



The MSG Skills Movement Scheme has entered into force on 30 September 2012. The MSG Countries of Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have now commenced with the implementation of the Skills Movement Scheme which was made possible through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed by their Leaders in March this year, 2012. The MOU provides the framework for facilitating the movement of skilled MSG workers for temporary employment in MSG Countries.

In announcing the commencement of the SMS, the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr. Peter Forau stressed that the MSG region needs to play a leading role to pave the way for newer opportunities in the Services sector to compliment its trade in Goods Agreement for the growing MSG population. He indicated that combined, Melanesia have a total population of almost 9 million people or over 90 percent of the Pacific's total population and this is often an untapped resource in Melanesia. "This scheme will also bring added benefits apart from remittances by providing a platform to develop qualifications, standards, mutual recognition arrangements and accreditation arrangements and focus on training opportunities that will prepare the MSG members to tap into the wider international labour market where there are more relatively lucrative opportunities" said Mr. Forau.

The scheme was developed in response to requests by MSG Members. Vanuatu and Solomon Islands have earlier engaged in a bilateral arrangement in 2010 when Vanuatu recruited nurses from Solomon Islands to work in its health care facilities due to shortages of nurses. This arrangement has proven beneficial for both Vanuatu in accessing skilled nurses as well as for Solomon Islands in terms of employment opportunities and remittances sent back home.

The MSG Skills Movement Scheme is framed on a MOU between the MSG countries of Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The MOU is based on an agreed list of specific occupations where each Member offers for access to other parties to the MOU. This scheme is open to those listed in each Members' schedule and most of these occupations are skilled professions such as engineers, accountants, pilots, doctors and nurses as well as trade skills and vocational teachers. Each member country has its own list of occupations that is based on its identified shortages and the scheme is capped at a quota of 400. In further explaining the MSG SMS, Mr. Forau stressed that this scheme does not intend to open up the unskilled employment sector to outside parties rather is designed to help fill skill shortages in each

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member country where there is a demand by offering preferential treatment to parties in the MSG SMS to access employment opportunities.

Access to employment under this scheme is based on employment offers or contracts from receiving employers in any countries that is party to the MOU. This means nationals of the MSG countries seeking employment in other MSG countries under the SMS will only travel to the other party to take up employment on the basis of a job offer or employment contract.

The idea of a MSG Skills Movement Scheme was first endorsed at the Leaders' Summit held in 2005 to develop a scheme for movement of professionals within MSG Member countries.

The MSG Skills Movement Scheme has now come into effect for implementation and will be reviewed jointly by the parties no later than 3 years after this MOU is signed and every 3 years thereafter. Further details on accessing employment under the scheme will be published on the MSG website and MSG countries Labour/Immigration website in the coming weeks.

For more information on this MSG Skills Movement Scheme, please contact the MSG Secretariat on +678 27791 or email Mr. John Licht, Trade Policy Adviser on j.licht@msgsec.org