



MELANESIAN *Tak*

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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, BEING RELEVANT & INFUENTIAL



Prime Ministers of our Melanensian states during the recent 22nd MSG Leaders Summit in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Melanesian Leaders converged in Port Vila, Vanuatu for the 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit in August after a lapse of five years.

Under the theme, "MSG, Being Relevant & Influential", they issued two landmark Declarations on Climate Change and Security. A Communique at the end of the Summit included key decisions reached on Climate Change, Security and the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement, among other issues.

In his official opening remarks, MSG Chair and then Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Hon. Ishmael Kalsakau welcomed the Leaders saying it was a momentous occasion after having last met in Papua New Guinea in 2018. Hon. Kalsakau also acknowledged his colleagues for their

invaluable contributions during the Summit, saying he was humbled by the presence of very tall leadership "that can only sharpen the edges of the spear of Melanesia in the right direction. The onset of COVID19 and their competing schedules he said, also made it difficult for them to meet, adding that their presence showed in a very strong way their solidarity as a group to advance common and collective interests.

The Summit began with a plenary at the Warwick Le Lagon in Port Vila and concluded with a Retreat at the Havannah Boat House.

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Leonard Louma, OBE

Greetings and welcome to this special edition of our Melanesian Tok! The highlight of this quarter was the convening of our Governing Body meetings - culminating in the 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit here in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

It was truly a momentous occasion since our Leaders last converged in Papua New Guinea in February 2018. Also noteworthy is that our Leaders last met in Port Vila 15 years ago - so what a historic and proud moment for our hosts, Vanuatu!

The intrusion of COVID-19 along with Member's competing schedules made it challenging to lock in dates, so it is only right to acknowledge the efforts of officials at all levels to get our Governing Bodies to meet. It would also be remiss of me not to commend here the efforts of my diligent staff who worked tirelessly to ensure the convening and smooth running of these significant gatherings.

Needless to say, the fact that our Leaders were able to converge after five years is testament to their underlying commitment to solidarity, in progressing the mandate to improve and sustain the livelihoods of the people of Melanesia. Our Leaders convened under the theme "MSG, being relevant and influential", and issued two landmark Declarations on Climate Change and Security, along with a Communique, all in this issue. To witness them speaking frankly on issues, articulating their national positions passionately but of course making



FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

necessary changes when needed, for the greater collective good and in the interest of MSG cohesion, was indeed a proud moment for every Melanesian. Also, a special thank you to our Senior Officials and Foreign Ministers for their attendance at the SOM and FMM respectively, whose meetings preceded the Leaders' Summit, the MSG's pre-eminent decision-making body. The SOM and FMM helped frame and inform the decisions and outcomes reflected in the MSG Leaders Communique.

Additionally, an important milestone for us was the approval by the International Court of Justice for our participation in the advisory proceedings on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change along with the Forum Fisheries Agency.

This quarter also saw a number of events transpire including the convening of the 8th SOM of the Archipelagic Island States (AIS) Forum in Antananarivo, Madagascar, East Africa which I attended, and the launch of the historic R2P Framework For Action - a first for the Asia Pacific region. The Framework, to be used as a practical guide to implementing R2P for governments, regional bodies and civil society, was launched during the Inaugural Melanesian Workshop on Atrocity Prevention & Responsibility to Protect, here at the Secretariat. The 8th SOM of the AIS Forum in Madagascar discussed strategic matters related to concrete collaboration between AIS countries, focusing on climate change mitigation & adaptation & disaster management, the blue economy, marine plastic debris, and good maritime governance.

The MSG is collaborating with AIS on projects within the Blue Economy sphere.

In July, Vanuatu successfully hosted the 7th MACFEST, which featured a mesmerizing blend of Melanesian unity in the form of authentic cultural performances, musical extravaganzas, handicraft and art displays from across the Membership.

I hope that this special issue will give you more insight into the work of the MSG Secretariat in serving our region!

Vinaka Vakalevu, Tank Yu, Tenkiu Tru, Tankyu Tumas, Merci Beaucoup.

