



# 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 LEADERS CAUCUS, A SUCCESS AT 52ND PIFLM



*Leaders and their representatives at the MSG Caucus with the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, during the 52nd PIFLM in Rarotonga.*

A Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Leaders' caucus was held at the Nautilus Resort in Rarotonga, Cook Islands, on Monday 6 November 2023, as part of the Group's preparations for the 52nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM).

The MSG Caucus was Chaired by the Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, Minister for Environment and Climate Change on behalf of the Prime Minister of Vanuatu and Chair of the MSG.

In attendance at the MSG Caucus was Hon. Sitiveni Rabuka, Prime Minister of Fiji; Hon. John Rosso, Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; and Hon. Jeremiah Manele, Foreign Minister of Solomon Islands, all deputizing for their respective Heads of Government.

The caucus expressed appreciation to the Cook Islands Government Organising

Committee and the PIF Secretariat for providing the space in the 52nd PIF Leaders Meeting Programme for the MSG to meet.

The Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, expressed hope that this gesture be regularized and mainstreamed into the format of PIF Leaders Meetings.

Such an avenue allows Members to caucus as MSG prior to PIFLMs, as well as at other international meetings, mainly to develop and agree on common positions and strategies.

Initiatives from the caucus including the appointment of PM Rabuka and PM Marape as MSG Special Envoys to meet with President Widodo on the margins of the APEC Leaders Meeting were adopted by PIFS.

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**Leonard Louma, OBE**

2023 has come to a close and with it, yet another chapter. It has been a year of accomplishments that of course did not come without its challenges – both for the Secretariat and our region as a whole.

For one, the MSG marked 35 years of existence – from humble beginnings as a pressure group voicing the concerns of Melanesian countries at the Pacific Islands Forum, to forming a registered sub-regional organisation, now recognised beyond the region and internationally. The MSG has certainly come a long way.

Recently, we welcomed a Grant Assistance of 3.2m VT from the People's Republic of China, which will help improve our administrative capacity to better serve our Membership. Indeed, a significant demonstration of PRC's genuine desire to assist its partners.

Another development was the securing of two formal agreements with Papua New Guinea for the funding of two positions within the Secretariat – a Forestry and Fisheries Officer. This, following an announcement by Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, as part of PNG's contribution towards strengthening the Secretariat's capacity.

Additionally I have approved the appointment of three new posts namely, Legal Officer (LO); Programme Manager, Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resource Management (ECCNRM) and Deputy Director General (DDG).



## FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

At the 52nd Pacific Island Forum Leaders Meeting (PIFLM) in Rarotonga, the MSG held a caucus for the first time, for which we are grateful and do hope that this gesture be regularized into the format of PIFLMs. Initiatives from the caucus including the appointment of PM Rabuka and PM Marape as MSG Special Envoys to meet with President Widodo on the margins of the APEC Leaders Meeting in San Fransisco, were adopted by PIFS and successfully carried out.

Such an avenue allows Members to caucus as MSG prior to PIFLMs, as well as at other international meetings, mainly to develop and agree on common positions and strategies.

I am also pleased to note that thanks to UNCTAD, a draft Subregional Action Plan for the MSG Green Trade Project is now in the pipeline, one that will see the integration of green trade promotion into Member's sustainable development strategies.

In October, the 2nd edition of the MSG Prime Minister's Cup was held in Noumea, under the theme, "United By Sport, Linked By Culture", with Solomon Islands taking away the spoils. Two other major events this year included the successful hosting of the 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST) by Vanuatu in July and the convening of our Governing Body meetings, culminating in the 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit. This saw our Leaders eventually converging to meet in person for the first time in five years.

These are only a few I wish to mention.

