



MELANESIAN Tok

ISSUE 12 AUGUST - NOVEMBER 2020

A quarterly newsletter to inform our readers about key work activities undertaken at the MSG Secretariat

Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, Social Equality and Inclusivity and Sustainable Development are the MSG's core objectives as endorsed by Leaders in the "MSG 2038 - Prosperity for All Plan"

*The Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat,
Mr George Hoa'au*



ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

Greetings once again from Port Vila!

This Melanesian Tok issue covers work that we continue to do at the MSG Secretariat in the service of our Members for the August – November period.

First, I would like to thank the staff of the Secretariat for the continuous work, which they continue to give to our Members.

Our working mantra remains: "We are working and waiting". Suffice to say that the lessons we have learned from doing work for, and with our Members online, have transpired into what I would like to refer to as "Awakening the Waiting for 2021". On one hand, it basically captures how lessons we have learned are being factored into what we do, that will inform our preparations for 2021 – now. Conversely, our overarching goal remains, that is to focus on delivering specific and targeted work, with the resources we have, and against time-bound deliverables – aggressive but realistic.

These have enabled us to track progress and measure what matters to us as an organisation, in the service to our Members (Fiji, PNG, SIs, Vanuatu and FLNKS).

Second, it is important that the MSG Secretariat continues to engage with "the future which has already occurred" as I mentioned in our previous issue.

However, equally important is that in trying to foresee possible futures for 2021, and their impact on MSG work, it is not good enough to talk about a "new normal", if we do not continue to keep asking ourselves questions, and take necessary actions to address them.

This thinking will guide the way we explore answers to the question: What is most important in the service to our Members in 2021?

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FOREWORD BY THE ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL

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Additionally, in preparation for MSG 2021 work plans and thinking, we have started conversations to answering the following question:

How do we want to make sure that our Members, partners and friends understand as much as we do about lessons learned in 2020, and how do we factor these into our 2021 planning?

The activities covered in this edition ranges from work that we continue to do at the MSG Secretariat with our members to those that we see opportunities for collaborations, coupled with those which, we have initiated with a few development partners.

To this end, we have initiated a few interesting collaborations, which should bear results come 2021 and beyond.

Therefore, I am excited about the lessons that we have learned from this year, whose sum has influenced in-house initiatives to strengthen our foresight ability to understand the wider and regional systems, that have the potential to influence the visions for which, MSG was established to lead, and those are priorities in the MSG Prosperity for all

Plan 2038.

Finally, this year and its COVID-19 related challenges has resulted in the MSG Secretariat exploring alternative approaches to the usual face-to-face consultations with Members and partners. One of which is the hosting of online meetings with Members and partners through the ZOOM medium.

We have seen its success, and will continue to strive towards improving its use.

To this end, I would like to thank our Members and their respective staff for their continuous support.

Since, this is the final Melanesian Tok newsletter for 2020, I would like to express our most profound gratitude for our MSG Leaders, national institutions and Members' technical people for the support they have given us throughout the year.

On behalf of the MSG Secretariat staff and our families, I would like to convey our sincere Season's Greetings for a blessed Merry Christmas, and a prosperous New Year 2021 to all our Members, families and friends of Melanesia.

God bless Melanesia.



MSG Member Flags

MSG CONGRATULATES PNG ON CELEBRATION OF 45TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY

**HAPPY 45th INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY
INDEPENDENT STATE OF
PAPUA NEW GUINEA**



The Acting Director General, Mr. George Dan Hoa'au and Staff of the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu, wish to congratulate the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and current Chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), Hon. James Marape MP, the Government and People of PNG, as you celebrate 45 years of nationhood.

On this date, 16 September 2020, pause and celebrate the achievements of the PAST 45 years, while working NOW to plan and forge ahead into the FUTURE. Let the occasion of the 45th year of Independence bring renewed hope and aspirations for peace, stability and greater success.