MSG LEADERS AGREE ON KEY DECISIONS & SIGN DECLARATIONS ON SECURITY & CLIMATE CHANGE



MSG Leaders from L-R: Mr. Victor Tutugoro, Spokesperson for FLNKS of New Caledonia; Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of Fiji; Hon. Ishmael Kalsakau, then Prime Minister of Vanuatu; Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands; and Hon. James Marape, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea.

Leaders of Melanesia concluded the 22nd MSG Leaders' Retreat at the Havannah Boat House (HBH) in North Efate, Vanuatu, on 24th August 2023, with a Communique containing outcomes of the Summit and two landmark Declarations on Climate Change and Security.

The Communique included key decisions reached on Climate Change, Security and the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement among other issues, in addition to two Declarations by the Leaders, namely the Udaune Declaration on Climate Change and the Efate Declaration on Mutual Respect, Responsibility, Cooperation and Amity.

Chair of the MSG and then Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Hon. Ishmael Kalsakau said it was the first time the Leaders converged to execute two declarations – one on security and the other on climate change.

In his official opening remarks Hon. Kalsakau acknowledged his colleagues for their invaluable contributions.

"I am delighted at the outcome, it is a joyous occasion. I am humbled by the presence of very tall leadership that can only properly sharpen the edges of the spear of Melanesia in the right direction, to ensure that Melanesia is safeguarded in all its aspects to the satisfaction of its people and the

horizons that we seek for our people," he continued. "I wish to on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Vanuatu convey my sincere appreciation to my colleague Leaders for their steadfast commitment and respect, not only for honouring my invitation to attend the Leaders' Summit in Port Vila, but more importantly for their leadership and wisdom.

This he said, includes collectively harnessing opportunities to revitalise and galvanise efforts as a United Melanesia moving forward, under the timely and fitting theme of 'MSG, being relevant and influential'; and in the face of intense geo-political competition facing the region".

Hon. Kalsakau also reminded Leaders of the wisdom of "our forefathers in deriving the MSG's La raison d'être, which concerns the wellbeing and self-determination of Melanesians and Melanesia".

And for this he said, to include the safeguarding and promotion of inalienable human rights of Melanesians.

The Summit also saw key decisions on the discharge of APLS-treated water from the 2011 Fukushima accident, as well as the process and outcomes of the Third Referendum on New Caledonia's political status.

ICJ APPROVES MSG'S PARTICIPATION IN ADVISORY PROCEEDINGS ON THE “OBLIGATIONS OF STATES IN RESPECT OF CLIMATE CHANGE”



The MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has hailed the decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) authorizing its participation in the advisory proceedings on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change.

In a press statement, an elated Director General, Leonard Louma proclaimed, “I am proud that we have been given approval and standing by the ICJ to make a submission on this question before the Court, because it is an initiative of one of our MSG Members, Vanuatu, to seek an Advisory Opinion from the ICJ on the “Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change.

In welcoming this approval, DG Louma said that the Secretariat, in close consultation with the Vanuatu Government, will make a written statement on the question before the Court by 22 January 2024.

He confirmed it will also provide written comments on statements made by other States and Organisations recognized by the Court, by 22 April 2024, in compliance with the timelines set by the ICJ.

The Director General re-echoed the sentiments of MSG Leaders, expressed in their Communique, and urged other State Members of the MSG to make

written submissions on the question before the Court.

On 11 September 2023, DG Louma had written to the ICJ, seeking approval to make a submission on the question before the Court.

This followed a directive to the MSG Secretariat, by Leaders at the 22nd MSG Leaders’ Summit in Port Vila on 23-24 August 2023, to request the ICJ for participation in the ICJ advisory proceedings on the “Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change”.

In response to the Director-General’s letter, the Registrar of the ICJ wrote back stating that the Court has decided, pursuant to Article 66 of its Statute, that MSG can make a submission on the question before the Court.

DG Louma said that “according to current information, the only other Regional Organisation from our part of the world that has been approved to make a submission to the ICJ on the question before the Court is the Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA)”.

The Organisation of African, Caribbean and the Pacific States (OACPS) has also been authorized by the ICJ to participate in the advisory proceedings.

