



MELANESIAN *Tak*

ISSUE 15 JANUARY - MARCH 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"

NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL PAYS COURTESY CALL ON MSG CHAIR & PAPUA NEW GUINEA PRIME MINISTER, HON. JAMES MARAPE



DG Leonard Louma, OBE, (Right) with MSG Chair and PM of PNG Hon. James Marape.

Newly-appointed Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, OBE, paid a courtesy call on the Chairman of the MSG and Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Honourable James Marape on 22 March, 2022.

This follows his recent appointment as DG of the MSG Secretariat. One of the most important and pressing issues discussed was the need for an urgent formal handover of the MSG Chairmanship from PNG to Vanuatu, a position which rotates every two years among members. COVID-19 has, by default, caused this transfer of Chairmanship to be delayed for almost four years. PM Hon. Marape, has recommend-

ed the possibility of travelling to Vanuatu to meet with his counterpart, PM Hon. Bob Loughman, for the handover to take place.

PM Hon. Marape gave the assurance that PNG will settle all its outstanding contributions as well as pay its 2022 assessed contributions. Other issues discussed included a possible review of the recruitment process for the Director General and to explore the option of a rotational process among members, while retaining the merit-based system of appointment. PM Hon. Marape was pleased to hear that the Secretariat is already working on a Draft Discussion Paper for Mem-

bers and the Sub-Committee on Legal and Institutional Issues to consider.

The issue of reported human rights in West Papua and how to address them with Indonesia was also discussed at length during the meeting where the emphasis was on nurturing a credible ongoing dialogue with Indonesia on these matters.

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FROM THE DIRECTOR GENERAL'S DESK

Warm greetings from Port Moresby!

As I write my first foreword for Melanesian Tok, I continue to be engaged in a number of discussions and briefings with relevant stakeholders in Government and the Private Sector, while awaiting the necessary clearance for travel to assume office in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

I wish to, at this early juncture, particularly thank the Chairman of the MSG and Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Honourable James Marape, and the other MSG leaders - Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji; Honourable Manasseh Sogavare MP, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands; Honourable Bob Lougman Weibur MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu; and Mr Victor Tutugoro, Spokesperson of the FLNKS, for reposing in me the faith and confidence to take the MSG Secretariat forward.

It would be remiss of me not to offer, on behalf of the Organisation, our deep sense of gratitude to my predecessor, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli, for his leadership in successfully steering the Organisation through some turbulent times. In addition, I wish to sincerely thank the Deputy Director General, George Hoa'au, for his able stewardship of the Secretariat when the office of the Director General was vacant for more than a year.

The Secretariat is pleased to use this platform to keep you updated on what we are doing for our Members.

As earlier alluded to, I have had a series of briefings and consultations, and continue to do so, with relevant stakeholders in both the Government and Private Sector.

So far, I have had the occasion to meet with the MSG Chair, Hon. James Marape; New Zealand High Commissioner, Philip Taula; Acting Australian High Commissioner, Joanne Loundes; Solomon Islands High Commissioner, William McDonald Soaki; Peoples Republic of China Ambassador, Zeng Fanhua; and Indonesian Ambassador, Andriana Supandy.

Meetings have also been held with officials from the PNG Trade Office, National Forestry Authority, Justice, Treasury, Foreign Affairs and Prime Ministers Department. In the Private Sector, I have had meetings with BSP, Credit Corporation, WWF-Pacific, and TWL Group, to name a few. I thank each one of them for the support rendered and will ensure that we continue to maintain an open dialogue in our efforts to serve you better.

Since my appointment, I have had the first of many virtual meetings with my senior staff, a team of very experienced and competent individuals, where I spoke of the need to use this change of Leadership in the Secretariat to reflect and reassess the reason for our existence, our objectives, strategies and seek to recalibrate our efforts and action plans, to correct course and add value to what we are doing.

In essence, while at the helm, I aspire to develop a cohesive team, one that operates on mutual respect and trust, and one that is able to accept divergence of views in our search for solutions and policy options.

I envision a Secretariat that is efficient, so efficient that it will be nimble on its feet, responsive to the dictates of its Governing Bodies, and able to implement its mandates on a timely basis within limited resources.

