



THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU



STATEMENT

BY THE RT. HON MOANA CARCASSES KALOSIL

PRIME MINISTER

DELIVERED

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 19th MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP LEADERS' SUMMIT

PLENARY SESSION

NOUMEA, NEW CALEDONIA

21ST JUNE 2013

Mr. Chairman

Hon. Prime Ministers,

President of the New Caledonia Government

Deputy Prime Ministers

Hon. Ministers

Observers and Special Guests

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I bring with me warm greetings from the people of Vanuatu to you all who are present here today.

Let me on their behalf acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Kanaky people, with whom, we, the people of Vanuatu have close traditional and cultural ties through the Loyalty Islands Province from time immemorial. I echo the multitude of voices of the Vanuatu people, and express our appreciation for the very warm hospitality, accorded to my delegation during our arrival here in the Kanaky land. I also want to extend our appreciation to the Director General of the MSG Secretariat and his staff for working tirelessly with the host, the FLNKS and Government of New Caledonia, to organise this important meeting which brought us here today.

My Government remains grateful to the Government and the people of New Caledonia for looking after the Vanuatu citizens in this country, many of whom have been here for many generations. My people are here not only because of our close ties with France as part of our historical legacy, which we still treasure up until today; but also because they are accepted by the Melanesians in this great land of economic opportunity.

Mr Chairman,

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of the Melanesian Spearhead Group. It has been a long but winding road. Some of our Founding Fathers have since left us; and to those who are still with us today, may I on behalf of the people of Vanuatu pay tribute to them for breaking the kernel of colonialism and sowing seeds of freedom which has led to strong solidarity and growth in our sub-region. I believe that we have achieved some of their aspirations in our 25 years of the journey. I also believe that from our humble beginning, we have grown to a strong and vibrant organisation in the region, proving to our sceptics that sub-regionalism not only could be a vehicle for growth, but one that could serve our greater regional vision. And because we are called the ‘Spearhead’ Group, our collective strength literally connotes a spear that could penetrate any issue. I am therefore proud that the MSG

Trade Agreement is the only active trading agreement in our region. It shows that together we can achieve great things.

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, as one of the Founding Fathers of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, our very own Father Walter Hayde Lini, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu once said,

Quote “*Vanuatu will not be fully free until all Melanesians are free.*” Unquote.

That in itself defines the enormity of the task ahead of us. The preamble of the Agreement establishing our organisation further elaborates and perhaps transcends it to define who we are and what we stand for as a group.

Vanuatu’s own experience showed that at one stage during our period of struggle for an independent and democratic Republic, we had to seek help when we needed it. And we are grateful that our brothers from Papua New Guinea came in to assist in the restoration of law and order in 1980 before we got independence. There are many others who came in with financial support and offered assistance for infrastructure and other development needs.

I say this because all our experiences are valuable in indicating that within our group, there is a huge reservoir of compassion, respect, solidarity and empathy for those who are in need. And we must open the gates to this reservoir so that all peoples within the Melanesian sub-region, and even beyond, could harvest these values and principles.

So at the summit of our 25th Anniversary celebrations here in Noumea, New Caledonia today, let me remind us of the importance of the ‘canoe analogy’ told by the paramount custom Chiefs of Kanak—that as we paddle this canoe together, we must make sure we leave no Melanesian behind us.

This brings me, Mr. Chairman, to the application by the West Papua Coalition for National Liberation (WPCNL) seeking membership to the MSG. In the true spirit of Melanesia, my Government gives its unmistakable support for full membership of West Papua into this forum of Melanesians—a position we have always proudly pronounced for all Melanesians alike.

I am therefore greatly indebted to the outgoing Chair for his understanding for the West Papuan application to be accommodated in our discussions this week. I am also equally grateful to the host of this 19th Summit of the MSG Leaders for inviting the West Papua Coalition of National Liberation to this august gathering. This is indeed a huge landmark achievement of which all peoples in our Melanesian countries should be proud of.