MSG SECRETARIAT CONDEMNS JAPAN'S DISCHARGE OF ALPS WATER



The Pacific Ocean is our mother that feeds us and her health determines our survival: DG Louma

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has strongly denounced the discharge of ALPS water into the Pacific Ocean by Japan, saying that the contrived use of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Report to justify the decision is mischievous and at worst, disingenuous.

In a press statement, Director General, Leonard Louma, stated that nowhere in the Report, do we find a categorical or explicit endorsement of, and approval for, the discharge of ALPS water into the Pacific Ocean.

"In fact, the best proof that ALPS is safe, is to discharge it into Japan's own internal waterways and that no amount of justification, scientific or otherwise, will suffice," he said, adding that we in the Pacific are too well aware of the fallacy of the safety of nuclear activities. "We have been victims of false assurances and the scourge of the health effects of, once touted negligible effects of nuclear activities, continue to beset us to this day. We were removed from our islands and told that we would be returned to our homelands once the testing was over because it would be safe then," he stated.

Today, he said, Bikini Islanders continue to anguish in other lands with no real hope of returning because their homeland is still contaminated.

"We were assured that we could swim in our lagoons and fish in our traditional fishing grounds once the tests were over, these lagoons and fishing grounds around Mururoa and Bikini continue to be out of bounds to us because they are still contaminated. We were told that the storage facility for the nuclear waste was built to the highest safety standards, by their own admission, the Runit Dome (Tomb) structure appears to be compromised now," DG Louma remarked.

"So please forgive us if we are sceptical of this safety narrative that you have gone overdrive to have us believe that the ALPS water is safe. Excuse us if we appear naïve when we say science can be wrong. Our experience tells us to be cautious," he added. The Pacific Ocean he said, is our mother that feeds us and her health determines our survival.

"Any action that portends to affect her health is of concern to us and we make no apologies for speaking out to protect her and her ecosystem," he added.

DG Louma added, "We may not be nuclear scientists, but our reading of the IAEA Assessment Report before the discharge gives us no comfort at all. The "qualified" words and "diplomatic" construction of language used in the Assessment Report suggests to us that even the IAEA is not sure of the safety of the discharge of the ALPS water into the Pacific Ocean".

"For how would one interpret the use of "consistent with" safety standards, the effects will be "negligible", and "additional review" or checks will be done again when discharge takes place. And we understand this cautious approach, for science can only tell us what it knows now but cannot tell us what it does not know yet."

Furthermore, DG Louma reaffirmed the appeal by Pacific Leaders for a precautionary approach to be adopted, for ongoing discussions between all stakeholders to continue, and for alternative uses to the ALPS be aggressively sought.

HEALTH OF THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND ITS ECOSYSTEM, A CONCERN



Participants of the 8th Senior Officials Meeting of the AIS Forum.

Conversations on the Blue economy is inextricably linked to the health of the ocean hence it is important to safeguard and protect the ocean and its ecosystem, says Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma.

He made the comment while speaking recently at the 8th Senior Officials Meeting of the Archipelagic Island States (AIS) Forum in Antananarivo, Madagascar, in East Africa.

"I feel duty bound to inform the AIS Forum that MSG Leaders at their Meeting last week in Vanuatu expressed concern at the discharge of the ALPS water from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant into the Pacific Ocean, which poses a real threat to the health of the Pacific Ocean," he stated.

In addressing the focus areas for the AIS framework of cooperation, DG Louma stated that with regards to Fisheries and Aquaculture, the MSG has an Inshore Fisheries Roadmap and discussions will be held with the AIS to identify where cooperative action can be taken to implement some of its aspects.

In the area of Health of the Ocean Eco-system, DG Louma commented that MSG Leaders had agreed to prohibit sea-bed mining in their national jurisdictions and also called for a Pacific region-wide moratorium on sea-bed mining.

With respect to collaboration with the AIS

Secretariat, DG Louma thanked them for agreeing to partner with the MSG Secretariat to run a "Bluepreneurship" training workshop in June in Vanuatu targeting Melanesian womenfolk and youth.

