

**PRELIMINARY STATEMENT  
OF THE  
MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP OBSERVER GROUP (MSGOG)**

This preliminary statement is issued by Ratu Inoke Kubuabola- Head of MSGOG to the Solomon Islands National General Election 2019 as a summary of the MSGOG observation.

The MSG Observer Group (MSGOG), on the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government, has been in the Solomon Islands since 20 March to observe the 2019 National General Elections. The MSGOG comprised of Ratu Inoke Kubuabola (Fiji), Mr Leonard Louma (PNG), Mr Martin Tete (Vanuatu), and Mr Rodrigue Tiavouane (FLNKS), and assisted by staff members of the Secretariat led by the Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli. With a team of eight (8) in all, the MSGOG observed polling in Makira province (Eastern part of Solomon Islands), in the Capital Honiara (West, Central and East Constituencies), and the Western Province of Solomon Islands.

During the course of the observations, the MSGOG were able to interact freely with polling officials, political party agents, security personnel, as well as other groups of observers, including the Commonwealth, Pacific Islands Forum, UNDP, ANU, UK, NZ, Australia, and Government Officials of Solomon Islands which provided the Group a broader view and understanding of the election process and environment. The observation role was strictly in adherence to the Code of Conduct provided by the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission.

At the outset, the MSGOG congratulates the people of the Solomon Islands for exercising their democratic rights and for participating in the 2019 National General Elections in a free and fair manner. On the same token, the MSGOG acknowledged the enormous efforts of the Government in reaching out to voters given such a heavy constraints prior to the polls. During the observations, the MSGOG witnessed firsthand and generally strong expressions by many citizens of their genuine desires to continue to uphold and promote the principles of good governance (transparency and accountability, etc) in a democratically elected government.

In our preliminary assessment, the 2019 Solomon Islands National General Elections was fully embraced by her citizens. In all, voters were excited about participating in the general election and make their choices freely. At the same time, the MSGOG came across reports of cross-border voting which obviously presented some challenges.

The MSGOG also noted views expressed by voters and candidates on the need for wider consultations on voters' rights and processes for the election itself as stipulated in the Electoral Act 2018. For instance, the electoral roll may require closer scrutiny which remains an issue for both voters and officials. It's determined resolution would greatly assist in the transparency of the entire election process and an inclusive and transparent process for citizens to exercise their democratic rights in any election. It will require strong political will to ensure that the election system is continually updated, improved and strengthened.

The MSGOG also observed that the counting of ballots is still ongoing and in the counting centers visited, the group notice the need to standardize the counting process. Training of polling officials is

pivotal to be able to achieve this. Despite the challenges, we are pleased to note that the polling stations visited by the MSGOG were manned by committed polling officials who performed their duties diligently even in challenging circumstances. We commend them for their commitment.

There were also an overwhelming presence of political party agents as well as election observers, both local and international, which allowed for the appropriate close scrutiny of the election process. We acknowledge that the official results for all seats are yet to be completed. However, we are confident with a high voter turnout, the people of Solomon Islands, having had the opportunity to participate in the election process, will fully embrace their future government.

The MSG Leaders had agreed in the MSG Agreement and in the MSG 2038 “Prosperity for All Plan” for Members to work closely amongst themselves to strengthen our national and sub-regional cooperation not only in people to people relationships, trade and investment but also in the area of good governance and the strengthening of democratic processes for the well-being of our nations and citizens of Melanesia.

On behalf of the MSG Observer Group, we would like to thank the Government of Solomon Islands for the invitation to participate in the process as Observers. We thank our respective Governments for the trust and confidence placed upon us and for their commitment to upholding the principles of democracy in Melanesia. Our final detailed report and recommendations will be released at a later date.

May God bless the Government and the People of Solomon Islands from shore to shore!

For more information, please contact Mr. Christopher Waiwori, Senior Executive Officer on [cn.waiwori@msg.int](mailto:cn.waiwori@msg.int)