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Finally, I want to underscore, in an emphatic way, that our name “spearhead” was deliberately chosen by our Founders to personify MSG approach to issues - wielded (the spear) by Melanesian warriors to be thrust at specific targets for Melanesian good, to protect Melanesians, and to procure sustenance for

Melanesians. I hope you will enjoy our first edition of *Melanesian Tok* 2022!

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

LEONARD LOUMA, OBE.

DG LOUMA HOLDS 1ST VIRTUAL MEETING WITH SENIOR STAFF



Senior staff of the MSG Secretariat during the 1st virtual briefing with DG Leonard Louma, OBE.

The new Director General of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, Leonard Louma, OBE, held his first formal 2-day briefing with his senior staff which ended via Zoom last month.

The Director General joined in from Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, while senior staff logged in from their respective homes in Port Vila, due to the current COVID-19 outbreak in Vanuatu.

DG Louma, OBE, acknowledged the Deputy Director General, George Hoa'au, for his able leadership while acting as DG for more than a year, since the departure of Ambassador Amena Yauvoli in 2020.

In his opening statement, DG Louma, OBE, reminded his staff of the purpose of the

establishment of the MSG, and the need to reflect and reassess strategies, with a view to strengthening the Secretariat's focus. He emphasised the need to strategically review the path that has been plotted and the actions taken so far to ensure that the Secretariat adds value to its work. The meeting was an opportunity for the Executive to update the DG on the status of the preparations towards the Biennium Leader's Summit and the draft Corporate Plan 2021, including major updates from senior staff on their respective work programmes.

In conclusion, the DG said he was convinced that as a team, a lot of work that needed to be done had been progressed and while there was still a lot more to be done, he commended the effort of the senior staff.

MSG EMBARKS ON KIWA INITIATIVE TALKS WITH FIJI

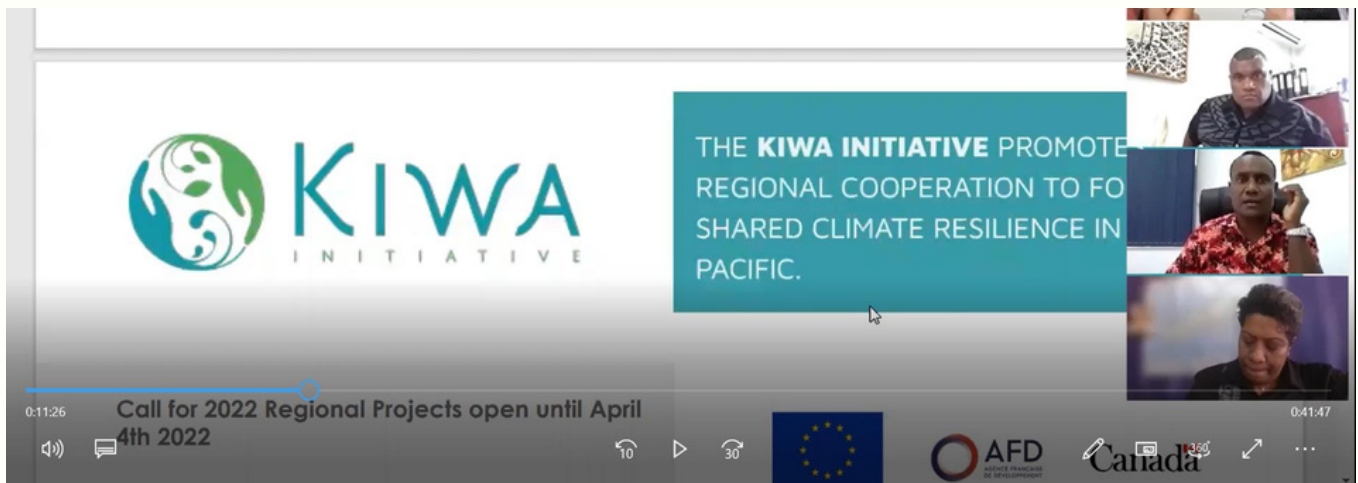
The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat recently met with officials from the Fijian Government to obtain views on the Call for 2022 Regional Projects under the KIWA 2022 - Women and Youth Entrepreneurship for Biodiversity.