He expressed appreciation that the AIS Secretariat has agreed to join forces with the MSG Secretariat to roll out a project next year on Melanesian Plastic Waste Management.

"I am pleased to note that the AIS is involved in start-up capital and would be keen to further explore with the MSG Secretariat on how we can access and tap into this initiative," he said.

In terms of AIS discussions on Climate Change, DG Louma pointed out to Vanuatu's, a member of MSG, ICJ Advisory Opinion on the responsibility of States as it relates to Climate Change and thanked members of the UN for their support for the UN Resolution. He appealed to AIS Members to make submissions to the ICJ on the matter.

DG Louma further mentioned that the MSG Leaders at their 22nd Summit endorsed the Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific, as part of MSG efforts towards having the international community agree to develop a Non-Proliferation Treaty on Fossil Fuel.

This he stated, is one of the most suitable ways of arresting extreme temperature rise and the adverse effects of Climate Change.

MSG & PIFS COLLABORATE ON 2050 BLUE PACIFIC STRATEGY



The MSG Secretariat team with their counterparts from the Pacific Islands Forum.

A senior team from the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat recently met with officers from the Pacific Islands Forum to discuss and identify possible areas of collaboration, in supporting the implementation plan for the 2050 Strategy for Blue Pacific Continent.

The MSG Secretariat was represented by Officer-in-Charge and Programme Manager for Political & Security Affairs (PSA), Mr. Ilan Kiloe and Programme Manager, Trade & Economic Development, Mrs. Sovaia Marawa.

The 2050 Strategy was endorsed by Pacific Island Forum Leaders in Fiji last year as an overarching blueprint to advance Pacific regionalism for the next three decades, articulating the region's long-term vision, values, and key thematic areas and strategic pathways for delivering the outcomes.

The PIFS team comprised of Mr. Noah Kuback, Programme Adviser for Trade and Ms. Jemima Jemima Holborow accompanied by Ms. Jill Juma, the PIFS Sub-regional Trade Advisor based at the MSG Secretariat.

MSG SECRETARIAT MEETS MEMBERS ON ICJ SUBMISSION



MSG Secretariat's Manager, Political & Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe, (4th from left) meets with the Vanuatu ICJ Legal Advisory & Climate Diplomacy Team.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has been meeting up with Members to discuss ways to make written submissions to the International Court of Justice on the Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change.

This follows the decision by Leaders at the recent 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit in Port Vila, urging all

MSG Members to make written submissions on the question before the Court.

Meetings have already been held with representatives from Vanuatu (pictured) and Solomon Islands. The MSG Secretariat is looking forward to convene similar meetings with Fiji and Papua New Guinea.

PACIFIC LAUNCH OF THE R2P FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION



Participants with the new R2P Framework for Action.

The Pacific launch of the new Responsibility to Protect (R2P) Framework for Action took place earlier this week during the inaugural Workshop on Atrocity Prevention and the Responsibility To Protect (R2P).

Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, joined the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary General on Responsibility to Protect (R2P), Mr George Okoth-Obbo, and the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E Heidi Bootle to launch the R2P Framework at the MSG Secretariat.

He noted that this is the first for the Asia-Pacific region and expressed pride that the MSG Secretariat was co-hosting this historical event.

"I wish to express deep appreciation to the Asia - Pacific Centre for Responsibility to Protect (APR2P) for agreeing to have the MSG Secretariat partner it to launch this important framework document here", he added.

The R2P framework will assist provide practical tools to assist MSG governments contribute to monitoring, risk assessment and early warning on atrocities.

"I am aware that cynics would attempt to diminish the significance of actions contemplated or undertaken within the R2P framework as over the

top. And while I will admit that our part of the world has not yet experienced the levels of atrocities as that experienced elsewhere (as I mentioned in my remarks this morning), we would do well to keep a close watch on trends developing and seek to address "enablers" of atrocities now," he urged. DG Louma expressed appreciation to the Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, H.E Heidi Bootle, for accepting the invitation to deliver the opening statement during the launching ceremony of the R2P Framework and for the positive disposition Her Excellency continues to kindly show towards efforts in having Australia consider supporting the activities of the MSG.

