



MSG Foreign Ministers pledge urgent and relief assistance for Vanuatu

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Foreign Ministers gathered at the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila to hear first-hand reports from the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu and its National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) officials, before discussing urgent relief assistance to one of its member and host of the MSG Secretariat – Vanuatu.

Madam Caroline Machoro-Reignier, Chairlady of the MSG Foreign Ministers Meeting (FMM) welcomed Hon Rimbink Pato, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs & Immigration of Papua New Guinea; Hon Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji; Hon Milner Tozaka, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands; Hon Sato Kilman Livtuanu, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of Vanuatu; and Front de Liberation National Kanak et Socialist representative, M. Mickael Forrest to the one-day meeting.

At the official opening of the meeting, Madam Machoro - Reignier called on all Ministers and Senior Officials at the Special FMM to take a minute of silence in memory of the people of Vanuatu who lost their lives during the recent Tropical Cyclone Pam and to those who were affected by the cyclone in other parts of the Pacific.

The Chairlady of the FMM said that the very purpose of holding the Special FMM is to discuss a relief assistance, rebuilding and rehabilitation package that MSG members could provide to help the Government of Vanuatu respond immediately in the coming weeks to the pressing needs of the people of Vanuatu.

She said that this is to help MSG members consider the best way forward, not only in terms of urgent and immediate relief assistance to the people but also in terms of rebuilding Vanuatu.

Madam Machoro - Reignier and Foreign Ministers from MSG member states were able to receive a presentation with an assessment of the impacts of Cyclone PAM by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), and a presentation by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade, Hon Sato Kilman Livtuanu on International Cooperation arrangements for immediate relief assistance to Vanuatu. Minister Kilman provided the meeting with information on the various pledges Vanuatu had received from donor countries. The Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Peter Forau also briefed Foreign Ministers on what the Secretariat has done so far as part of immediate assistance to the National Disaster Management Office who are coordinating relief and rehabilitation for the people of Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam.

The Chairlady of the MSG FMM said members have been shown an inkling of the extent of damages to Vanuatu by Cyclone Pam and have also heard of the remarkable spirit of resilience

the people of Vanuatu have showed in the aftermath of this disaster. “We can only salute and uplift that spirit, and provide the support much needed to the people to rebuild their homes and lives and encourage the Government of Vanuatu in this huge task to get the country back on their feet and reboot the economy to get Vanuatu back in business,” urged Madam Machoro - Reignier.

The Chairlady of the FMM also noted in the meeting that PNG has contributed VT221million to the Government of Vanuatu and further expressed that they would be sending an assessment Team that would determine further support for Vanuatu. Hon. Rimbink Pato, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration confirmed at the meeting that the PNG Assessment Team would include officials from the National Emergency Disaster Office, Department of Works (engineers), Prime Ministers Department, Foreign Affairs Department, Department of Health and PNG Defense Force some of whom were already been deployed and on the ground in Vanuatu. PNG also indicated that the PNG Government had contributed K1 million to Tuvalu to also assist in their recovery efforts from Cyclone Pam.

During the meeting Hon Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji expressed the gratitude of the Prime Minister and the Government of Fiji to the Government of Vanuatu for allowing the Fiji contingent to participate in their recovery efforts. Minister Kubuabola also informed the meeting on the support that they are providing to the Government and people of Vanuatu. He confirmed that on Fiji has committed \$250,000 on the provision of personnel, \$122,000 on relief assistance, \$70,000 relief assistance awaiting deployment and further assistance is expected to be announced soon. The meeting also noted that a team of 8 personnel was deployed to provide support to the Vanuatu NDMO and the Team brought with them first supply of water and food rations donated by the Fiji Business Community and other partners. On 23 March, 2015, 40 government officials (28 Military personnel including engineers and 12 Health officials) were deployed to Port Vila with the assistance of the New Zealand Government. The personnel would be involved in the clean-up, damage assessment, provision of health services, provision of engineering service during the 14 days period of deployment. Fiji also indicated that the engineers were now part of the Infrastructure and Public Utilities Cluster under the NDMO and the focus of the assistance to Ambrym and Paama (Malampa Province). Minister Kubuabola confirmed that the Fiji Government will be able to commit \$1m, as per the advice from the Ministry of Finance, to assist with the relief and rehabilitation efforts in Vanuatu.

The meeting also noted that the FLNKS firstly expressed their sympathy to the Government and people for the Vanuatu for the loss that they have suffered following the devastation effect of cyclone Pam. FLNKS also indicated that they had requested that all elected FLNKS officials in all of their institutions and to the Kanaky people to support all relief work for Vanuatu.

The Chairlady of the FMM and MSG Foreign Affairs Ministers also received confirmation from Solomon Islands Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Hon Milner Tozaka who indicated that although recovery efforts were also underway in the Temotu Province, Solomon Islands which was also affected by the cyclone, the Government in showing concern for the Melanesian wantoks in Vanuatu had approved VT11million to assist the Government of Vanuatu in their relief efforts. Hon Minister Tozaka further informed that the Royal Solomon Islands Police patrol boat was en route to Vanuatu to assist in the relief efforts.

Outcomes of the Special FMM will be conveyed to the Leaders for the 20th MSG Leaders' Summit.

Madam Machoro-Reignier and MSG Foreign Ministers as part of the Special FMM on Thursday also visited some of the most affected areas and communities in Port Vila as part of their commitment and support to the relief efforts being carried out in Vanuatu.

Photo Caption: (Left to Right: Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, MP, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Fiji; Hon. Sato Kilman Livtunvanu, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of the Republic of Vanuatu; MSG Foreign Ministers Meeting Chairlady, Madam Caroline Machoro-Reignier; Hon. Rimbink Pato, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs & Immigration of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea; Hon. Milner Tozaka, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands)

*MSG Secretariat
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