



22 March 2018

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat, with support received under the TradeCom II Programme for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States organised a Regional Validation Workshop under the Technical Assistance Project to provide capacity building support to the Secretariat and enhance trade facilitation services in the MSG Region.

The Workshop was convened in Port Vila, Vanuatu on Thursday, March 15, 2018 and was attended by Senior Officials from the Trade, Civil Aviation and Shipping regulatory authorities,

service providers as well as private sector representatives from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Regional partner institutions including the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Community, Pacific Aviation Safety Office and the Pacific Islands Private Sector Organisation were also represented.

Technical input for the Workshop was provided by the Enabling Environments Ltd Team, comprising Mr Alipate Tavo, Mr Bertrand Monrozier and Ms Nicole Garraway. TradeCom II was represented by their Programme Manager, Mr Riccardo Tintis, who provided requisite support to the MSG Secretariat.

During the opening session, Mr John Palmer, Officer-in-Charge, MSG Secretariat, expressed his sincerest gratitude for the support received under the TradeCom II Programme. He acknowledged that the outputs and outcomes of the Workshop would contribute to the advancement of the regional economic integration process within MSG and the Pacific Region. “It cannot be business as usual and change can be the only theme that will advance the MSG integration process,” Mr Palmer said.

Mr Tintis expressed his appreciation to the MSG Secretariat and the Enabling Environments Team for organising the Validation Workshop, as well as for the implementation of the Technical Assistance intervention and its outputs “We are enthusiastic about these outputs because they are the reason that this project is considered as a best-practice project in terms of the way it was conducted and the level of consultation engendered in order to yield the results that would be discussed at the Workshop.”

The Workshop focused on improving air connectivity, by pinpointing the key challenges affecting the regional air services industry and identifying practical solutions which can be implemented to surmount these hurdles. In addition, the modalities to facilitate the establishment of an MSG Shipping Commission that would better monitor, regulate and facilitate enhanced shipping services across the MSG Region were also discussed. Moreover, the Workshop facilitated the launch of the Online MSG Business Directory, which is an online facility and resource for business contacts, market information and advice on how to do business in the MSG Region. The launch of this online platform was complemented by a discussion on sourcing relevant and timely trade and business information from reputable regional and international sources. The Business Directory can be accessed via <http://msgsec.info/businessdirectory/>.

The MSG Secretariat will be pursuing the outputs and outcomes of the Workshop through its established machinery to support policy decision-making process for the benefit of Member

countries. A key consideration in this regard is the alignment of the Workshop outputs with Members' National Development strategies.

For more information on the Workshop, please contact Mr Henry Sanday, Trade and Investment Adviser, via email h.sanday@msg.int.