



## **Technical Working Group Meeting for the Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement 3 (MSGTA3)**

The Technical Working Group Negotiations meeting on Trade in Services was convened in Port Vila, Vanuatu on 19-20 April 2016 to complete negotiations on the Services Schedules of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Trade Agreement (MSGTA3). It was the last of several rounds of negotiations on the revision of the MSG Trade Agreement which began in 2012.

Mr George Tuti of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade for Solomon Islands

chaired the meeting, while the Secretariat facilitated the proceedings. The meeting was attended by Officials from the Departments of Trade, Customs, Bio-Security, Investment, Immigration, Labour and State Law from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Representatives of the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) were also present.

The meeting provided the opportunity for MSG Members to complete outstanding negotiations on the services schedules of the MSGTA3, following their earlier discussions in October and November of last year at which they agreed on the legal text for Trade in Services, which included the Schedules of Employment Opportunities for Labour Mobility.

In his opening remarks, MSG Acting Director General, Mr Molean Kilepak, stressed the significance of this final round of negotiations before Trade Ministers and Leaders are to consider for possible signing the revised Trade Agreement. The anticipated endorsement conforms to the commitment under the Port Moresby Declaration made in November 2014 by the MSG Trade Ministers to achieving a Melanesian Free Trade Area by 2017. Mr Kilepak also noted the consensus of Leaders in Solomon Islands in June 2015 and more recently during the MSG Chair's visit to the capitals for the need to conclude the MSGTA3 negotiations without any further delay. This would help ensure that the Trade Agreement remains as the premier trading arrangement in the Pacific, for the socio-economic benefit of the people of Melanesia.

Mr Tuti acknowledged the commitment of MSG Members to producing a Trade Agreement that is technically sound and reflective of the political, economic and social interests of MSG as a Sub-region. He also emphasised that the only yardstick for measuring the success of the meeting would be a successfully concluded MSG Trade Agreement that affirmed the accomplishment of the primary purpose of the Technical Working Group, which is to culminate with the signing of the revised Agreement by the Leaders later this year.

At the end of the negotiations, the key outcomes of the meeting was the consensus reached by Members in the adoption of firstly, the revised Services Schedules offered by each Member to facilitate trading in services and secondly, on the Schedules of Non-Conforming Measures tabled by each Member to facilitate Cross-Border Investment flows. These Schedules were developed and first presented to the Technical Working Group as initial offers by Members following their national consultations. After negotiations and adoption, the Schedules would be incorporated into the legal text of the revised MSG Trade Agreement, which would be presented at the Trade and Economic Officials Meeting on 23-24 May 2016 and subsequently to the Trade Ministers Meeting on 25 May 2016. Both meetings will be held in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

In the closing remarks by members and the Secretariat, there was special appreciation to the European Union for its funding assistance to the MSG Secretariat through the Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP) which is administered by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The MSG PITAP under the 10th EDF will come comes to an end on October 2016.

Authorised by

Acting Director General  
MSG Secretariat