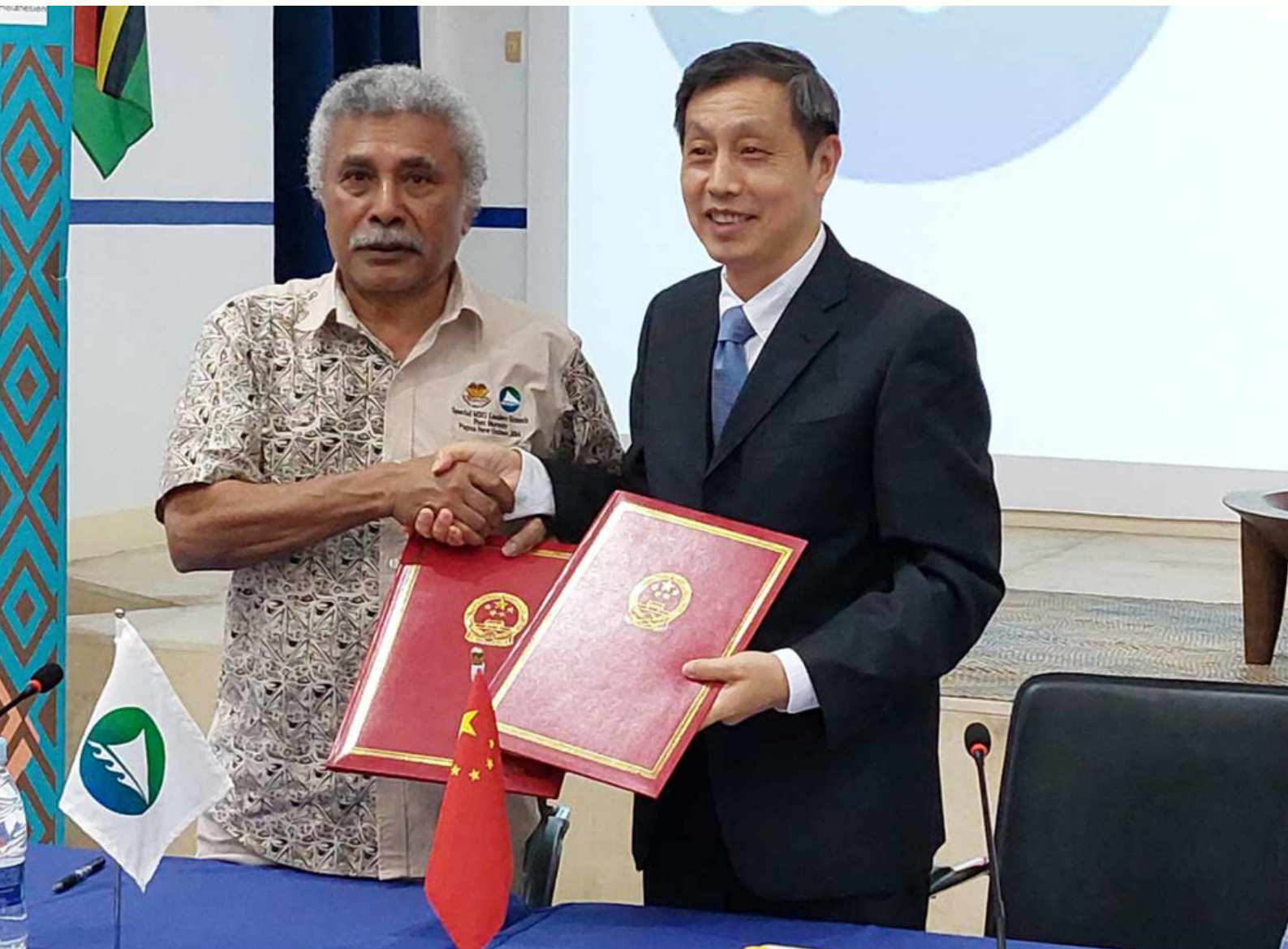
Needless to say, the accomplishment of these notable feats can only be due to the dedication and commitment of my small albeit amazing team of professionals, for whom I am proud.

However, we cannot rest on our laurels, so as we sit back and enjoy with our families, we excitedly look forward to the year ahead with renewed vigor, as we continue striving to meet the mandates of our Leaders, for the betterment of our region.

I hope you will enjoy our final edition for 2023 and I wish you all a safe festive season.

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

## MSG SECRETARIAT RECEIVES VT3.2M GRANT FROM CHINA



*Chinese Ambassador to Vanuatu, H.E Li Minggang & the DG of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma following the handover of the Grant Assistance at the Secretariat.*

A grant of 3.2million vatu was handed over by the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu last month.

