

Senior Officials from the five members of the Melanesian Spearhead Group met key cooperation issues to be presented to the Foreign Ministers Meeting next week. Chair of the MSG Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), Mrs Saipora W. Mataikabara thanked delegates from Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, FLNKS and Fiji for their contribution and cooperation on addressing these key issues of common interest at the two-day meeting.

On the first day, SOM endorsed among other issues the Director General's Report to the Leaders, Secretariat papers on MSG Properties, Corporate Planning Process and the MSG Secretariat Soft Reforms. SOM Chair confirmed that the Secretariat papers were to strengthen the organization's administration arm of the MSG organization.

Mrs Mataikabara said on the second day of meeting the other reports presented to SOM were all endorsed. She said the members' endorsements reflected the common interests of the MSG in strengthening cooperation amongst member countries in particularly on cultural cooperation for instance the endorsement of the draft MSG MOU on Cultural Cooperation presented by the MSG Council of Arts & Culture. She said other issues that will promote more cooperation between member countries include the preparation for the first Melanesian Games in 2013 as mandated by Leaders on 31st March 2011 was also endorsed by the Senior Officials Meeting today.

Mrs Mataikabara said the Special SOM was also able to endorse key recommendations presented by the Subcommittee on Institutional Issues (SCLII) to complete discussions on the Review of the Agreement Establishing the MSG.

SOM Chair said legal and institutional issues are backbones of MSG as an organization and that is why members felt that careful consideration on the legal and institutional issues will help guide senior officials, foreign ministers and leaders in making sound decisions to strengthen the organization. A key recommendation that was endorsed by SOM is that SCLII meet in July to further complete important discussions on the Review of the Agreement Establishing the MSG, Reporting Requirements, Membership Issues (Observers & Associate Members) and MSG Visa Arrangements.

Reports from the different subcommittees and technical committees such as Security, Trade and Economic Officials Meeting (TEOM), and the Police Commissioners' Conference were also endorsed. The draft MOU for the MSG Skills Movement Scheme and the MSG Trade Agreement on Rules of Origin and principles for enhancing fiscal management in Melanesia

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were all endorsed this special SOM.

Mrs Mataikabara thanked all delegates for their participation and cooperation in the pre-Summit SOM and confirmed that the SOM outcomes will be presented to the Foreign Ministers Meeting for their consideration next week.

Authorized by SOM Chair
SOM Meeting 23 March 2012
MSG Secretariat, Fiji Police Academy