The MSG Secretariat looks forward to strengthening its collaboration with APR2P Centre in advancing the key commitments identified under the R2P framework and to continue to provide necessary assistance and training to MSG members on how to address challenges that threatens the lives of our people in Melanesia.

H.E Bootle acknowledged the important role the MSG plays in facilitating mutual cooperation on sub-regional matters and its contribution to unity, stability and peace-building in the region.

MSG DG CONGRATULATES VANUATU FOR SUCCESSFUL MACFEST



Hundreds flocked to Saralana Park in Port Vila over the weekend to witness the closing of the 7th MACFEST. Photo: Brej Pacific.

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, paid special tribute to the Government of Vanuatu for successfully hosting the 7th Melanesian Arts & Culture Festival (MACFEST).

He thanked them for allowing all participating contingents the honour and privilege of showing off to the world the rich Melanesian cultures and traditions during the 7th MACFEST in Port Vila.

Special mention was also made for the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs, and the Minister for Justice, Community Services & Culture, Hon. John Still Tari Qetu (the host of the 7th MACFEST).

"I must confess it is with a tinge of sadness that I address you today to mark the closing of the 7th MACFEST.

"I stand before you with the somber realization that we have now come to the closure of what is probably one of the most memorable occasions that I have experienced since assuming office as Director General of the MSG Secretariat," lamented the Director General.

Vanuatu, he said, has done all of us in Melanesia proud.

"Prime Minister, Vanuatu Government and its people have shown, once again, it has no peer, when it comes to advocacy for, and promotion of Melanesian rights, Melanesian customs and Melanesian values," he stated.

During this MACFEST, you have successfully brought together Melanesians of different political and religious persuasions, different economic and social circumstances to celebrate our smorgasbord of Melanesian cultural heritage, in ways that promote better relationships amongst us."

Vanuatu he said, is known the world over as one of the happiest countries in the world.

"You have affirmed this in a very emphatic way during this 7th MACFEST and you have also spread that happiness to all Melanesian communities all over the world," he said.

DG Louma also thanked the many sponsors that generously contributed towards the hosting of the 7th MACFEST and expressed appreciation to all MSG participating contingents for travelling to Vanuatu to attend the Festival. He also thanked the Vanuatu Provincial contingents that journeyed into Port Vila to help celebrate the Melanesian Cultural heritage.

"Vanuatu, you have brought together Melanesian communities from the MSG membership, and invited Melanesian communities beyond the MSG Membership, welcomed other communities that have links to Melanesia, to come and share the joy of celebrating our respective identities," DG noted.

"MSG can only gain from this," he added.

EFATE DECLARATION ON MUTUAL RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, COOPERATION AND AMITY BY MEMBERS OF THE MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP (MSG)

PREAMBLE

We the Leaders of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), consisting of Fiji, Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak Socialiste (FLNKS), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, at the 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit held on 24th August 2023 in Havannah Boat House, North Efate, Vanuatu.

RECALLING the 1988 Agreed Principles of Cooperation among Independent States in Melanesia, and the objects and purposes of the MSG enunciated in the Agreement Establishing the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG);

REAFFIRMING the principles and purpose of the United Nations Charter including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, equality, non-interference in the domestic affairs of States, non-use of force and uphold the principles of peaceful co-existence and mutual respect;

RECALLING Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' commitments to the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent's ambition for a peaceful, safe, and secure Blue Pacific region which respects national sovereignty;

REAFFIRMING that Climate Change and environmental degradation is an existential threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of our people as recognised in the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security;

AFFIRMING human rights, including civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights, align with the traditions and ways of government in our countries, and the settlement of disputes, including territorial disputes, through dialogue and international law;

REAFFIRMING our adherence to the principles of the non-Aligned Movement (NAM) as espoused in the Bandung Principles, international law and international principles;

DESIRING to maintain a 'friends to all and enemies to none' approach and be strategic in our engagement with all partners;

COGNISANT of the risks from major power tensions and potential conflict directly affecting the peace and security of the Pacific region;

