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## □ **MSG Trade Agreement to break new ground**

The MSG Trade Agreement is set to make new ground as the only trade agreement in the Pacific that will include services, investment and labour mobility, says Fiji's Permanent Secretary for Industry, Trade and Tourism Shaheen Ali.

Senior MSG Trade and Economic officials met in Nadi today to finalise recommendations and items to be presented to MSG Trade Ministers next week.

This is the second-last meeting to finalise the draft legal text of a new and more comprehensive trade agreement known as MSGTA 3, which will include new chapters on services, investment and labour mobility, to be presented for adoption by Ministers in November.

Trade officials went through the reports and outcomes of the MSG technical working group meetings on goods and services that were held earlier this week, including the heads of investment promotion agencies meeting.

They also considered the first-ever regional study on an MSG private sector development strategy.

MSG officials have been pleased with the progress made so far on some of the key

outstanding issues such as the Rules of Origin – the criteria under which Goods will be deemed eligible for preferential treatment by member states in the new MSGTA.

“The revised trade agreement will provide impetus for deeper and increased integration amongst MSG and also open up avenues for further trade opportunities to take place in the MSG region,” says Fiji’s Permanent Secretary Shaheen Ali.

“It is the only fully operational trade agreement which has achieved free trade area status for trade in goods. MSG leaders have a vision to increase the scope of this trade agreement to include services, investment, telecommunications, e-commerce, and temporary movement of natural persons,” he said.

Other senior officials from MSG countries have echoed this view stating they intend to make the MSGTA3 a premier trade agreement.

This week’s meetings are being supported and funded by MSG members and the European Union, through the Pacific Islands Forum, under the Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP)

For coverage or more information of the event or request for interviews please contact John Licht, Program Manager Trade & Investment on Ph.: +679 865 5459 or +679 946 1346.

**SOURCE:**

Stanley Simpson  
Business Melanesia