Focusing on New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Vanuatu, the Call for 2022 Regional Projects is open until April 4.

Its three thematic areas cover Climate Change Adaptation; Biodiversity Protection;

and the use of Nature-Based Solutions for Climate Change Adaptation and Biodiversity Conservation.

Playing a facilitating role and in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), the MSG Secretariat will also seek to meet with officials from Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. More discussions are expected with the MSG Secretariat officials at the next scheduled meeting.



Officials from the MSG Secretariat discuss the KIWA initiative with Fiji Government officials.

2022 MACFEST PLANNING TALKS CONTINUE

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (VKS) resumed talks in late January on preparations for the 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival (MACFEST).

The team from VKS presented a draft plan and budget for organising the MACFEST, which the MSG Secretariat welcomed as an important step in the preparations.

While discussions are underway with the Vanuatu Government on the hosting of the 7th MACFEST in 2022, it is important that ground work and preparations are in place, including various options for hosting to guide proper decision-making.

The last MACFEST was hosted by the Solomon Islands Government in Honiara in 2018.



MSG SECRETARIAT & PIFS COMMENCE TALKS ON EDF11 SPIRIT PROJECT

Talks have begun between the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) on the Host Agreement for a Melanesia Trade Adviser, under the EDF11 Strengthening Pacific Intra-Regional and International Trade (SPIRIT) Project.

The recent dialogue recognised the complementary role that PIFS and the MSG Secretariat play to improving intra-regional and international trade and boost economic growth of Melanesian countries. It was also an opportunity to finalise the draft Host Agreement which will facilitate the deployment of a Melanesia Trader Adviser to the MSG Secretariat in Vanuatu.

Funded by the European Union (EU), the SPIRIT Project is an output of the 11th EDF

for the Pacific Regional Integration Support (PRISE) Programme and implemented by PIFS. The SPIRIT project aims to boost and increase intra-regional and international trade through strengthening of institutional and human capacity of Pacific ACP countries (PACP).

Under this project, Sub-Regional Trade Advisers will be responsible for implementing specific key result areas in the SPIRIT Project to address relevant needs of the sub-region.

A Host Agreement between the PIFS Secretariat and the MSG Secretariat, designed to guide the implementation of the SPIRIT Project under the Melanesian Trade Adviser, is expected to be signed later this month.



Representatives of PIFS and the MSG Secretariat on EDF11 SPIRIT Project talks.

MSG SECRETARIAT HOLDS FIRST 2022 SENIOR STAFF MEETING

The first meeting of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat’s senior staff was convened on January 24 with an individual and organisational reflection on how it can better itself with its existing resources.

Deputy Director General, George Hoa’au, chaired the meeting in his capacity as Acting DG, prior to the appointment of DG Louma.

DDG Hoa’au challenged staff on how each can interact and deal with the Secretariat’s stakeholders as diplomats and at the same time achieve results as entrepreneurs.

He encouraged staff to continue to be competent and emphasised the need to continually accept change as without it

there can be no progress.

The meeting agenda included the vision of the MSG Secretariat against expectations; Leadership Issues; holding a work-from-home mock event; having ICT as a platform for work; Annual Report; and Strategic Partnerships, among others.

It was also an opportunity for senior staff to briefly present their major work programme activities, how they would approach it and what events have been identified as priorities for the first quarter of 2022.

Furthermore, DDG Hoa’au touched on the importance of management leadership; self-responsibility; innovation; thinking on our feet and improvising with online resources.



Senior staff discussing their respective work programmes for the year.

MSG SECRETARIAT BRIEFS MAJOR GENERAL JONE KALOUNIWAI ON STATUS OF REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

The Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) and Chairman of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Regional Security Strategy (RSS), Major General Jone Kalouniwai, was briefed on the status of the RSS by the MSG Secretariat on 23 February 2022.

