



Delegates for the MSG Workshop on the Draft MSG Trade Agreement and other Trade & Economic Integration Initiatives

MSG Workshop on the Draft MSG Trade Agreement and other Trade & Economic Integration Initiatives

The MSG Secretariat has conducted another successful 2 days Workshop on the Draft MSG Trade Agreement and other Trade and Economic Agreement/Initiatives in the region. This was held at the Secretariat Conference Room in Port Vila, Vanuatu from 26-27 March 2014. The Workshop was co-funded under the MSG-Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP) funding arrangement with the European Union which is jointly administered by the Pacific Islands Secretariat (PIFS) and the MSG Secretariat.

In his opening address, the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr. Peter Forau, welcomed and thanked participants for accepting the invitation to attend the Workshop. He also acknowledged and thanked representatives from the Office of the Chief Trade Advisor (OCTA), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organization (PIPSO) for attending as resource people for the Workshop. The workshop was attended by Trade, Labour, Immigration and Investment Officials from the MSG Membership including representatives from the private sector and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).

Mr. Forau highlighted that the purpose of the workshop was to help the private sector and Non State Actors gain awareness and understanding of the newly drafted MSG Trade Agreement legal text, currently in its draft form as well as being aware of other existing and emerging trade and economic arrangements in the region and trade matters beyond the MSGTA. The Director General stressed the importance of the workshop, which is to engage the Private Sector and NGOs on the draft MSGTA legal text to ensure that their views and concerns are taken into consideration. Mr. Forau was pleased with the turnout out of the meeting and said that the MSG Trade Agreement must continue to evolve to attain long term goals for deeper economic integration in the MSG economies as we strive to meet our international and regional obligations.

The key message from DG Forau's opening statement was that:

"The region needs a modern FTA, one that is cognizant of the constraints and challenges faced by the small island economies and continues to demand for greater co-operation, accountability, flexibility and resilience for our Members".

The private sector and NGOs were given the opportunity to provide their views on the new and amended provisions in draft MSGTA and its linkages to other agreements. The workshop also received detailed presentation from Dr. Chris Noonan, the consultant who was engaged by the Secretariat to assist with the re-drafting of the new MSG Trade Agreement. The draft legal text is going through negotiations at the technical level involving Trade, Customs, Quarantine, Labour Investment and Immigration officials from the MSG Member countries. The officials are expected to complete negotiations and finalize the text by end of 2015 as mandated by the MSG Trade Ministers Meeting held in August 2013.

Further information on the outcome of the workshop can be accessed by contacting Mr. John Licht, Program Manager Trade & Investment at the MSG Secretariat on email: j.licht@msg.int or telephone: (678) 27791.

**Authorized for release by the Director General
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