PNG is blessed with abundant flora and fauna, natural and human resources blended with a rich and diverse culture and tradition, a fundamental prerequisite for Prosperity. Papua New Guinea will continue to prosper in the years yet to come.

The MSG Secretariat values the guidance and commitment that PNG has bestowed to the MSG.

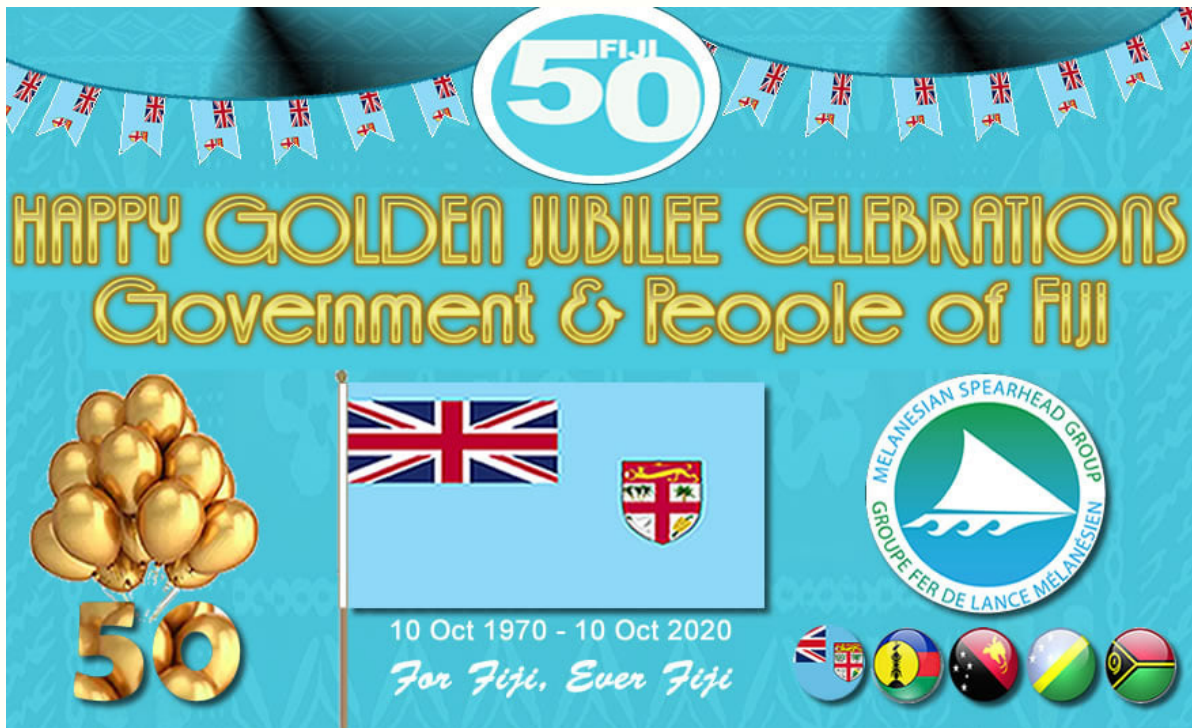
The Secretariat will continue to promote the original mandates of the MSG, including the promotion of Melanesian Solidarity in all political and socio-economic spheres.

With steadfast and God-fearing leadership at all levels, PNG will continue to reach greater heights. God has blessed and will continue to bless the Government and People of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea!

Shout again for the whole world to hear! "PAPUA NEW GUINEA!"



MSG WISHES FIJI WELL ON CELEBRATION OF 50TH INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY



The Acting Director General, George Dan Hoa'au and the staff of the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu wish to send their warmest greetings and heartfelt congratulations to the Prime Minister, Hon. Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama CF, OSt.J., MSD, MP, the Government of the Republic of Fiji, and its beautiful people on this occasion as you celebrate 50 years Jubilee.