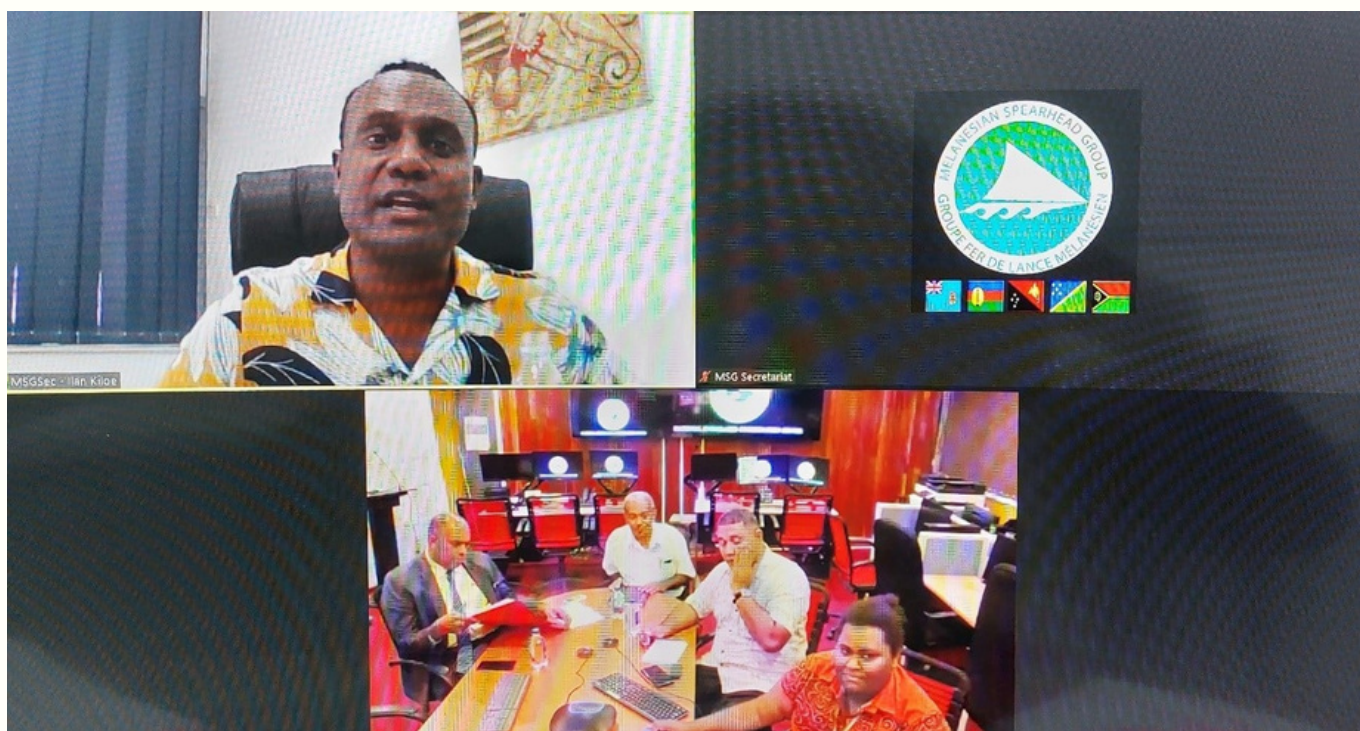
The Programme Manager for the Political and Security Affairs programme of the MSG Secretariat, Mr. Ilan Kiloe briefed the Chair on the five strategic priorities under the RSS framework, which covers traditional and non-traditional security challenges facing the MSG region.

He informed Mr Kalouniwai and his team that while working in close collaboration with Members, the Secretariat will use the Action Plan and Key Performance Indicators as baseline targets to monitor progress in the

implementation of the strategy. Some of the next steps highlighted include the convening of the 4th RSS Working Group Meeting to consider and finalise the RSS before final consideration by the Police Commissioners Conference (PCC) and the Police Ministers Meeting (PMM).

