



European Union



MSG Secretariat
Secretariat du GFLM
Melanesian Spearhead Group | Le Groupe Fer de Lance Mélanésien

Trade Ministers Meeting

25 May 2016

*MSG Secretariat,
Port Vila, Vanuatu.*

Opening Remarks by the Secretariat

Mr Amena Yauvoli, Director General

Chair of TMM- Hon Milner Tozaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade of the Solomon Islands,
Hon Trade Ministers from MSG Member Countries
Representatives of Members' Trade Ministers
Distinguished officials;
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to welcome our Ministers for Trade, Ministerial representatives, Senior Officials and distinguished guests to your Secretariat for this Trade Ministerial Meeting today. This meeting is unique as it marks the culmination of a series of high-level policy and technical engagements at both the Ministerial and Officials levels, which commenced in 2013 when revisions to the MSG Trade Agreement were first launched.

I may add another special dimension of the meeting, that is, it presents me with my first opportunity to meet with you Honourable Ministers and Senior Officials as your new Director General to be part of the MSG Trade Agreement consultative process. It's a career journey that I myself was proudly a part of with some of you colleagues here in the meeting during our days of youths.

Besides the various trade and investment-related issues to be discussed at this meeting, two particularly policy documents to be highlighted are the revised MSG Trade Agreement and the Draft MSG Private Sector Development (PSD) Strategy, both of which were mandated in the Port Moresby Declaration of 2014.

While a lot has been mentioned about the Port Moresby Declaration, a reality check of the Declaration reveals that the bulk of its commitments have not been fulfilled. However, through the hard work of our Officials, plus the support of principal stakeholders particularly the private sector and civil society

groups, the Technical Working Group Negotiations (TWGN) for Trade in Goods and Services were concluded last month at this same venue.

The last TWGN produced a way forward strategy to guide the conclusion of the revision of the Trade Agreement, leading to this Trade Ministerial Meeting. We should all then be comforted then that while the pursuit of the Port Moresby Declaration has been slow, we are well placed to attain the ultimate goal, and that is, Achieving a Free Trade Area by 2017.

In addition to the Draft Revised MSG Trade Agreement that will be tabled with the Ministers, the Draft MSG Private Sector Development Strategy (PSD) will also be considered by the Ministers. The approval of the Strategy will go a long way in supporting the revised Trade Agreement as intra-MSG or cross-border investment flows are stimulated and facilitated.

Our gathering is timely since the Revised Trade Agreement is to be endorsed and signed by our Leaders at the scheduled Special Summit in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea later this week (I have been informed as of this morning have been further deferred). The Leaders will also be informed of the MSG PSD Strategy and other key policy documents including the MSG Export Products Study and MSG Development Investment Fund, among others.

The achievements of these noble initiatives would certainly be significant as they are not only consistent with the mandates issued by our Leaders when they met at their last Summit in Honiara, Solomon Islands in 2015, but they are also in line with the strategic objectives of the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

While many deserves to be acknowledged for their involvement and contributions to progress achieved so far with regards to MSG trade and investment policy work, I would like to name a few. Our Members' stakeholders are numerous including Leaders, Officials, the private sector and civil society groups and they have all made considerable contributions to our policy making processes.

Our key partner, the European Union (EU), has been bold in engaging with and providing funding support to the MSG through the Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project (PITAP). We thank the EU and we, MSG, remain committed to continuing our long-lasting partnership for the benefit of our people. We are sincerely hopeful that this relationship between the EU and MSG will inspire other partners to engage with us on a sustainable basis.

Let me also acknowledge the enduring commitment of our staff here at the MSG Secretariat, whose efforts are resulting in the imminent conclusion of the whole negotiations of the Revised MSG Trade Agreement. I thank them sincerely for their dedication and commitment.

May we all have a successful and also enjoyable meeting, so our Ministers would be in a position to present constructive documents and documents to our Leaders soon.

Finally, as your new Director General, let me reaffirm my commitments to the vision and mission of our MSG Leaders for the achievements of political stability, economic prosperity and social inclusivity of all and sustainable development as ascribed in the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan. Fundamental changes have therefore begun with earnest with the bold objective of revamping the Secretariat that would improve our business models and operations to deliver the mandates of our Leaders to our people and communities in the MSG family.

I thank you for your attention.
Merci beaucoup

MSG Secretariat
Port Vila
16 May 2016