



MSG Observer Mission Preliminary Statement

24 January, 2016

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Observer Mission congratulates the people of Vanuatu for having peacefully participated in the 2016 '*Snap*' General Elections. We recognize the strong desire by all *Ni-Vanuatu* to be governed by a democratically elected government.

The MSG teams observed Polling and Counting on Efate Island and Santo. The reports were that the process was embraced with an atmosphere of calm and people were able to exercise their right to vote freely. We found that Polling Officials were competent, professional and committed in performing their duties, sometimes under challenging circumstances. We did not observe any significant irregularities in the counting process.

In the Polling Stations we visited, we did not see any intimidation or apparent electoral misconduct. The overwhelming presence of political and election observers allowed for appropriate scrutiny.

While we find that the Electoral Commission and its staff had carried out this mammoth task

with great commitment and enthusiasm, we have taken cognizance of the issues in the roll and we believe there is room for improvement for consideration by the Electoral Commission.

We acknowledge that the official results are yet to be announced, however, we are confident that the people of Vanuatu, having had the opportunity to participate in the process will embrace their future government.

These and other matters will be included in the final report when completed in due course.

On behalf of the MSG Observer Mission, we would like to thank the Government of Vanuatu for the invitation to participate in the process as Observers. We thank our respective Governments for the trust put upon us and for their commitment to upholding the prevalence of democratic principles in Melanesia as enshrined in our MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

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