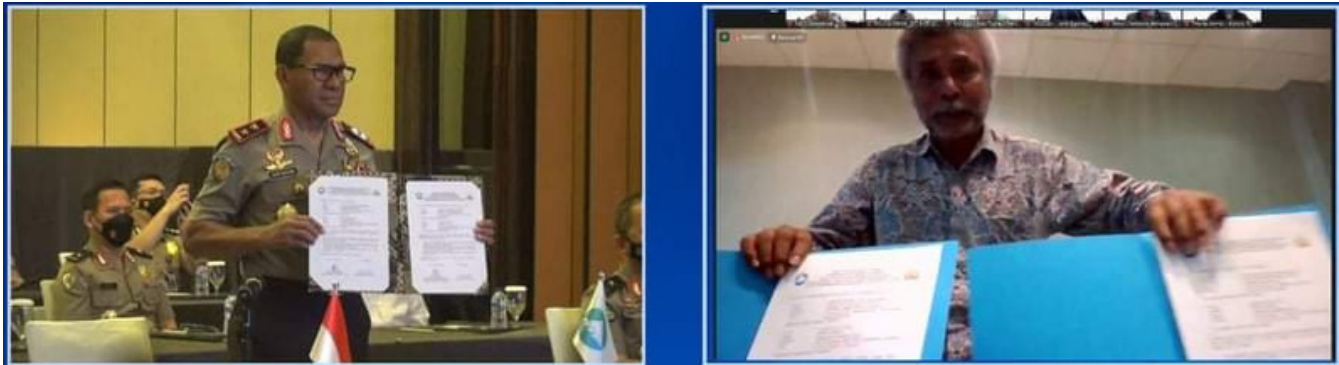
“Where necessary, the Secretariat will establish a more detailed and robust process, linked to the desired results and outcomes of the strategy,” he noted.

Major General Kalouniwai commended the work carried out by the MSG Secretariat in overseeing the facilitation of the RSS and its subsequent implementation. In conclusion, the Chair reiterated his commitment to lead this important work and to ensure the finalisation of the strategy.



Programme Manager for the Political and Security Affairs programme of the MSG Secretariat, Mr. Ilan Kiloe (top left) virtually briefed the Chair of the RSS, Major General Jone Kalouniwai and his team.

100,000USD FOR MSG REGIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY (RSS)



DG of the MSG Secretariat, Leonard Louma, OBE, (Right) and Head of the International Cooperation Division, INP, Police Inspector General Johni Asadoma.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has formally received a voluntary contribution of 100,000USD from the Indonesian National Police (INP), for the formulation of the MSG Regional Security Strategy (RSS).

This was made possible following a virtual handover ceremony between the two organisations and formally signed by the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr Leonard Louma, OBE, and Head of the International Cooperation Division, INP, Police Inspector General Johni Asadoma.

In his remarks, DG Louma expressed deep gratitude to the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for supporting the development of the RSS as a full member to the Working Group (WG). He also expressed his appreciation to the Chair of the RSS WG Meeting and Commander of the Fiji Military Forces, Major General Jone Kalouniwai for diligently steering the process of the development of the MSG RSS thus far.

DG Louma stated that the RSS WG was established to provide an avenue for discussing and development of the RSS, adding that in the face of ever increasing and emerging new threats to peace and security, it is incumbent on Members of the RSS WG to devise appropriate and relevant strategies to address identified common security challenges in the region, on the basis of the needs and interests of its members. He emphasised that the narrative of the security threats and the construction of the regional security architecture to respond to these threats must have our input.

He said the Agreement Establishing the MSG recognises the importance of aligning policies to further advance MSG members' shared goals of peace and security. He further underscored the importance of the RSS to address common security threats and challenges in the MSG region for our future sustainable development and prosperity, as recognised in the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

In the ongoing work to refine the RSS, the Director General implored the RSS WG not to lose sight of the other national issues that precipitate security challenges faced by our members and to factor these in the RSS. As well, he urged the WG to develop the RSS in ways that complement and add value to existing regional initiatives, noting that the Formed Police Unit and HERCC could be leveraged to support the RSS. DG Louma acknowledged that each strategic priority was not only informed by common security challenges facing the MSG region, and captures both traditional and non-traditional emerging security threats, but were aptly contextualised to cover Global, Regional and National security considerations. He drew the attention of the RSS WG to the fact that the 2018 Boe Declaration, of which the MSG is party to, defines Climate Change as our real and greatest security threat.

The INP is looking at the possibility of physically hosting the 4th RSS WG in Indonesia. The last RSS WG was hosted by Fiji in 2019.