As an important member of the MSG, we at the Secretariat would like to join with your island nation in remembering how far you have come in celebrating your 50th year of Independence.



Fiji is uniquely blessed with abundance of pure natural resources and a rich diverse culture comprising ethnicities from all walks of life. The statement, there is unity in diversity hence rings true for your beloved nation.

The attainment of your Golden Jubilee not only marks an important milestone in the country's vibrant history but is also an opportunity to celebrate your socio-economic progress as you look forward to an even brighter and better future ahead – a secure and peaceful Fiji, one that is filled with hope and prosperity.

As we look back through the past fifty years, we give all Honour and Glory to our Heavenly Father for His continuous guidance and blessings over your beloved nation, as we commemorate this great achievement with you.

With best wishes for continued success and prosperity, we join you and the People of Fiji in celebrating this milestone. May this momentous occasion provide hope for a promising future ahead.

Stand united, we of Fiji, fame and glory ever,
Onward march together!

GOD BLESS THE GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF THE REPUBLIC OF FIJI



Photo credit:
http://malecek.com

MSG EMBARKS ON CONSULTATIVE ONLINE MEETINGS WITH MEMBERS

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has embarked on a series of online consultative meetings with its Members, as it continues implementing its work programme for the year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Successful online meetings have already been convened with the Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 9 and 24 September respectively. A meeting with the Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade is also expected to take place.

Similar meetings are expected to be held with the Vanuatu Ministry of Foreign Affairs, followed by the Kanak & Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS).

Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr George Hoa'au, said that the purpose of the online consultative meetings is to update Members on the Secretariat's 2020 work programme.

"We are also using these online meetings with our Members to update them on important policy and organisational matters," he added.

He said, we cannot postpone our response to change so our response to the "new normal" constitutes several approaches, one of which is to continue to host meetings with our Members and partners through the ZOOM online medium. The MSG Secretariat continues to seek ways of improving its services to its Members in light of the challenges brought about by COVID-19.



The MSG Secretariat Headquarters in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

CONSULTATIVE MEETING SUCCESSFULLY CONDUCTED WITH SOM CHAIR & THE PAPUA NEW GUINEA DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OFFICIALS

A successful online meeting was conducted via ZOOM on 9 September, 2020 between senior staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu, led by the Acting Director General, Mr George Hoa'au, and Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and Secretary, Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Ms Barbara Age, and her senior officials within the Ministry.

According to the rotational basis as agreed to by the founding Fathers of MSG, PNG is currently assuming the Chairmanship role of the MSG. Concurrently, the MSG Chair is also the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea.

The online consultative meeting provided the opportunity for the MSG Secretariat to provide an update on the Secretariat's undertakings since April 2020, including discussion of some important organisational policy matters that required the urgent

attention and advice of the SOM Chair. Among the many important deliberations, was the need to continue to maintain and strengthen the original principles of the MSG.

These include the decolonisation of the Kanaks of New Caledonia, Promotion of MSG Trade through the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement, exchange of Melanesian cultures, traditions and values through Sports and Arts and Culture activities, including addressing other common issues of concern relating to Climate Change and Regional Security.

The PNG Department of Foreign Affairs was pleased to note that the MSG Secretariat has not lost sight of its original mandate. For the decolonisation of the Kanaky people of New Caledonia, it was noted that the MSG Secretariat fully supported the Referendum of Independence which was held on 4 October, 2020.

The meeting was the first successful consultative one done online with Members' focal points.



The SOM Chair and Secretary of Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Ms Barbara Age; ADG George Hoa'au, and staff of the MSG Secretariat during the meeting.

ONLINE CONSULTATIVE MEETING WITH FIJI'S MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, A SUCCESS

A successful online meeting was conducted via ZOOM on 24 September, 2020 between senior staff of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu, led by the Acting Director General, Mr George Hoa'au, and a team from the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by the Deputy Secretary, Mr Esala Nayasi.