Mr. Chairman, we are aware of the concerns of West Papuans, who long for a day when they as Melanesians, could achieve self-determination. But also Dear Colleague Leaders and friends, we are aware of the human rights violations and atrocities being committed against West Papuans in their motherland. And so therefore, I join the many voices of peace loving citizens around the world, across all continents and oceans, to call for an end to the abuse of human rights. We urge that any continuation of abuse of human rights should be immediately brought to the attention of the international community. Leaders, ladies and gentlemen, I raise these serious concerns on this issue with great humility for a very important reason. And that is, we have strong respective political and economic relations with Indonesia and this relations at a bilateral level for us in Vanuatu is indeed an important one.

Vanuatu established diplomatic relations with Indonesia on 3rd of July 1995. And we treasure this relationship and wish to see it strengthened into maturity. We want to see the continuation of political dialogue between ourselves. But as sovereign friends, we equally believe we could in the true spirit of comradeship and maturity, discuss the issue of West Papuans who are undeniably Melanesians. Our collective acceptance of our friend, Indonesia, as observer in the MSG is done with the aim to promote amicable dialogue and discussion on issues of common interest, including the West Papuan desire for self-determination.

I thank the Government of Indonesia for being open to dialogue with Melanesian countries. Indonesia is a growing democracy and a very powerful friend and neighbour of Melanesia. I believe as a friend of Melanesia, important issues could be discussed without diluting our collective determination to see the West Papuans granted their right for self-determination some day.

We know that their cries have been bluntly denied by many rich and wealthy countries, including the UN for many decades, inspite of many rich discussions on good governance. So I say that we as brothers, must stand up for them. That is to say that the epicentre of support for the advocacy for West Papuan Self-Determination must begin in this region, the Melanesia. And from here it could spread to other foreign lands. The world must know our unwavering support for the colonized people just like we did for the Kanaky people and the French Polynesia who are now finally listed in the Decolonization list of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman, the preamble of our constitution is very clear on our determination as a group. It states that we are determined to promote the Melanesian values, traditions and the inalienable rights of all Melanesians. We have this as a guiding principle and our decisions and actions must mirror what is enshrined not only in the MSG Constitution, but eternally in our hearts.

Mr. Chairman, the raison d'être of this noble organization was because of the strong determination by our leaders for the colonized peoples of this country to walk free from colonialism someday. Nevertheless, 25 years after that promise, we are still here with the FLNKS to show solidarity and to renew our commitment and assurances that their objective for independence will be achieved one day. One day they will be sitting with us around this table, no longer as a political party group but as Sovereign nation of the Kanaky people. Chair, this is the Melanesian dream-the Melanesian dream for freedom. One day, the people of this country will board the freedom train to join the nations of the world, where their rights and future will no longer be dictated to them.

To do this, I urge our Kanaky brothers to be united. And I say again, let us be united. We in Vanuatu have had our share of divisive political ideologies during our struggle for independence. But when we searched the souls of our people we found the determination and courage to never let our desire for freedom be extinguished by the power of money and a promise for comfort. We took the risk and today we are free and still maintain close relations with France and Britain. We value our relationship with them now. I thank God for this gift of being free. I would like to rally the people of Melanesia to support the people of New Caledonia in the upcoming referendum. I pledge the support of the Vanuatu people to the New Caledonia people for the upcoming referendum.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished leaders, Ministers and officials, as I conclude my statement on this issue, I want to sum up my remarks.

History will judge us, for the decisions we make here now and in the future. Our failure today to take decisive decisions, will be scrutinized and exposed by our future generations. Our motives behind our reluctance and hesitation, will be laid bare by our future generations. Therefore, we must demonstrate strong leadership as fighters for justice in the Melanesian region. May the true spirit for our Melanesian freedom descend upon all the colonized peoples, from our highest mountains to the lowest valleys of our land. So that one day all the peoples in Melanesia will be free. I said one day, they will be free. And where we as Melanesians could sit together around the same table and contemplate a new Melanesian civilization.

May the Great Compassionate and Merciful God bless us all. Long live Melanesia.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.