MSG REGION REMINDED OF THE NEED TO USE FORESTS SUSTAINABLY



Staff of the MSG Secretariat and their families engaged in a tree-planting initiative while marking MSG Day last year.

Forests are home to about 80 per cent of the world's terrestrial biodiversity, with more than 60,000 tree species.

In addition, around 1.6 billion people depend directly on forests for food, shelter, energy, medicines and income, according to the Food & Agriculture Organisation. These figures are important to highlight as the MSG Secretariat marked International Day of Forests on March 21, 2022.

MSG Secretariat Director General, Leonard Louma, OBE, said we are being reminded of the need to be responsible custodians of Melanesia's rich forests and equally its conservation and sustainable use.

"This, to ensure that our future generations are not

NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL APPOINTED

Seasoned Papua New Guinea diplomat Leonard Louma, OBE, was appointed the new Director General of the MSG Secretariat on 22 February 2022. The appointment was a result of a lengthy and rigorous merit-based process which was adopted at the 20th Leaders' Summit in Honiara, Solomon Islands on 26 June 2015. MSG Chair & PNG PM James Marape on behalf of the MSG Leaders, in congratulating DG Louma stated that he has confidence in him to continue to lift the visions, spirit and solidarity of the MSG and moreover to lead the MSG Secretariat into new heights. DG Louma, OBE, who hails from Milne Bay Province, is a former veteran diplomat and a senior public servant who has had more than 30 years of senior management experience in both the government and private sector. Among other major responsibilities, he has also served in the PNG Permanent Mission to the UN in New York and the PNG Embassies in Paris and Beijing.

deprived of its health, social and economic benefits," he noted.

Additionally, conservation efforts can lead to opportunities for communities to sell rainforest carbon offsets to generate revenue for local economic development. Currently, some communities in Melanesia have already begun doing this like the Sirebe Tribe in the Solomon Islands and the Drawa Rainforest Conservation project of Fiji. In line with this year's theme, "Forests and Sustainable Production and Consumption", the MSG Secretariat encourages initiatives like tree-planting in all Melanesian communities.

MESSAGE FROM DG LOUMA, OBE

ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE MSG DAY - 14 MARCH



The signing of the MSG Principles of Cooperation by our Founding Leaders in Port Vila, Vanuatu on 14 March, 1988.

On behalf of the MSG Secretariat Team, allow me to wish all our members, our friends and development partners a Happy MSG Day.

I know I echo the sentiments of our MSG Chair, Honourable James Marape MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea; Honourable Bob Lougman Weibur, MP Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu; Honourable Mannasseh Sogavare, MP Prime Minister of Solomon Islands; Honourable Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama MP, Prime Minister of the Republic of Fiji; Mr Victor Tutugoro, Spokesman for the Front de Liberation Nationale Kanake et Sociasliste (FLNKS); Associate Membership and Observer Membership of the MSG, allow me to wish you a Happy MSG Day.

On 14 March 1988, the MSG Principles of Cooperation was signed in Port Vila formally marking the establishment of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. Today marks 34 years of the Melanesian Spearhead Group since its formal inception in 1988. Add two years to account for its initial inception in 1986 in Goroka, and you will have 36 years of existence.

Paraphrasing one of the founders, Rt Hon. Ezekiel Alebua, no one could have imagined, then, that what had started off as a small pressure group within the Pacific Island Forum, could transform into an important and strategic regional grouping with an established Secretariat in the region.

Historically, the original issues that galvanised the idea to establish the MSG was to help crusade for the emancipation of the Kanaks in New Caledonia from colonialism and their push to re-enlist New Caledonia on the UN Committee on Decolonisation List of Non Self Governing Territories, denouncement of nuclear testing and pushing for the establishment of the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, promotion and protection of our Melanesian culture and tradition and, against all odds, nurture the belief that free trade among all MSG Members through the Melanesian Tree Trade Agreement was possible.

Now with a formally established Secretariat, the MSG have further strengthened its mandates through various agreements and establishments, including the Agreement

... CONTINUATION OF MSG DAY MESSAGE

Establishing the MSG and the 2038 Prosperity for all Plan.