In welcoming the Chinese Ambassador to Vanuatu, H.E Li Minggang, to the Secretariat for the occasion, Director General, Leonard Louma, stated that the Secretariat building, built by the Chinese Government, is a testament of the strong, deep friendship and goodwill that exists between China and the MSG Members.

The MSG Secretariat will use the grant assistance to improve its administrative capacity to better serve its membership.

The Grant assistance by PRC was officially announced by China's Special Envoy to the Pacific, HE Qian Bo during his visit to the Secretariat, earlier this year.

Ambassador Li reciprocated the kind gesture accorded to him and stressed that China's policy towards Pacific Island Countries (PICs) is based on their respect for the sovereignty, independence, and will of PICs and that guided by these principles, among others, China will continue to support PICs particularly in sustainable development and capacity-building.

DG Louma said the occasion demonstrated, China's genuine desire to assist its partners.

## MSG PROUD OF ASSOCIATION WITH AIS FORUM



*Participants of the 1st High Level Meeting of the Archipelagic & Island States (AIS) Forum in Bali, comprising officials from the top levels of government from AIS Forum participating countries, of which the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, was a part.*

The Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, says the MSG is proud of its long-standing association with the Archipelagic & Island States (AIS) Forum.

He made the comments at the AIS Forum High Level Meeting following the AIS Ministerial Meeting in Bali, Indonesia on October 11, 2023.

“Thanks to the foresight of my predecessor, H.E. Ambassador Amena Yauvoli of Fiji, who is amongst us today in the Fiji Delegation, the MSG Secretariat was in attendance at the Manado Meetings in 2018 that gave birth to the establishment of the AIS Forum,” he noted.

“MSG is proud of this long association - manifesting the seriousness with which MSG Members (Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu), attach to addressing the challenges of climate change, sea level rise, good maritime governance, waste disposal and the development of a viable Blue Economy where all of us can mutually benefit,” he said.

DG Louma stressed that MSG countries’ commitment to addressing these issues is reaffirmed and re-demonstrated in the MSG Leaders agreeing at their 22nd Summit in August in Vanuatu, to adopt the Udaune Climate Change Declaration. It is a commitment that complements

the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific continent.

In that Declaration, amongst other things, the MSG Leaders agreed to work towards a possible Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Fossil Fuel. This was as part of the Port Vila Call for Just Transition to a Fossil Fuel Free Pacific, to pursue aggressively the ICJ Advisory Opinion on Responsibility of States vis-à-vis Climate Change, and undertake not to allow underwater seabed mining to be carried out in their jurisdictions. MSG countries he said, have all legislated to ban single use plastic products and the Group sees AIS as a reliable and pragmatic partner. He acknowledged Indonesia, UNDP and the AIS Secretariat for their stewardship of the work of the AIS so far. DG Louma said the Report rendered to the Ministerial Meeting “affirms to us and convinces us that AIS is on the right track and provides us an appropriate platform to prosecute our concerns in the areas of climate change, sea level rise, good maritime governance and waste disposal”.

MSG is happy to associate itself with, and lend its support for, the Leaders’ Declaration on the Solidarity of the Archipelagic and Island States Forum. The HLM was attended by H.E. Joko Widodo, President of the Republic of Indonesia and Chairman, Leaders of the AIS Forum, Heads of Delegations and Distinguished Delegates.

## 2ND MSG PRIME MINISTER'S CUP, A SUCCESS



*Teams lining up for the opening parade to mark the launch of the 2nd MSG Prime Minister's Cup in New Caledonia.*

The second edition of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Prime Minister's Cup was officially opened at the Tjibaou Cultural Centre in Noumea, New Caledonia, with a parade of delegations from the competing countries of Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and New Caledonia on Saturday, 7th October 2023.

Under the theme, "United by Sport, Linked by Culture", the tournament aims to strengthen cultural ties among Melanesian countries and spread the values of exchange and sharing through sports.

On behalf of the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, Senior Advisor, Chris Waiwori, conveyed the Secretariat's warm appreciation and gratitude to the Government of New Caledonia, and the FLNKS as a Member of the MSG, for the confidence and capability expressed to host the regional competition.

