

MSG Leaders sign Treaties to promote closer Legal Cooperation between Members

The Leaders of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) today signed treaties on Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments and Custody & Maintenance as well as a Memorandum of Agreement on Police Cooperation.

The decision to have treaties on Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments and Custody and maintenance of Children between member countries was approved by the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) held in Goroka, Papua New Guinea (PNG) on 16-17 August 2005 and after several years of negotiations amongst the membership, they have finally agreed to formalize these arrangements.

Members fully endorse these treaties in light of increasing movement of people across borders over the years and deepening engagement amongst members in trade, commerce, education, employment, sports and culture. Furthermore the increase in business activities has resulted in more business transactions being conducted, particularly under the auspices of the MSG Trade Agreement (revised 2005) therefore signifying the need for Legal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments in member countries.

The treaty on Reciprocal Enforcement of Foreign Judgments will now allow orders or judgments issued in the competent court of one member country to be registered and enforced in the territory of another member. The treaty will also ensure courts efficiency to reduce costs, avoiding cross border disputes and ensuring Members have confidence in the operation of the judicial institutions.

Similarly the Treaty on Custody and Maintenance of Children will allow for a more harmonized approach to custody and maintenance of children in a way that is easily accessible by citizens to seek the assistance of the relevant authorities and the judicial systems in member countries.

Leaders also signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to enhance Police Cooperation between members. The MOA on Police Cooperation was first introduced at 3rd Police Commissioners Conference (PCC) held on 26 November, 2012 in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea (PNG) where members agreed to take one step further to deepen Police cooperation amongst themselves.

The MOA will enable members to cooperate and consult each other in areas of mutual interest such as international cooperation and assistance, secondment and attachments to build capacity, sports, social and cultural exchanges, sharing of information and any other areas agreed to by the Parties.

Authorized by the Chairman

Noumea, Port Vila

19 June 2013