As we celebrate, with thanksgiving, the commemoration of this important day in our history, I would like to take this time to remember and pay tribute to certain individuals who have been in the engine room behind this noble cause.

In Vanuatu, I acknowledge the leadership of the late founding Father of the Republic of Vanuatu, Fr Walter Hyde Lini, Barack Sope, His Excellency Nikenike Vurobaravu, Mr Joe Natuman and other successive Vanuatu Leaders. In Papua New Guinea, I acknowledge the Leadership of Honourable Paias Wingti, Sir Julius Chan, the late Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare, Mr William Dihm and Gabriel Dusava. In Solomon Islands, I acknowledge Ezekiel Alebua, the late Sir Peter Kenilorea, and the late Wilson Ifunaoa. In New Caledonia for the Kanaks, I acknowledge the leadership of the late Jean-Marie Tjibaou, late Eloi Machoro, Paul Neontine and Rock Wamytan. In Fiji, I acknowledge the leadership of Sitiveni Rabuka who brought in Fiji to join the MSG in 1996 and successive Fiji Leaders.

After over 34 years, it is an opportune time to sharpen our spearhead and recalibrate our strategies in pursuit of our objectives. We must consolidate and reinvigorate the MSG's role with respect to FLNKS fight for New Caledonia's independence, continue to maintain a bold stand on nuclear testing and its legacy issues, continue the promotion and protection of Melanesian identity, values, custom and culture as a glue that binds us together, and further the depth and scope of economic and trade cooperation within the ambit of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement.

These are foundational issues for MSG, as they provide the basic element of the MSG DNA. As a Secretariat, we must uphold the MSG identity and focus on its real interests, what it can do better and add value to and complement regional action and not duplicate activities done elsewhere.

The spearhead metaphor in our name demands us to be pointed and targeted.

At this juncture, let me state here that the MSG grouping, in many ways, is the most significant within the Pacific Island Forum Context. Excluding Australia and New Zealand, by my crude calculations, the MSG constitute almost 98% of the land area, 86% of the population, 91% of the GDP, almost half of the EEZ, and some accounts has close to 90% of the natural resources in the PIF area. Hence, the comparative advantage is in our favour. These characteristics rightfully imposes on us a responsibility to be in the forefront of regional actions as we prosecute our regionalism within the Blue Ocean Continent.

I would like to convey my outmost appreciation to the MSG Leaders, MSG FMM, and the MSG SOM for their confidence rendered towards my recent appointment as the New Director General of the MSG Secretariat, the first under the merit-based process.

By way of conclusion, let me remind us, once again, that our name "spearhead" was not accidental, it was deliberately chosen to personify MSG approach to issues. Wielded (the spear) by Melanesian warriors to be thrust at specific targets for Melanesian good, to protect Melanesians, and to procure sustenance for Melanesians.

God Bless Melanesia.

Note: It is a standing MSG Leaders decision made on 20 June 2013, for MSG Members to celebrate this day in MSG Capitals. Unfortunately, for us, the COVID 19 restriction had made it impossible to meaningfully celebrate this day at the MSG Secretariat, but I hope you will find time to remember the birth of our Melanesian Solidarity.

MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP TURNS 34



Back in 14 March, 1988 in Port Vila where the signing of the MSG Principles of Cooperation took place. Below is a photo of the late former Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Father Walter Lini, addressing the crowd.

Thirty-four (34) years ago on 14 March back in 1988 the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) was formally recognised through the signing of the MSG Principles of Cooperation right here in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

We have certainly come a long way and achieved so much politically, socially and economically. Indeed, we would not have come this far without the determination and foresight of our Founding Leaders, who were fierce and steadfast in their resolve to unite on a common platform.

On 14 March this year we acknowledged them. We hold in high regard their vision and wisdom. We also acknowledge the contribution of the many MSG Leaders who have gone before us and those who continue to hold the fort in our respective Member states up until today.

Unfortunately, however, this year we at the MSG Secretariat cannot celebrate due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Nevertheless, we will remember the sacrifices that our Leaders have made to ensure that the

MSG region remains politically stable, that it becomes economically prosperous and one where there is not only Social Equality and Inclusivity but Sustainable Development as well.

God Bless Melanesia!

