



Some of the Government Officials from member countries during the Validation Workshop on the MSG Labour Mobility and Melanesian Travel Card.

04 October 2018

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat with the support of the International

Migration Organisation (IOM) had successfully completed a validation workshop from 3-4 October, 2018 at the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Labour mobility, a key chapter of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA), facilitates the movement and engagement of skilled MSG workers for temporary employment within MSG countries. To operationalise the implementation of this chapter, the MSG Secretariat with financial support from IOM, conducted a study which recommended Standard Operating Procedures to facilitate movement of nationals within the MSG sub-region. The SOP will also be supported by the Melanesian Travel Card which aims to improve efficiency and effectiveness in the movement within the MSG sub-region of certain categories of visas for MSG nationals.

The purpose of the validation workshop is to bring all participants from key government ministries or departments of Labour, Immigration and Trade in MSG countries to offer constructive and pertinent comments in reviewing and validating the findings of the IOM report. Participants were also given opportunity to recommend strategies to facilitate the implementation of the Labour Mobility Scheme and the Melanesian Travel Card. Bilateral consultations were also conducted with members to ascertain the progress with respect to signing and/or ratifying of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement.

While opening the workshop, the Director General for MSG Secretariat, Mr. Amena Yauvoli welcomed the participants to Port Vila. He emphasized the importance of labour mobility to create employment opportunities for MSG nationals to freely move within the MSG sub-region. The workshop also provided an opportunity for the MSG Secretariat to encourage members to work expeditiously in showing a firm commitment towards signing and ratifying of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement. The Director General underscored the importance of capitalising on economic opportunities through the MFTA to achieve MSG Leaders commitment towards achieving regional integration within the MSG sub-region. He reminded participants that the MSG Secretariat was readily available to assist members with the implementation of the Agreement and have already taken steps to achieve this as a priority. To date, Fiji and Solomon Islands have signed the MFTA.

Participants at the workshop included government officials from the Ministry of Labour, Department of Immigration and Ministry of Trade from Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Also in attendance were representatives from IOM and the MSG Secretariat.

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