The main objective of the MSG Prime Ministers' Cup, among others, is to provide an avenue to advance and improve the competitiveness of the MSG Members' national football teams (both men and women) into new heights. Mr Waiwori said the short-term objective is to prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and to ensure that one of the MSG

Member teams qualifies for a spot at the FIFA World Cup. The long-term vision he said, is to ensure that both male and female football talents and competency in the MSG are developed to a standard commensurate with other leading national football teams from other football confederations in the world.

"Above all, our gathering here in New Caledonia is yet again a testament of our Solidarity, as envisioned by our MSG Leaders, to enhance people-to-people interaction and sharing.

"Today also marks an important opportunity for us to show our respects and gratitude to our brothers and sisters in New Caledonia who are very much part of our Melanesian family," he said.

The inaugural PM's Cup, hosted by Vanuatu last year, was a culmination of a dream by our MSG Leaders, to revive the Melanesian Cup under the banner of the MSG Prime Ministers Cup.

The Local Organizing Committee and the New Caledonia Football Association, Oceania Football Confederation, sponsors, in particular the Government of Australia were acknowledged and for the continuous support. Fiji did not participate due to the lack of player availability. The tournament was held from 8th-14th October.

# DRAFT MSG GREEN TRADE PROJECT SUBREGIONAL ACTION PLAN IN THE PIPELINE



*Participants of the 3rd Sub-Regional Workshop on the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Green Trade Project.*

The 3rd Sub-Regional Workshop on the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Green Trade Project attended by MSG Trade, Agriculture and Biosecurity Officials, and funded by the United Nations Conference for Trade & Development (UNCTAD), successfully concluded in Vanuatu on 17 October, 2023.

Delivering the opening remarks on behalf of the MSG Secretariat's Director General, Leonard Louma, the Programme Manager for Trade & Economic Development (TED), Mrs. Sovaia Marawa, said the gathering marked an important milestone as participants updated the workshop on national activities undertaken in each Member state. Participants also discussed the draft Sub-Regional Action Plan for the MSG Green Trade Project.

Recalling that MSG Leaders set out to enhance economic growth and integrated sustainable development in the region as required under the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan, Mrs. Marawa said developments taking place at the international, sub-regional and national level has also raised the importance of creating linkages and synergies between international trade and sustainable development. "And today, the Secretariat unpacked some of the policy issues to assist

Members discussions on creating linkages between sustainable development, Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) and the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan," she stated.

The MSG Green Trade Project began in November 2021 with Members attending the first virtual workshop, the objective of which was to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies in the MSG sub-region. The MSG Green Trade Project provides for planned joint initiatives, actions and activities to enhance the capacity of MSG Members to integrate green trade promotion into their sustainable development strategies.

In 2022, Members selected their priority products with Fiji being ginger, PNG (vanilla), Solomon Islands (kava) and Vanuatu (virgin coconut oil) and with the support of UNCTAD and national consultants updated the Non-Tariff Measures (NTMs) database and prepared the Voluntarily Sustainable Standards (VSS) and Export Guides for the MSG.

The draft Sub-Regional Action Plan for the MSG Green Trade Project identifies three key actions namely Capacity Building; Trade Policy Data Transparency; and Policy Coordination along with recommendations.

## MSG & PNG SIGN MOA ON FUNDING FOR FISHERIES OFFICER



*MSG Secretariat Director General, Leonard Louma, is flanked by senior Papua New Guinea Government officials following the signing of the MOA. Looking on is Solomon Islands Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Jeremiah Manele.*

A formal agreement between the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Papua New Guinea Government, through the Papua New Guinea National Fisheries Authority (NFA), for the funding of a Fisheries officer position within the Secretariat was signed in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in November. The Agreement was signed between the Managing Director of the National Fisheries Authority and the Director General of MSG.

The decision for Papua New Guinea to fund the Fisheries Position at the Secretariat was formally announced by Prime Minister, Hon. James Marape, at the 22nd MSG Leaders' Summit in Port Vila in August, as part of Papua New Guinea's contribution towards strengthening the capacity of the MSG Secretariat to better serve its Members, including the implementation of Leaders decisions.

The Director General of the MSG Secretariat,

Leonard Louma, thanked the Papua New Guinea Government, in particular the NFA and its board, for agreeing to fund such an important position considering that fisheries is a very important sector in all of the MSG economies.