The meeting was an opportunity for the MSG Secretariat to provide an update on its undertakings. These included the discussion of some important organisational policy matters, namely the Biennium Leaders' Summit and handover of the MSG Chairmanship; the COVID-19 5-Point Sustainability Plan (Melanesian Bubble); the 2021 Work Programme & Budget Meeting; and the appointment of the new Director General.

In his opening remarks, Foreign Affairs Deputy Secretary, Mr Nayasi welcomed all officials to the first virtual meeting between the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the MSG Secretariat and thanked everyone for availing themselves. He acknowledged the important role that the MSG Secretariat continues to undertake, adding that he looked forward to the deliberations.

In response, the ADG thanked the Deputy Secretary for his time and that of his senior staff for being

available for the meeting and assured him of the Secretariat's continuous support to his office.

Mr Hoa'au said that with the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat has re-adjusted its engagement on how it can continue to deliver quality service to its Members.

He also mentioned the Secretariat's continued strengthening of the monitoring and evaluation framework, in order to properly coordinate its annual work programme, budget and other important mandates. Furthermore, the ADG confirmed that the Secretariat's investment in online platforms such as ZOOM has been a successful undertaking for the Secretariat to date.

The Meeting also provided the need for the Secretariat to review its 2020 work programme in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such a review is necessary to better inform the Secretariat's 2021 Work Programme and Budget.

The Deputy Secretary in his concluding remarks, thanked the ADG and his staff at the MSG Secretariat for the successful conduct of the first online meeting and for the Secretariat's ongoing good work. The meeting was the second successful consultative one done online with Members' focal points.



Senior staff of the MSG Secretariat and officials from the Fiji Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

MSG SECRETARIAT CONGRATULATES FLNKS FOR PEACEFUL CONDUCT OF INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat congratulated the Front de Liberation Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) and the People of Kanak-New Caledonia for exercising their democratic right and participating in the Independence Referendum on 4 October, 2020. The Secretariat acknowledged the peaceful and calm manner in which the people of Kanak participated in the Referendum, demonstrating the true spirit of Melanesian respect and friendship.

The attainment of 46.7 percent in favour of the "Yes Vote" compared to 43.2 percent in 2018, is a significant step towards a future for Kanak-New Caledonia. An overwhelming number of voters have recognised that independence is inevitable and this result sets the momentum for the third Referendum in 2022, as provided for under the Noumea Accord. It is critically important that peaceful dialogue continue amongst all parties involved to ensure a conducive environment for the decolonisation process in New Caledonia.

The Secretariat also acknowledged the support and dedication of the United Nations, in the face of many challenges, to facilitate the referendum process.

These efforts will contribute towards the full realisation of the fundamental and inherent human rights and dignity of the colonised peoples and their self-determination aspirations of Kanak-New Caledonia.

On the same token, the MSG Secretariat extends its sincere appreciation to France, as the Administering Power, for its continuous positive engagement with all stakeholders and organisations to ensure all relevant processes are fulfilled.

To this end, the decolonisation process in Kanak-New Caledonia remains an important priority for the Melanesian Spearhead Group. The MSG remains committed to stand in solidarity and in unity with the FLNKS, and the Kanak people of New Caledonia to help chart their future.

God bless FLNKS and the Kanak People of New Caledonia.



Staff of the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila showing their support for the FLNKS, Independence Referendum in New Caledonia, which was held on 4 October, 2020.

POSSIBILITY OF ONLINE BIENNIUM MSG LEADERS' SUMMIT DISCUSSED

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat will await approval from the Chair of the MSG Hon. James Marape MP and Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea on its proposal for the convening of the Biennium Leaders' Summit online.

The MSG Secretariat had already formally requested the Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and Secretary, Papua New Guinea Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade, Ms Barbara Age, to seek consent on its proposal from the MSG Chair.