DESIROUS of contributing to global peace and security;

RECOGNISING the importance of remaining unified to address common challenges and to capitalize on opportunities;

CONSCIOUS of our responsibilities to preserve and improve the security environment in the MSG Sub-region lies in a home-grown approach requiring collective self-help amongst MSG Members;

RECALLING our commitments on various existing Regional Agreements on Peace and Security matters, such as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty (Rarotonga Treaty), the Lakatoro Declaration on

Oceania Cooperation regarding Denuclearisation in the South Pacific, the Waigani Convention on the ban on importation into Forum Island countries of radioactive wastes and to control the trans boundary movement of hazardous wastes, the Nasonini Declaration on Regional Security, the Aitutaki Declaration on Regional Security, the Honiara Declaration on Law Enforcement Cooperation, the Biketawa Declaration, and the Boe Declaration;

RECALLING also international commitments and obligations under such International Agreements as the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – Article VI on obligations to pursue nuclear disarmament, and the Strategic Arms Reductions Talks (START);

EXPRESS the need to ensure that the MSG sub-region is a region of peace, prosperity, and neutrality;

DESIRING to focus the security conversation on Climate Change and the security of the environment, identified as our existential threat under the Boe Declaration and the MSG Security Strategy;

NOTWITHSTANDING and respecting the bilateral security arrangements that individual MSG Members have concluded with partners;

HEREBY AGREE TO RECOMMIT OURSELVES TOWARDS:

DEVELOPING a conducive environment under which peaceful co-existence and friendly cooperation in the MSG sub-region can prosper;

ADVANCEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION of MSG security initiatives agreed to under the **MSG Security Strategy**, such as the Memorandum on Police Cooperation, the Humanitarian and Emergency Response Coordinating Centre (HERCC), and the Formed Police Unit (FPU) to address national security needs in the MSG region;

SEEKING FIRST a home-grown and MSG Collective self-help solution through respect for, and use of, the Pacific ways of doing things (talanoa, tok stori and tok storian) underpinned by the values and strength of Melanesian cultures and traditions;

EMBEDDING AND ANCHORING this home grown and collective self-help approach on the Pacific shared values;

PROMISING THAT PRIOR CONSULTATIONS AND CONSENT with the affected Member for collective action will be sought before any action is taken in addressing a security situation in any of the MSG jurisdictions;

AFFIRMING OUR SOVEREIGNTY to engage with any development partner of our choice based on our respective needs and concerns,

EXPRESSING GRAVE CONCERN towards the geopolitical posturing for influence in our region and denouncing the threat and/or use of force;

CALLING ON PARTNERS, traditional and non-traditional, to respect the principle of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, and the right to non-interference in internal affairs of independent States;

UNDERTAKING ACTIONS, both regionally and internationally, with respect to arms control and disarmament, as well as efforts to reduce international tensions, to limit great power rivalry, to secure human rights, and to ensure the peaceful resolution of disputes; and

REAFFIRMING that Climate Change and environment degradation as our existential threat.

22ND MSG LEADERS



SUMMIT PICTORIAL



UDAUNE DECLARATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE BY MEMBERS OF THE MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP (MSG)

PREAMBLE

The Members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), consisting of Fiji, Front de Liberation Rationale Kanak Socialiste (FLNKS), Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, at the 22nd MSG Leaders' Retreat held on 24th August 2023 at the Havannah Boat House, North Efate, in the Republic of Vanuatu:

RECALLING the 1988 Agreed Principles of Cooperation among Independent States in Melanesia, and the objects and purposes of the MSG enunciated in the Agreement Establishing the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG);

REAFFIRMING the principles of respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all States, non-interference in the domestic affairs of States,

BELIEVING in the need to change the security narrative that is being imposed on the region due to the intensification of geostrategic competition, and to focus the security conversation on Climate Change and the vulnerability and special needs of the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in particular, Melanesian Countries and call for international support to take full and concrete action to address these vulnerabilities and needs through international, sub regional and bilateral cooperation;

