



# **MSG Secretariat** **Secretariat du GFLM**

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien



## Key workshops to strengthen and expand MSG trade underway

A series of workshops for Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) countries are underway in Port Vila, Vanuatu on issues relating to the MSG Trade Agreement.

Four events are scheduled with the workshop on Rules of Origin held this week on Tuesday 14th April, followed by the Technical Working Group meeting on Trade in Goods on 15 April, Technical Working Group meeting on Trade in Services on 16 April, and culminating in the Trade and Economic Officials Meeting scheduled for Friday 17 April 2015.

Officials and representatives of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu have converged on Port Vila, with the effects of Cyclone Pam in the backdrop, to further strengthen and expand on the MSG Trade Agreement (MSGTA) that was first signed in 1993.

Until now the negotiations and talks have primarily been about the trade in Goods, however a major focus now among MSG countries is the inclusion and addition of a number of key areas.

Director for Trade, Investment and Economic Development, Mr Peni Sikivou on behalf of the Director General of the MSG Secretariat said : “The MSGTA is being reviewed and under its current draft version, abbreviated as MSGTA3, new chapters on Services, Investment, Labour Mobility and Government Procurement are being incorporated into the Agreement,”

Hence key representatives in the MSG country delegations at the current workshops include officials from Labour, Immigration, Telecommunications, Investment Promotion Agencies, E-Commerce regulators and trade officials.

Mr Sikivou also explained that the expected outcome from the various workshops and meetings underway this week is for members to understand the draft legal text for each specific chapter and area and its implications, and are able to form a position on the new provisions consistent to their earlier stand at previous meetings.

“The present review is to pave the way for free trade among Members by 2017, as stipulated in the Port Moresby Declaration that MSG Trade Ministers adopted on 26 November 2014,” Mr Sikivou added.

Another key issue that will be discussed this week, particularly at the Trade and Economic Officials Meeting on Friday is the MSG Private Sector Development (PSD) Strategy that is

supported under the EU-funded Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP).

Mr Sikivou further added that these meetings are very important in that MSG leaders recognize the strategic importance of private sector development (PSD) for effective trade and investment, especially in the context of the expanding MSGTA3.

Trade and Economic Officials will look at progress made on private sector development initiatives and future strategies.

These 4 events are kindly funded by the European Union under the PITAP.

For further information on the workshops or request for interviews please contact John Licht on Ph: +(678) 27791 or +(678) 5460440, email: [j.licht@msg.int](mailto:j.licht@msg.int) or communications support team Joseph Lee on Ph: +(678) 7747922 email: [joseph@makeallmedia.com](mailto:joseph@makeallmedia.com)