This follows an outcome of the Governing Body meeting on 12 February, 2020 in Suva, where it was agreed that there would be a recommendation to Leaders for the next Biennium Leaders' Summit to be held in April 2020 in Port Vila, Vanuatu. However the meeting could not be held due to travel restrict-

tions brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless to ensure that the MSG Secretariat carries out this decision and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat proposed that the Biennium Leaders' Summit be held online.

The convening of a Biennium Leaders' Summit will allow for urgent matters for the MSG Group and its Secretariat to be addressed, in particular the hand-over of the MSG Chairmanship from the Independent State of Papua New Guinea to the Republic of Vanuatu, and the appointment of a new Director General for the MSG Secretariat.

The proposal was brought to the attention of the SOM Chair during the first virtual consultative meeting between the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade and the MSG Secretariat on 9 September, 2020.



The possibility of an online MSG Biennium Leaders' Summit is currently being discussed.

MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP MUSIC FESTIVAL TAKES SHAPE

The notion of a proposed Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Music Festival is gradually taking shape.

This is in line with the recommendation of the 7th MSG Ministers of Arts & Culture Meeting (MACM) on 29 October, 2019 in Kokopo, Papua New Guinea and also in July 2018 in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

A draft Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Music Festival Working Group Terms of Reference (ToR) has been developed by the Arts and Culture Sector of the Vanuatu Ministry of Justice and Community Development, with the assistance of the MSG Secretariat.

It is currently being circulated for Members' comments

and input.

MSG Secretariat Arts & Culture Officer Simone Tuimalega stated that the ToR sets the provisions for the MSG Music Festival, its purpose, including its operationalisation.

The MSG Music Festival is an initiative that seeks to promote the platform on how MSG traditional and contemporary music is celebrated, promoted, and appreciated, and to gain recognition not only in the region, but also globally.

The necessary documents enabling this activity to be realised is currently being put together by the Vanuatu Ministry of Culture.



Action from the 2019 Fest' Napuan Music Festival in Port Vila. Source: Fest' Napuan Facebook page.

MOVES FOR MSG BEAUTY PAGEANT WELL UNDERWAY

A draft of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Beauty Pageant Terms of Reference (ToR) is currently being consolidated and finalised by Fiji.

As endorsed during the 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Meeting (MACM) in Kokopo, Papua New Guinea, Fiji currently leads the Working Group on the preparation of the ToR. This includes developing a ToR, and Guiding Document on the MSG Beauty Pageant. The MSG Beauty Pageant is an initiative

that seeks to promote an avenue in which our Melanesian women can not only showcase their talents and personalities to raise their self-esteem and confidence, but more importantly get regional and global recognition as true Melanesians. MSG Secretariat Arts and Culture Officer, Mr Simone Tuimalega, confirmed that Fiji is currently finalising the necessary documents which should be submitted to the next MACM.

MSG E-COMMERCE ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP, A SUCCESS

A one-day virtual workshop hosted by the MSG Secretariat to review and validate the draft MSG E-commerce Assessment Report successfully concluded on 4 November, 2020.

The Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr George Hoa'au, in his opening remarks, said that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the contraction of MSG region economies, which depended on the tourism sector, retail and wholesale, travel industries, and small and micro enterprises, among others.

"However, the current time presents an opportunity for an expansion of the way we think collectively around creating, finding and using solutions for our economies," he said. He added that E-commerce holds one of the trade possibilities for our people, businesses and transactions to exist in different online economies. Similar sentiments were echoed by the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Dame Meg Taylor, saying that while there has been substantial progress in developing ICT sector policies, significant gaps remain like financial inclusion, among others, which is a challenge to progressing e-commerce.

The assessment report highlighted the challenges

and opportunities to embrace e-commerce development in MSG countries.

Seven key recommendations to enhance cross border trade and e-commerce development were presented at the workshop.

The outcome of the workshop included the endorsement of the draft MSG E-Commerce Assessment Report and support for the development of a draft Pacific E-Commerce Strategy, taking into consideration the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement.

