



## **Celebrating 25 years of MSG Solidarity & Charting the way forward**

The Government of Papua New Guinea will play host to two of the three most important events on the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Calendar for 2013. This week, the Government is celebrating the organization's Silver Jubilee in a series of celebrations in MSG capitals since the celebrations were launched in January 2013 in Port Vila, Vanuatu, where the MSG Secretariat headquarters is based. PNG also welcomes the visit early this week by the MSG Eminent Persons Group (EPG) who will be undertaking consultations with various stakeholders to review the organization's performance as well as to develop a vision for the future. The EPG is led by Ambassador Kaliopate Tavola of Fiji and other members include: Mr Mr Roch Wamytan, first Vice President of Congress of New Caledonia; Hon. Manasseh Sogovare, former Prime

Minister and current Member of Parliament of Solomon Islands; Hon. Joe Natuman, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and current Member of Parliament of Vanuatu; and Mr Leonard Louma, former Acting Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs & International Relations Advisor to former Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare of Papua New Guinea.

Since the launching of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations in Vanuatu early this year, members of the MSG – Fiji and Solomon Islands organized similar celebrations in March whilst Vanuatu celebrated the event early this month. After PNG hosts the Celebrations this week from 30 May – 1 June, the FLNKS of New Caledonia will host the final celebrations next month when they will also host the 3<sup>rd</sup> most important event on the MSG calendar for 2013, the 19<sup>th</sup> MSG Leaders' Summit. The Government has invited Mr Roch Wamytan as Chief Guest, a prominent Kanak Leader and currently one of two vice-Presidents of the Congress of New Caledonia. The theme of the silver jubilee celebrations is: Celebrating 25 years of MSG Solidarity and Growth.

PNG is celebrating the silver jubilee with a series of events which include cultural performances, a Melanesian market, Canoe racing, Panel Discussions, School quiz competition and a fashion parade.

The EPG has been visiting MSG capitals since April to gauge the views of Leaders, the Government's, Members of Parliament, Departmental Heads, Chiefs, statutory bodies, the private sector, civil society, academia, development partners and other relevant stakeholders. Recently in Vanuatu, the Chairman of the EPG, Ambassador Tavola presented a progress of the EPG team's work to the MSG Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) in Vanuatu. Next month, the EPG is also expected to deliver their final report to the MSG Leaders through the Foreign Ministers Meeting (FMM), which should chart the future direction of the MSG.

Today, the EPG met Departmental Heads, PNG Business Council and Manufacturers Council of PNG. They will meet other relevant stakeholders throughout the week and will also participate in the Silver Jubilee celebrations.

On behalf of the MSG EPG, Ambassador Tavola said the team was excited to be in PNG at the same time the Silver Jubilee celebrations are being held as the future of the MSG or any organization cannot be determined unless we take stock of our past and current performance(s) to measure our successes and failures. 'Only then, will the membership be able to re-prioritize and decide on the way forward,' added Ambassador Tavola.

On behalf of the Director General and staff of the MSG Secretariat, the acting Deputy Director General, Mr Peni Sikvou who is also accompanying the EPG, expressed the organization's deep appreciation to the Government of Papua New Guinea for their continued commitment to the MSG – evident in the excellent programmes they have prepared for the EPG as well as for the Silver Jubilee celebrations. He added that the Secretariat was proud and indeed privileged to be part of these events in Papua New Guinea with its rich cultural heritage, diverse culture; and the most vibrant democratic system and robust economy in the region.

***Authorised for release by the Acting Deputy Director General***

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