



Exchange of the new MSG-PIPSO MoU between Ms Mereia Volavola, PIPSO CEO (right), and Mr John Licht, Program Manager Trade & Investment on behalf of MSG Secretariat Director General, Mr Peter Forau (left);  
Background: Ms Fong Toy, PIFS Deputy Secretary General; and Mr Jerome Pons, Head of Sector at the EU Delegation for the Pacific

On 13 May 2015 the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation (PIPSO) concluded a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking an important milestone for both regional organisations.

The MoU, which was signed between the Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr Peter Forau, and PIPSO CEO, Mrs Mereia Volavola, was exchanged on the sidelines of the annual steering committee meeting of the EU-funded programme "Strengthening Pacific Economic Integration Through Trade", held at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in Suva. Both MSG and PIPSO are implementing partners of this 35 million euro programme, which is overseen by PIFS.

PIFS Deputy Secretary General, Ms Fong Toy, and Mr Jerome Pons from the EU Delegation for the Pacific, commended the MSG Secretariat and PIPSO for their initiative aimed at fostering joint cooperation in the field of private sector development. The MoU provides for reinforced co-operation building on the partner's specific strengths and expertise, mutual recognition of respective roles and mandates, pooling of resources for joint initiatives that address common priorities as well as exploring new opportunities for future cooperation.

In handing over the signed MoU to Mr Licht from the MSG Secretariat, Mrs Volavola underlined the importance both organisations attach to strengthening the existing relationship and pursuing joint approaches to enhance private sector influence on policy issues relating to trade, investment and economic development for the MSG countries. Mrs Volavola emphasised: "The officiating of this MoU formalizes the genuine partnership which PIPSO and the MSG Secretariat have developed over the last 3 years."

MSG Secretariat Director General, Mr Peter Forau, added "as the MSG region continues to negotiate and close the brackets on the new draft MSG Trade Agreement, it is equally important that MSG places itself at the forefront with PIPSO to provide mutual support and advocacy to the private sector to ensure that economic growth of the MSG region continues to be driven by the private sector besides the support offered by multiple donor agencies. The MoU provides a boost to further unleashing some of the potentials between our two organisations to better serve our members as we advance into a new trade agreement Post 2015".

While the partnership between MSG and PIPSO was formalized in Suva, the MSG Secretariat is undertaking in-country consultations in its member countries to draft its first ever Private Sector Development Strategy, as mandated by the MSG Heads of Investment and Promotion Agencies in 2012. A distinct feature of the PSD Strategy is its scope and inclusiveness – covering foreign and domestic investments, both large and small, as well as urban centres and rural areas, which are often left out of strategic policy development undertakings.

For further details on the MoU, please contact Mr. John Licht, Program Manager Trade and Investment at the MSG Secretariat on: [j.licht@msg.int](mailto:j.licht@msg.int)