The funding will enable the recruitment of a knowledgeable person to help draw up an appropriate implementation plan for the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap.

The Director General, Leonard Louma, during his remarks indicated that he will be exploring with other MSG Members the possibility of secondment arrangements to fill other positions on the approved MSG Secretariat structure.

He noted, with appreciation, that the Fiji Government had provided to the Secretariat a senior police officer on a secondment basis to occupy the position of Security Officer within the Secretariat's Political & Security Affairs Division.

# MSG PROUD TO PARTNER WITH JICA ON COMMUNITY-BASED COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT



*Participants of the Regional Seminar on the Guideline of Integrated CBCRM in Vanuatu in early November.*

As part of efforts to implement the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Inshore Fisheries Roadmap, the Group is proud to partner with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Operators of the Grace of the Sea Project, in the development of the Guideline of Integrated Community Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM).

Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, made these comments while speaking at the Regional Seminar on the Guideline of Integrated CBCRM in Port Vila, Vanuatu in early November.

“The Guideline of Integrated CBCRM is a living document that provides a very useful template for Community Based Coastal Resource Management that could be tweaked to suit national circumstances.”

He pointed out that the MSG is keen to be involved in such a Project because many of our people live along the extensive coastlines of our countries, as well as the myriad of low-lying islands and atolls that scatter our seas and oceans.

“All these coastal communities rely on the coastal resources and the coastal marine ecosystem to survive.

“Responsible development and good management of the resources in the surrounding terrestrial coastal

communities and the coastal marine ecosystem is critical to ensuring that our coastal communities’ source of sustenance and economic empowerment is not destroyed,” emphasized DG Louma.

He added that talk of the Blue Economy cannot happen meaningfully without the proper development and management of the coastal fisheries.

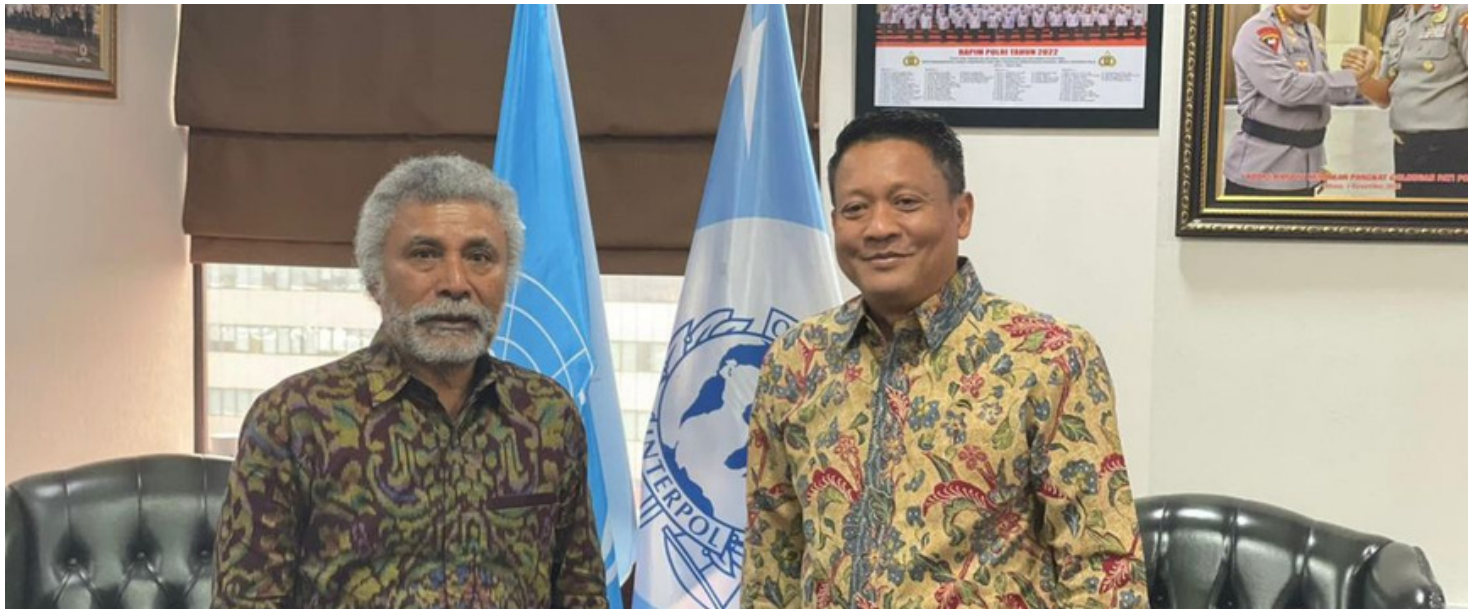
“As our populations grow and pressures for food bear down on our natural fisheries stocks, some to the point of dangerous levels of overharvesting, we would need to look seriously at aquaculture and mariculture for food security.