The one-day workshop brought together participants from trade, ICT, education, postal services and other government officials and representatives from private sector organisations of MSG countries.

Also in attendance were representatives of other regional organisations and development partners from the Pacific and abroad.

The online workshop was hosted by the MSG Secretariat with the support of the PIFS, assisted by Trade Com II Programme and the European Union.

The online workshop complemented the initial workshop hosted by PIFS on 3 November, 2020.



Participants of the workshop on the MSG E-Commerce Report hosted by the MSG Secretariat.

SOM CHAIR LAUDS MSG SECRETARIAT'S WORK ON MELANESIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The work of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat in advancing the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) has been lauded by the Foreign Secretary of Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Chair of the Senior Officials Meeting (SOM), Ms. Barbara Age. During the recent online consultative meeting with the PNG Department of Foreign Affairs, Ms. Age commended the ongoing efforts by the Secretariat in ensuring that this important MSG Leaders' mandate is implemented.

Since the completion of the trade negotiations on the MFTA in 2016, Fiji and Solomon Islands have signed the MFTA.

It is anticipated that the next stage is its ratification process. Other Members are still conducting national consultations on the Agreement and will consider it in the near future.

The MFTA is a progressive trade agreement that aims to achieve economic integration through trade in goods, services, cross border investments and labour

mobility within the MSG region.

Whilst the Agreement is yet to be ratified by the two signatories, the MSG Secretariat has received technical assistance programmes from International Organisation for Migration and ACP-EU Action Migration Programme, earmarked to assist Members implement key aspects of the MFTA, once it becomes operational.

Some of the key projects involved the baseline assessment on remittances and development of a regional remittances strategy, labour mobility and Melanesian Travel Card to facilitate the movement of MSG personnel within the MSG region.

During the consultative meeting, the Secretariat was assured of PNG's support of the MFTA. It is understood that inter-regional trade between the MSG Members has been one of the original principles of cooperation agreed to during the formation of the MSG Group.



The MSG Secretariat has been commended for advancing the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA).

MSG SECRETARIAT & JICA SIGN MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION



Participants of the online MOC signing between the MSG Secretariat and JICA on 2 September, 2020.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC), in the area of Fisheries and Marine Resource Management on 2 September, 2020.

The historical online signing was conducted by the Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr George Hoa'au, and JICA's Director General – Economic Development Department, Mr Makino Koji. It was witnessed by JICA officials in the MSG countries, including representatives of Fisheries Departments in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands.

The online signing of the MOC now paves the way for collaboration on community-based coastal resource management activities, that support the implementation of the objectives of the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015 – 2024, which is a standing mandate of the MSG Leaders.

Signed by the MSG Leaders in 2015, the Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development recognised the significance of coastal fisheries as a very important food security priority for communities in the MSG region. Its vision contemplates a sustainable in-shore fishery that is well managed using community-based approaches that provides and promotes long-term economic, social, ecological, conservation and food security benefits to Melanesian communities.

The collaboration with JICA provides an opportunity to use their technical expertise in fisheries, to progress the objectives and activities of the Roadmap by the respective national fisheries departments in MSG Member countries.

The objectives include: implementing effective policies, legislation, management framework and financing mechanisms for all stakeholders;

conducting education, and awareness-raising and the provision of information on the importance and management of in-shore fisheries; and to manage, maintain and restore fisheries stocks to secure long-term economic and social benefits to coastal communities. The MSG Secretariat in the process, will support Members in meeting reporting requirements to the MSG Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee (FTAC) annual meetings, and ensures that MSG Leaders are updated on the implementation progress of the Roadmap.

The Secretariat will also coordinate and harmonise approaches to regional agencies, donors and development partners regarding assistance to Members for the implementation of the Roadmap at national level.

Departments responsible for Fisheries in MSG Member countries are required to develop national implementation plans to self-assess progress, reporting, and monitoring and evaluation.