NOTE with serious concern the current low global climate ambition under the Paris Agreement further accelerating the vulnerability of the Pacific in particular, the Melanesian sub-region which is located in the climate hotspot;

RECALLING Pacific Islands Leaders identifying climate change as the single greatest existential threat facing the Blue Pacific Continent and subsequent Declaration that the Pacific is in a state of Climate emergency;

RECALLING their commitments to strong regional action, harnessing shared stewardship of the Blue Pacific Continent, through such Regional Agreements as the 1986 Convention for the Protection of the Natural Resources and Environment in the South Pacific, the Noumea Protocol concerning Cooperation in Combating Pollution Emergencies in the South Pacific, the Rarotonga South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, the Lakatoro Declaration on Oceania Cooperation regarding Denuclearisation in the South Pacific, the Waigani Convention on the ban on importation into Forum Island countries of radioactive wastes and to control the trans-boundary movement of hazardous wastes, and the Boe Declaration, the Blue Pacific's Call for Urgent Global Climate Change Action through the Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Action Now, the 2010 Framework for Pacific Oceanscape, the Pacific Islands Framework for Nature Conservation and Protected Areas, the Cleaner Pacific 2025 Strategy;

RECALLING also their international commitments under such International Agreements such as the United Nations (UN) Charter, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) - Part XII on Protection and Preservation of the Marine Environment, the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL), the IMO 2020 Regulations on Sulphur content of marine fuels, the 1972 London Dumping Convention, the 1989 Basel Convention on the

Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Kyoto Protocol (reduction of emissions of greenhouse gases), the Paris Climate Accords/Paris Agreement;

COGNISANT of the ongoing efforts that are being made under the auspices of UNEP, COP, Our Oceans Conference, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO);

DESIRING to bolster efforts and raise ambitious actions under the Paris Agreement and the commitments made at COP 27 to limit temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius below the pre-industrial level, to encourage further radical Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) in particular greenhouse gas reduction targets, to hold businesses and institutions to account on their climate change actions, to pursue efforts towards 30X30 conservation goals;

DETERMINED to insist at the COP28 on developed countries responsibility to mobilise more financial support for developing countries towards such funding arrangements as Green Climate Fund (GCF), the Adaptation Fund, the LDC Fund, Special Climate Change Fund and Loss and Damage Fund;

ASPIRING to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 as agreed to in the 51st PIF Leaders Meeting in Suva in 2022;

DETERMINED to collectively refocus the security narrative and draw attention towards our real security threat of Climate change and environmental degradation;

CONSCIOUS of their responsibility to improve the environment of present and future generations of the people of Melanesia;

AWARE that their responsibilities to preserve and improve the environment can be met only by cooperative effort among regional players based on the understanding of the needs and capacities of all parties;

RECOGNISING the interconnectivity of the world's oceans means that marine pollution requires the involvement of all countries and peoples to be effectively addressed;

NOTING with deep concern the proposal by Japan to discharge Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS) Treated Nuclear Water at Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO's) damaged Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station into the Pacific Ocean;

ACKNOWLEDGING the ongoing constructive dialogue between the Japanese Authorities, IAEA Authorities and Pacific Islands Forum (PIF);

AWARE of the desire by countries to engage in seabed mining, the ongoing discussions at the ISA on the appropriate mining code for seabed mining, and the focus of interest in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone;

ACKNOWLEDGING that very little is known of the effects of seabed mining to the ecosystems of the oceans and sensitive to the ways in which initiatives by one country can affect development prospects, including the natural environment beyond national boundaries, including the common heritage of humanity;

APPRECIATIVE of the support rendered by the UN membership on the UN General Assembly Resolution for an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on the obligations of States in respect of Climate Change;

BELIEVING that serious consideration of a Non-Proliferation Treaty on Fossil Fuel would precipitate serious investment and efforts towards alternative green energy sources;

DETERMINED to undertake actions nationally and collectively as MSG to demonstrate leadership and collective resolve to protect our environment;

DO HEREBY AGREE TO:

RECOMMIT themselves towards undertaking robust actions, legislatively and politically, to address the Climate Change issue, and undertake review of their NDCs with a view to upscaling their commitments, including concrete REDD plus initiatives;

