



06 December 2017

The 5th Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Ministers of Culture and Arts Meeting (MCAM) was held at the Heritage Park Hotel in Honiara, Solomon Islands on Wednesday 6th December, 2017. On Tuesday, the Senior Officials met informally to prepare for the Ministers' Meeting. The Meeting was officially opened by the Chairman and Minister for Culture & Tourism of the Solomon Islands Government, Hon. Bartholomew Parapolo.

Hon. Minister Bartholomew Parapolo conveyed the Prime Minister's Opening Remarks during

the Opening of the 5th MSG Ministers of Culture & Arts Meeting. The Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Rick Houenipwela (MSG Chair) welcomed the Ministers and Officials and re-affirmed his Government's support to the MSG Agenda and the Ministers meeting. The PM stated that the common Melanesian culture is one of the pillars that the MSG is founded on. The common cultural pillar establishes the important platform for our past, present and future cooperation and interactions.

Minister Bartholomew Parapolo in his Opening Statement said the establishment of the MSG Culture & Arts Festival every four years is one milestone the MSG Group has achieved, as the festival brings our people together to build stronger relationships, promote learning amongst our people while celebrating our cultural diversity, tradition, customs and arts in Melanesia. He further stressed the importance of arts and culture in development of our people and economies. Arts and Culture is a strong enabler of Tourism and in the art & craft industry for Melanesia. He further stated that the vital source of Melanesian Arts and Culture, the land, forests, and seas are very important natural resources and must be used wisely and closely protected.

A successful Outcome was achieved as expected in the Objectives of the meeting for the Ministers to endorse a number of recommendations of the previous MSG Council of Arts & Culture Meeting on 23-24 May, 2017 in Honiara, Solomon Islands and for Members to receive an Update by Solomon Islands on preparations for the 6th Melanesian Arts & Culture Festival (MACF) to be held in Honiara on 1st -14th July, 2018. The main Outcomes were as follows, Ministers: (i) endorsed the establishment of a Culture, Arts & Heritage (CAH) desk at the MSG Secretariat to enhance implementation of the CAH program; (ii) agreed for Members to update on development of national legislation on the "Treaty on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge & Expressions of Culture (TK & EC); (iii) endorsed that a Melanesian Music Festival utilizes existing events (e.g., New Caledonia music festival, First Napuan, & Fete de la musique) as a platform to address Intellectual Property (IP) issues and concerns; (iv) endorsed a study on MSG cultural goods and services; (v) supported the national efforts for MSG cultural education to be embedded in the formal and informal education system; and (vi) Ministers agreed to support Solomon Islands Plans and Preparations for hosting the 6th Melanesian Arts & Culture Festival on 1st -14th July, 2018.

The 6th MACF will be held during a time when Solomon Islands will also celebrate their 40th Anniversary of Independence on 7th July, 2018. The MSG Members (FLNKS, Fiji, PNG & Vanuatu) will celebrate the Independence of the Solomon Islands in a true Melanesian Spirit through the Culture & Arts Festival. All friends in the Pacific and in the region are welcome to attend this event of the MSG.

The MSG Secretariat as usual supported the administration of the meeting. The Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli in his statement to the members at the opening of the meeting reiterated the Secretariat's commitment to the service of the members and to enhance the implementation of the sub-regional programs on arts, culture & heritage under the Secretariat's "Sustainable Development Program" as mandated by the Leaders.