

**Statement by
H.E. A. M. Fachir
Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia
At the 20th Melanesian Spearhead Group Leaders' Summit
Honiara, Solomon Islands, 26 June 2015**

Honorable Manasseh Sogavare, Chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group,

Honorable Leaders of the MSG

*Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of more than 253 million people of Indonesia, including those from over 11 million Melanesian descendants, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to our brothers and sisters here in the Pacific region. It is a distinct privilege for Indonesia to address this auspicious Summit.

Let me congratulate Honourable Manasseh Sogavare, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, on your assumption as the chair of the MSG for the term 2015 – 2017, and thank to Government of Solomon Islands for such warm hospitality.

My highest appreciation also goes to Mr. Victor Tutugoro for his able leadership in the MSG during the past two years.

Allow me to extend our sincere appreciation and profound gratitude to the MSG Members for their trust and confidence in granting Indonesia as its Associate Member.

MELANESIANS IN INDONESIA

*Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Since its inception to the MSG in 2011, Indonesia, with its rich Melanesian culture spread across its five provinces: Papua Province, West Papua, Maluku, North Maluku to East Nusa Tenggara, has become an inseparable part of this community and its heritage.

With our shared cultural and historical similarities, we believe that Melanesian Indonesians in the five provinces will be a tremendous asset in boosting our ties.

Indonesia is not only the neighbor that lives next door, but also a brother that share the same hopes with the people of MSG.

STRONGER ENGAGEMENT WITH PACIFIC COUNTRIES

The Pacific Region is one of the top priorities for Indonesia.

One of the first working visits that my Foreign Minister made a few months ago were to PNG, Solomon Islands, and Fiji.

President Joko Widodo's recent visit to Papua New Guinea was also a true reflection of this priority.

Indonesia wants to continue this positive engagement by building stronger connectivity with our fellow MSG members.

Our concept of maritime fulcrum emphasizes "connectivity" as one of its pillars.

A better connectivity would open wider opportunities for everyone.

Through Indonesia's membership in the MSG, the connectivity between the people of the MSG Members and 11 million Melanesian Indonesians will be enhanced.

It will also open greater access to the "253 million Indonesians" potential partner and market.

Indonesia can also be a gateway to enter the greater ASEAN market, a robust market of 600 million people....a number equivalent to 9 % of the world's population.

Our commitment for MSG is real and concrete.

We want to support our fellow MSG Members to have a stronger engagement with the wider international community.

We will grow together through the exploration of new opportunities.

That is why we have encouraged the active participation of our MSG fellows in APEC 2013 as well as in the Asia-Africa Conference 2015.

DEVELOPING TOGETHER

As an archipelagic country, as with most Pacific countries, we are confronted with common challenges.

Challenges of natural disasters...

Challenges of climate change...

And challenges to enhance economic welfare.

These are eminent challenges that we must address together.

These are challenges that calls for a joint effort to develop together.

In a nutshell, developing together implies strengthening our committment to work closer with our brothers and sisters in the MSG...both bilaterally and multilaterally.

Indonesia remains committed to assist our MSG brothers and sisters during dire times.

Indonesia has been present and have assisted countries such as Vanuatu in post Typhoon Pam recovery.

As a country with similar geographical and cultural background, there are plentiful avenues to expand cultural exchanges and cooperation. One alternative is through the convening of cultural events.

In October 2015, the East Nusa Tenggara Province will be hosting the Melanesian Cultural Festival. We would be most grateful if MSG Members can join and contribute to this event.

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Developing together to enhance economic welfare is also of utmost importance.

I have full confidence that we could quadruple the two-way trade of USD 260 million in the coming years.

The provision of technical cooperation may help in the attainment of a better economic stature.

In this spirit, Indonesia remains steadfast in providing technical cooperation through capacity building programs in the area of fisheries product processing, handicraft making, arts and culture, diplomatic courses, journalism and human resources development.

To this day, we have convened no less than 130 technical cooperation programs, involving 583 participants from the Pacific countries.

Our private sectors and SMEs have also contributed in these programs.

However, we realize that there are still many untapped potentials that can be further explored in future times.

There is much to be done.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP IN THE MSG

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

If we recall the Agreement Establishing the MSG in 2007, it stated that *“MSG Members fully respect the principles of international law governing relations between nations, including the principles of sovereignty, equality of independence of all states and non-interference in the domestic affairs of states”*.

This was reaffirmed in the Joint Statement by Indonesia and the Members of the MSG in 2014, reflecting our joint commitment to further strengthen our partnership.

Now as we become an associate member, we are committed to promote closer partnership with the MSG that will be beneficial for both sides.

We aim to add value to the organization;

To broaden relations between governments, communities, and people;

To strengthen cooperation and address common challenges;

To deepen economic ties and development cooperation for the future prosperity of our people within the MSG.

CONCLUSION

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To conclude, let me assure you my strong conviction that Indonesia's associate membership in the MSG will surely bring benefit to each and every member of our esteemed organization.

We look forward to welcoming your delegation in the Melanesian Cultural Festival this upcoming October.

I thank you.

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