PURSUE the International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion on Responsibility of States vis-à-vis Climate Change to its conclusion;

UNDERTAKE to make national submissions to the ICJ on the nefarious impact and effect of climate change;

ENCOURAGE work to be undertaken collectively in earnest on the Non-Proliferation Treaty on Fossil Fuel initiative on the basis of the principle and approach of just transition as part of the Port Vila Call for a Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific;

URGE Japan not to discharge the treated water into the Pacific Ocean until and unless the treated water is incontrovertibly proven scientifically to be safe to do so and seriously consider other options like use in concrete;

REGRETS DEEPLY the decision by Japan to dump ALPS in the Pacific Ocean, which has inter-generational and transboundary impact on our ocean, economy, livelihood, and future and on the basis of improved science and technology urged Japan to consider other options for disposal of ALPS;

UNDERTAKE not to allow Underwater Seabed Mining to be carried out in their jurisdictions;

CALL for more rigorous and transparent environmental scientific research on seabed mining and call for a Pacific region wide moratorium;

CALL on developed countries to submit more ambitious climate targets and additional measures at COP 28 towards limiting temperature rise to below 1.5 Degrees Celsius levels through making bold and practical solutions based on the NDCs;

COMMIT themselves to aggressively pursue at COP and the UNFCCC discussions and practical commitments towards greater focus on Adaptation and Mitigation measures with their attendant financial requirements;

REAFFIRM STRONGLY their commitments to further take actions in support of their current ban of single use plastic products.

CALL on Industrial States and Large Emitters to take lead in undertaking concrete ambitious action programmes on Mitigation and avoid "green-washing" schemes;

DEMAND that developed countries demonstrate more urgency and increased commitment to mobilize requisite financial support for developing countries, including the promised US\$100 billion per year by 2020 that remains unfulfilled; and

DEMAND that the international community in particular, developed countries take lead in providing and mobilizing support for greater resources and finances on Loss and Damage, GCF, Adaptation Fund, LDC Fund and Special Climate Change Fund that is easily accessible to those most affected, such as the Small Island States; and urge Parties to the UNFCCC to conclude at the COP28, the discussions on the funding arrangements to assist developing countries in responding to loss and damage.

7TH MELANESIAN ARTS & CULTURE FESTIVAL PICTORIAL



7TH MACFEST PICTORIAL



22nd MSG LEADERS' SUMMIT

23- 24 August, 2023 Warwick Le Lagan Resort Port Vila, Vanuatu

COMMUNIQUE

1. The 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit was held in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 23rd - 24th August 2023. An official Welcome Ceremony was held on Wednesday 23rd, 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 7th 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 24th 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-a-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. Siaso 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 advice on the proposal to seek ICJ opinion on the conduct and results of the 3rd referendum conducted in December 2021;
- iii. Directed the MSG Permanent Representatives at the UN to request the UN to provide the report on the 3rd 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 3rd 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 3rd Referendum was conducted and advise that the MSG does not recognise the results of the 3rd Referendum on the basis of the PIF's Observer Report.

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

11. 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

22. The MSG Chair thanked all the Leaders, FMM and SOM for their support and contributions during the 22nd 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

23. 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.



A SNAPSHOT OF QUARTER 3



Our Leaders were accorded a traditional welcome ceremony upon arrival for the MSG Leaders Summit.



The MSG Pre-Summit Foreign Ministers Meeting preceded the 22nd Leaders Summit.



Fiji's Solicitor General, Ropate Green Lomavatu paid a visit to the MSG Secretariat.



Solomon Is PM, Hon. Sogavare, & his wife met with members of the Solomon community.



Members of the MSG Pre-Summit Senior Officials Meeting at the MSG Secretariat.



Members of the 8th MSG Ministers of Arts & Culture Meeting (MCAM) at the MSG Secretariat.



Members of the 9th MSG Council of Arts & Culture Meeting (CACM) with senior MSG staff.



Vanuatu & PNG marked their 43rd & 48th Independence respectively in July & September.



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