“Our countries desire to declare Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to protect and sustain natural stocks and this inevitably necessitates the need to aggressively develop aquaculture and mariculture as a complementary measure for food security,” DG Louma noted.

He encouraged the workshop participants to continue to focus attention on the Inshore and Coastal Fisheries as that is where our people live and that is where they are mostly likely to benefit from its development - as opposed to the high seas areas which benefit more the distant water fishing nations.



## DG LOUMA BRIEFS INDONESIA POLICE ON MSG SECURITY STRATEGY



*DG Louma with the Head of the International Division of the Indonesian National Police, Inspector General Krishna Murti.*

In one of his follow-up meetings in Jakarta following the Archipelagic & Island States (AIS) Ministerial and High-Level Meetings in Bali, the Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, met with the Head of the International Division of the Indonesian National Police, Inspector General Krishna Murti.

DG Louma took the opportunity to discuss the security situation in the region, the increasing competition for influence by big powers in the Asian and Pacific regions, the MSG Security Strategy (MSGSS) and how MSG Members may collaborate with the Indonesian Police to implement aspects of the MSGSS.

He said discussions were frank and covered the MSG Formed Police Unit, Regional Police Academy, Regional Security Force, and Humanitarian and Emergency Response Centre (HERCC), which are covered in the MSG Security Strategy.

DG Louma explained that these ideas were all predicated on the desire by MSG Leaders to see 'self-help' security arrangements developed, where MSG countries can organize themselves in ways where they can, in the first instance, address their security concerns and challenges.

Inspector General Murti conveyed that the Indonesian Police is willing to assist the MSG

countries in whatever way it can to operationalize the ideas covered in the MSGSS, so long as MSG countries feel it is appropriate, and only at their express request.

DG Louma acknowledged the growing bilateral cooperation, in the security space, between individual MSG countries and Indonesia. He noted with appreciation that Indonesia was ready and willing to enter into cooperative arrangements that will further enhance its relationship with MSG countries under the ambit of the Indonesian Government's policy of 'Pacific Elevation'.

As part of the work of the MSGSS Working Group, DG Louma advised the Inspector General that MSG Leaders had directed the Secretariat to undertake public consultations on the MSGSS. This so that it can be submitted to the Police Commissioners Conference (PCC) and Police Ministers Meeting (PMM) for consideration and recommendations to the Foreign Ministers Meeting (FMM) and ultimately to MSG Leaders for approval.

DG Louma expressed satisfaction with the spirit and tone of the discussions and added that the occasion was made more significant for him as the Inspector General's father had served as the Ambassador of Indonesia to Papua New Guinea in the 2003 to 2005 period.

## 2ND MSG INSHORE FISHERIES TRAINING, A SUCCESS



*Participants of the 2nd MSG Inshore Fisheries Training in Indonesia.*

The second week-long Inshore Fisheries Training Programme kicked off in Ambon on 18 October 2023 with attendance from fisheries officials from the MSG Membership, as part of efforts to implement the Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG) Inshore Fisheries Roadmap 2015 – 2024.

In his opening remarks, MSG Secretariat Director General, Leonard Louma, said since taking up office last September he is determined to implement, in a concerted way, the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap as that is where the Membership will derive most benefit from. While this is the second year of training with the assistance from the Indonesian Government, DG Louma is convinced it will be beneficial to SME entrepreneurs in MSG's coastal communities and policy officials in our Fisheries Ministries, Departments or Authorities. DG Louma said while participants will be undergoing a training that has been tweaked to better suit their needs and requirements, the use of the term "Applied" in the programme suggests a welcome emphasis on practical application of knowledge and not simply theory.

