacific neighbours which it regards as brothers. And as brothers, will always provide a helping hand when needed.

H.E Li Minggang supported the idea of China becoming a development partner for MSG Secretariat. He looked forward to the development of the 'partnership agreement' and expressed hope that the Secretariat can prepare and forward this to his Office as soon as practicable.

The targeted areas of cooperation raised at the meeting, and which would likely be covered in the 'partnership agreement', include Institutional Strengthening & Capacity Development for the MSG Secretariat, the provision of scholarships and training for MSG Members and Secretariat staff, provision of Health support, Special designated Tourism destination status for MSG Members, and the PRC's assistance with the implementation of certain aspects of the MSG Regional Security Strategy (RSS).

INAUGURAL 2022 MSG PRIME MINISTER'S CUP, A SUCCESS



A packed Korman Stadium during the final match between PNG and the Vanuatu Development Team.
Photo: Vanuatu Daily Post

The inaugural 2022 MSG Prime Minister's Cup held from 17th-30th September in Port Vila, Vanuatu was a huge success, says the Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma.

DG Louma congratulated the Government of Vanuatu and her people as Chair of the MSG, for taking up the responsibility to organise the prestigious tournament and brave the challenges of hosting it, considering that the first is always the most difficult, particularly for an event of this magnitude.

"For this, we owe a debt of gratitude to the Vanuatu Prime Minister, the Vanuatu Government and its people," he said.

DG Louma also acknowledged the Australian Government for "stepping in to bail out what was proving around July to early August, to be an uncertain undertaking" adding that their assistance enabled the success of the Games.

"The Australian Government's support and generosity through the Australian High Commission here in Vanuatu made it possible for the just concluded MSG Prime Minister's Cup Tournament to be convened," DG Louma said.

He added that through this generous gesture, Australia has reinforced its membership of the Melanesian group within the Pacific Islands Forum set-up and that the MSG Secretariat looks forward to welcoming our Aboriginal & Torres

Strait Island brothers in our MSG sanctioned sporting fixtures and cultural activities.

DG Louma said while at the helm of the Secretariat, it was an honour to see the culmination of a dream by our MSG Leaders to revive the Melanesian Cup under the banner of the MSG PM's Cup. He also acknowledged all the sponsors.

He noted that 'Ignite the Melanesian Spirit Through Sports' was a fitting theme as through this tournament, Vanuatu has begun the process of consolidating the Melanesian bonds of solidarity, and unity of purpose, to be as rock solid as the Volcanic Rock that makes up our trophy.

"Through this tournament, and the intense competition between our Teams, Melanesia will explode onto the World Football Cup scene as a solid and credible force. We will be credible Oceania Confederation World Cup direct entry contenders. Melanesian Soccer Teams will no longer be pushovers in the Oceania Confederation," he said.

DG Louma has noted that there are positive signs within the football fraternity and the community at large in the Solomon Islands to suggest that the Solomon Islands may very likely host the 2023 MSG Prime Minister's Cup in Honiara and that the next Tournament will also feature MSG Women Teams playing.

MSG SECRETARIAT & PACIFIC FUSION CENTRE ON POTENTIAL COLLABORATION



The Pacific Fusion Centre staff with the senior team of the MSG Secretariat.

Senior staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat listened in on a presentation by the new Vanuatu-based Pacific Fusion Centre.

MSG Secretariat Director General, Leonard Louma welcomed the PFC team saying any efforts at potential collaboration on mutually beneficial areas was most welcomed.

"We are part of the Blue Pacific continent and as such our activities must be conducted in a way that we complement each other," DG Louma said.

"As we embark on finalising our own MSG Regional Security Strategy (RSS), let us examine where we can develop appropriate cooperative and joint arrangements with the Fusion Centre, in ways that strengthens our plans and what we envisage under the RSS," DG Louma added.

Centre Director, James Movick, informed the


Secretariat team that they deliver training and strategic analysis against security priorities identified by Pacific Island Forum Leaders in the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security.


"I believe the more we can talk amongst ourselves and share ideas the better it is that we can inform our Members and formulate our paths forward for the betterment of our region," he said.

Part of the discussion was the important role that can be played by MSG in progressing a subregional approach to complementing the Centre's mandates, one of which is to assist decision-making and strengthen regional responses to shared security threats and vulnerabilities through its strategic assessments.

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