



MSG Secretariat
Secretariat du GFLM

Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

**CLOSING REMARKS BY SOM CHAIR, PERMANENT SECRETARY, FIJI MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS & INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, MR. AMENA YAUVOLI
AT THE CLOSING OF THE SPECIAL MSG SENIOR OFFICIALS MEETING (SOM)**

**MSG Secretariat Conference Room
17TH May 2013
Port Vila, Vanuatu**

Heads of delegations from Fiji, FLNKS, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu,
Senior Government Officials,
Director General and Staff of the MSG Secretariat,
Ladies and Gentlemen

We have reached the end of our meeting and I want to say that I am very delighted with how our meeting went. We have discussed frankly and in a collegial manner and the success of our

meeting is due largely to our unity. Although this is the first time I have visited our Headquarters and Chaired the SOM in my new capacity as PS of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & International Cooperation of Fiji, I have been involved in the early life of this organization when discussions were taking place on its establishment. Those were exciting times, considering that MSG had existed for almost twenty (20) years when the Secretariat was formally established in 2008. Since then, watching from afar, how the Secretariat has evolved into a dynamic regional organization in such a short time, makes me proud to have been one of the 'original contributors', in a manner of speaking of the establishment of the Secretariat.

It also makes me even more proud to be part of the Senior Officials Meeting, leading the discussions this week on issues that matter to the growth and development of our organization. I am a proud Melanesian sitting in this room with eloquent heads of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Excellencies and representatives from the membership who have contributed to the success of this Meeting.

With almost less than a month before we meet again during the pre-Summit SOM in Poindimie in the Northern Province of New Caledonia, I am also grateful that you accepted my invitation to meet this week in Port Vila to discuss a number of significant issues concerning the future of our organization as well as to consider some progress reports from various constituent bodies and the Secretariat. I also believe the update on the preparatory arrangements for the 19th MSG Leaders Summit provides a clearer guidance on what is expected of members to enable our Kanaky brothers and sisters prepare for the Summit. Colleagues, I seek your support and cooperation towards meeting the preparatory requirements by the set timelines.

Since the 18th MSG Leaders Summit in 2011, I understand there have been a number of new initiatives as well as outstanding matters that have been accomplished by the membership and this esteemed body has played an important role in achieving those targets. You and your predecessors who have sat around this table together with the Director General and staff of the Secretariat as well as members of other esteemed constituent bodies of the Organization have successfully managed to implement many of the initiatives in such a short time thereby giving impetus to the recognition of the MSG as an organization that is committed to its broad vision on the future MSG economic integration and the Kanaky cause for political emancipation, among others.

Colleagues, as we head to New Caledonia next month for our 19th MSG Leaders Summit, I cannot over-emphasise the significance of holding the Summit in Kanaky/New Caledonia. It has been almost 25 years since the Noumea Accord was signed, the same period of time when our Leaders put pen to paper by signing the Agreed Principles of Cooperation that formalised

the founding of our Organization. I must say that whilst we as an organization have successfully grown into a formal institution with internal persona as rightly pointed out by His Excellency, the High Commissioner of PNG to Fiji and leader of the PNG delegation, and as an institution that is quickly gaining prominence in the region, I feel the progress towards political emancipation for our brothers and sisters from Kanaky has somewhat been of a slower pace. In recent years though, we have done our best to assist them in this process and I am grateful to the membership for their support and the attention they now begin to show towards this cause. With less than a year to go before the process for referendum commences in New Caledonia, I wish to call on your undivided support to the Kanaky cause and in so doing, perhaps take into consideration, some new initiatives that are being considered by some of our members in increasing engagement with the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, the C24.

My esteemed colleagues, with the expectations required of the Secretariat to meet the demands of the membership, including achieving the objectives for which our organization was originally founded, I plead with you to remain steadfast to the commitments made towards the success and growth of this organization. Compared to other regional organizations, we are a smaller institution but we serve the largest and most exciting part of our region. There is so much we can do to serve the 9million people of our region and despite the many challenges we continue to face, I am confident that if we fully commit ourselves to contributing and supporting our organization, we will be able to overcome some of these challenges.

We must be forward looking and consider innovative ideas that are being brought to us by the Secretariat to sustain the work of our organization. We must honour our commitments to the Secretariat so it is able to function effectively and efficiently, in order to satisfy the demands we continue to impose.

Having said that, I am grateful for the support our Governments continue to extend towards the Secretariat but I know we can do better. Let us be consistent in meeting our obligations to our organization and ease some of their anxieties as to whether the operations of the organizations can be sustained as well as the welfare of the staff of the Secretariat. The Secretariat should be focussing on the issues that we expect them deliver, and not be spending time, reminding us of our obligations.

Having considered the financial updated report this morning and other issues which require further commitment on our part, means we need to seriously take into account what this organization means to us and how this organization can effectively lead us for the next 25years. In this regard, I wish to urge you all once again, to ensure that we remain steadfast in our

commitment towards our young organization.

On that note, I thank you once again for availing yourselves to attend this important meeting and for your contributions to the outcomes of this meeting.

As you return home to your respective countries and to your families, I wish you bon voyage and look forward to seeing you all in New Caledonia in a few weeks time. For those that are remaining including the Vanuatu delegation and the Director General and staff of the Secretariat, I thank you for your hospitality on behalf of all delegates and wish you well until we meet again in New Caledonia.

I now have the great honour of officially declaring this Special Senior Officials Meeting of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), officially closed.

Thank you
Merci beaucoup and
Vinaka vakalevu.