"In our quest to find ways to address the development challenges that confront our countries in the coastal fisheries space, the MSG focus will be on community engagement with particular emphasis

on involvement of womenfolk and youth," he stated. DG Louma intends to continue this collaboration with Indonesia, hoping that the Indonesian Government's benevolence with respect to this training programme, can be extended for a few more years to enable more of our people to undertake it.

He urged participants to provide proposals as to how best the programme can be improved and further identify certain components and modules to be run at the ground level and on sight in selected MSG countries.

"In other words, I would want to have certain aspects of the training programme undertaken in either Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu or Papua New Guinea," he said.

This he said, would involve Ambon Fisheries experts, trainers and practitioners to come to MSG countries and be deployed in selected coastal communities for a hands-on approach to teaching and learning.

"Skills such as salt making, water harvesting, techniques in adding value to fisheries and marine products, marketing methods, etc, could be imparted to a larger group in this format," he said.

DG Louma further proposed the possibility of having MSG Fisheries scientists and experts attached to Indonesia's Fisheries institutions for a period of time to learn from their counterparts in Ambon.

## MSG & PACIFIC FUSION EXPLORE OPTIONS FOR COLLABORATION ON SECURITY ISSUES



*Assistant Director of the Pacific Fusion Centre, Viliame Bovoro with the Secretariat's Officer-in-Charge and Manager, Political & Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe (left)*

The newly appointed assistant Director of the Pacific Fusion Centre, Viliame Bovoro recently met with the Secretariat's Officer-in-Charge and Manager, Political & Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe at the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in Port Vila.

"We serve a region with a complex range of

traditional and emerging security challenges that require a collaborative approach to efficiently addressing those challenges for the betterment of our region," Mr Kiloe stated.

Mr Bovoro expressed similar sentiments saying that the Centre looked forward to continue working with the MSG Secretariat.

## STUDENTS FROM NEW CALEDONIA VISIT MSG SECRETARIAT



*Students from New Caledonia at the MSG Secretariat.*

Students from the Taremen School in Maré, New Caledonia visited the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat on 11th October during a visit to Port Vila.

Consisting of a class of 25 students and accompanied by 11 adults, the group met the staff and were warmly welcomed by Officer-in-Charge, Ilan Kiloe.

The students were briefed on the purpose, role and operations of the MSG Secretariat. As an organisation set up for the aspirations of Melanesians, the MSG Secretariat usually seizes such opportunities for learning and development of our young people who are the future leaders of Melanesia.

# MSG PART OF 2ND PACIFIC REGIONAL WRITESHOP TO ASSIST WITH NATIONAL SUBMISSIONS FOR ICJAO



*Participants of the 2nd Pacific Regional Writeshop to assist in the drafting of national submissions to the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) in Suva, Fiji. PC: Pacific-Community-SPC*

A 2nd Pacific Regional Writeshop facilitated by the Pacific-Community-SPC to assist in the drafting of national submissions to the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion (ICJAO) for Pacific Island Countries (PICs), including Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Members concluded in Suva, Fiji in October.

Manager Political & Security Affairs of the MSG Secretariat, Ilan Kiloie and Legal Officer, Brittien Yosef, were part of the writeshop.


The MSG Secretariat was recently given approval by the ICJ to make a submission on this question before the Court as it is an initiative of one of its MSG Members, Vanuatu, to seek an Advisory Opinion from the ICJ on the "Obligations of States in respect Climate Change".


In close consultation with the Vanuatu Government,

the Secretariat will make a written statement on the question before the Court by 22 March 2024 and will also provide written comments on statements made by other States and Organisations, recognized by the Court, by 24 June 2024, in compliance with the timelines set by the ICJ. At the recent 22nd MSG Leaders Summit in Port Vila, Leaders mandated the MSG Secretariat to submit a request for participation in the ICJ advisory proceedings and to make written submissions. The Regional Writeshop was a forum for legal experts and government officials to engage in legal drafting processes to support the refinement of submissions, as PICs advocate for their interests to the ICJ to address climate change.

The deadline for country submissions was extended, further to requests by the MSG and Pacific Community, among other parties.

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