

Fiji's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, says the adoption of the Skills Movement Scheme which aims to source skilled labour from within the Melanesian Spearhead Group region would be a landmark achievement.

The item is one of the issues to be discussed by MSG Foreign Affairs Ministers at its special meeting in Suva this week.

Ratu Inoke, who is the meeting chair, said as the MSG turns 25 next year, it is a good time to look ahead to the next 25 years and ask where else the MSG could be effective.

He said the MSG will celebrate its silver jubilee celebrations in Kanaky land, New Caledonia next year to mark the original objective of the establishment of the MSG which was to spearhead the aspirations of "our Kanaky brothers and sisters to achieve freedom".

The Foreign Ministers will also discuss a report of the inaugural MSG Environment and Climate Change Ministers Meeting in Nadi earlier this year.

Ratu Inoke said this meeting was convened following concerns expressed that the MSG region's environmental issues and climate change interests were not being given prominence at regional and international meetings.

The meeting will also review a report on cultural cooperation amongst MSG countries after a meeting of MSG Ministers of Culture and Arts in Honiara, Solomon Islands on 6-7 October last year.

The Solomon Islands will be hosting the next Festival of Pacific Arts in Honiara in June this year.

Other issues to be tabled include the FLNKS aspirations for de-colonization, security, the report from the Police Commissioners' Conference, and the Trade and Economic Officials Meeting.

The MSG Environment and Climate Change Ministers' request for a joint MSG position on the zero draft document, 'The Future We Want', which will be discussed at the Rio Plus 20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, Brazil in June this year; will also be on the agenda.ends

Ratu Inoke said the MSG has stood the test of time despite being confronted with a multitude of challenges.

"We have demonstrated a strong resolve and unity as a region bound by a common cause - a cause that is clearly articulated in our Agreement Establishing the MSG" he said.

Ratu Inoke said the purpose of the MSG is to promote and strengthen inter-membership trade, exchange of Melanesian cultures, traditions and values, sovereign equality, economic and technical cooperation between members, and the alignment of our policies in order to further MSG members shared goals of economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security.

"In the true spirit of Melanesian tradition, custom and values, we have managed to resolve contentious issues amongst ourselves. We have also managed to reach consensus through dialogue and solidarity."

Those attending the meeting include the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, Hon Alfred Carlot, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Papua New Guinea, Hon Ano Pala, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of the Solomon Islands, Hon Clay Forau, and the head of the FLNKS Group at the New Caledonia Congress, Madame Caroline Machoro.