



## **Trade Capacity Building Support for MSG Secretariat**

07 December 2017

The trade and investment policy advisory services of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG)

Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu have been boosted through technical support received from the European Union-funded TradeCom II Programme.

Following the launch of the 10-month Project on 14 August 2017, consultants of the Mauritian company Enabling Environments Ltd, comprising Ms Nicole Garraway of Grenada, Mr Alipate Tavo of Tonga and Mr Bertrand Monrozier of Switzerland have been working closely with the Secretariat on the execution of various activities.

The activities of the Project fall under three categories; firstly, the strengthening of the Secretariat's Trade and Investment Division in effectively monitoring intra-regional and international trade flows; secondly, identifying air and shipping transport connectivity bottlenecks among MSG Member countries and recommending suitable trade facilitation improvements; and thirdly, improving access to trade-related tools and the sharing of trade information. This final activity will result in the development of an online MSG Business Directory.

The consultants met with principal stakeholders from the public and private sectors for in-depth consultations on key activities of the Project during their visits to Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Online discussions with stakeholders were also undertaken.

"We welcome the support of TradeCom towards the MSG economic integration process and this particular intervention demonstrates our commitment to dialoguing with both the public and private sectors for policymaking purposes," MSG Acting Director General, Mr Peter Eafeare said. He added that the intervention was timely as the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) will soon be entering into force, while all four MSG Members are also advancing their commitments to the Trade Facilitation Agreement under the auspices of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

The consultants have just concluded their second mission to the MSG Region and will return for their final mission in February next year. The highlight of the final leg of their mission will be the organisation of a Validation Workshop in Port Vila on 13-14 March 2018, where stakeholder representatives will have the opportunity to review and validate the findings of the consulting team. The online MSG Business Directory will also be presented at the Workshop prior to its launch.

"The outcomes of this intervention, which exemplifies collaboration involving the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group, will also contribute to advancing the

implementation of the MFTA as well as our Members' obligations to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement," Mr Eafeare said. He added that such technical assistance would help streamline the Secretariat's Trade and Investment work programme priorities with those of MSG Member countries and other regional stakeholders.

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