

The Director General, Mr Peter Forau and staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat were privileged to receive His Excellency, Monsieur Roch Wamytan, President of the Congress of New Caledonia and his delegation at the MSG Secretariat today.

In welcoming the delegation, the MSG Director General thanked Monsieur Wamytan and the Congress of New Caledonia for the symbolic visit to the MSG Secretariat and the dedication to the signing the Convention of Partnership and Institutional Support between the Congress of New Caledonia and the Secretariat of the Melanesian Spearhead Group.

Mr Wamytan is the President of Congress of New Caledonia and is a prominent member of the FLNKS. Through his initiative, the Congress of New Caledonia is providing financial assistance to the MSG Secretariat and the visit by President Wamytan to the Secretariat follows an earlier visit in 2011 and this time, President is visiting to facilitate signing of a convention between the Secretariat and Congress of New Caledonia for the funding.

In signing, the convention President Wamytan said he recognizes the efforts by the Secretariat to lift the relationships with its members and in particular to assist the cause of the people of New Caledonia through the FLNKS and other parties to find a peaceful resolution to their future governance. He said, he wanted to see more young New Caledonians working at the Secretariat and for the French language to be learnt and applied widely as working language within the Secretariat. With the blessing of the Congress of New Caledonia, he is happy to be facilitating the signing of the convention and authorize the extension of funding to the Secretariat.

Speaking on behalf of the Directors and Staff of the Secretariat, Mr Forau, the Director General said the signing today is timely and meaningful. "It reinforces the mission that our Leaders have mandated the Secretariat with in advancing direct actions that promote the welfare and the cause of the Kanak people of New Caledonia; but also strengthen the regional cooperation arrangements between FLNKS-led institutions of Kanaky-New Caledonia and their counterparts in the MSG region," said Mr. Forau.

He added that the Convention or Agreement signed today lays the foundation for deepening relations between the MSG and New Caledonia especially President Roch Wamytan is a recognized figure within the FLNKS and Congress of New Caledonia. We are very grateful for

this generous gesture from the people of New Caledonia and especially for the extension of financial assistance which will assist the Secretariat implement agreed work activities.

Mr. Forau said through the leadership of M. Wamytan the assistance provided by the Congress of New Caledonia is exemplary as it will not only help to compliment the Secretariat efforts in the good coordination of regional cooperation and partnership arrangements, but also help to promote the Kanak identity and aspirations in the MSG region as MSG anticipates the exit of the Noumea Accord in 2014-2018. He thanked President Wamytan for his vision and foresightedness in facilitating the assistance. This is greatly appreciated and will be put to good use for the purposes agreed.

The partnership and institutional support project is aimed at a funding assistance to the Secretariat of the MSG aimed at addressing the functions and activities of the MSG Secretariat in terms of partnership activities between Congress of New Caledonia and the MSG Secretariat in facilitating regional cooperation in Melanesia; the promotion of 'la francophonie' within the Secretariat; the secondment of officers; and improving translation and interpretation within the Secretariat.

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