As the first step towards regional coordination, the MSG Secretariat acknowledged JICA's partnership in signing the MOC.

The aim of the MOC is to encourage mutual cooperation between the MSG Secretariat and JICA, in association with the implementation of technical cooperation, related to in-shore fisheries management and development, in assisting MSG Members develop and implement their plans.

Speaking during the online signing ceremony, Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, Mr George Hoa'au, acknowledged JICA for their commitment and stressed that "this partnership offers an exciting modality for implementing its sub-regional frameworks".

Additionally, he acknowledged JICA's plan to extend the Grace of the Sea Project activities to other MSG

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Member countries, which has been a success in Vanuatu.

On behalf of national focal points of the MSG Members who witnessed the online signing event, the Deputy Secretary Technical of the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources of Solomon Islands, Ms Rosalie Masu, while applauding the event, expressed that “the milestone signing will greatly benefit the majority of our population relying heavily on coastal fisheries for food security and economic benefit”. She added, “in the face of the already many challenges and now with the COVID-19 pandemic, focus has now shifted towards empowering communities to become self-reliant and resilient, hence the Roadmap framework is part of fulfilling that vision”. Mr Makino Koji, JICA’s Director General –

Economic Development Department also acknowledged the partnership with the MSG Secretariat and looks forward to a more meaningful and productive engagement in implementing the visions and objectives of the Roadmap.

Among other arrangements, the MOC provides the need for close collaboration in co-development and organisation of national and regional training programmes, executing reciprocal invitations including exchange of information and documents, and the coordination of technical cooperation to MSG Members. Under the new normal, the MSG Secretariat has embarked on facilitating online meetings and consultations, as a way forward in advancing its mandates to its Members.

MSG SECRETARIAT IN "DRIVERS OF CHANGE" WORKSHOP



Participants of the Validation Workshop on “Drivers of Change” for the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, at the Melanesian Hotel Conference Room in Port Vila. PHOTO CREDIT: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat was appreciative of the invitation to participate in the “Drivers of Change” workshop as the first step towards the development of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

The national workshop was held on 13 August, 2020 at the Melanesian Hotel in Port Vila. Participants included representatives from Government, regional organisations, private sector and civil society organisations.

‘Drivers of change’ is a series of collective undertakings where key actors and stakeholders discuss challenges or events that have significant impacts to the future of the Pacific region.

These include issues like climate change, which is already causing the relocation of many people living

along coastal communities in Melanesia, as a result of rising sea levels. Additionally, the recent COVID-19 pandemic is an emerging issue which has impacted negatively on the global economy, including that of our Melanesian economies.

Such drivers of change will require innovative approaches to thinking and development of national and regional strategies to achieve the MSG Leaders' mandate and contribute constructively as important stakeholders in the Blue Pacific Continent.

It is understood that similar national consultation workshops have taken place in other MSG countries and the wider Pacific region, with the draft of the 2050 Strategy expected to be finalised by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in 2021.

MSG SECRETARIAT, GIZ & GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY DISCUSS MELANESIA FOREST PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

A virtual meeting to discuss the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Forest Programme proposal between the MSG Secretariat, GIZ & Griffith University was successfully concluded on 6 August, 2020.

The meeting discussed key components of the Idea Note to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), on the MSG Forest Programme Proposal for two sites each in the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in a Phase I approach, namely, Tanna and Santo (Vanuatu) and Makira Weather Coast and Isabel islands (Solomon Islands). The plan is for the Programme to extend to Fiji and PNG in Phase II. The Idea Note focuses on the importance of conservation of primary forests and restoration of other forests and land areas in the Melanesian countries that support people's livelihoods connected to the land and forests.

The people of Melanesia have been living in harmony with the land (forests) and sea for thousands of years. The MSG countries with large land and forest areas in the Pacific region acknowledge the fact that their forest resources are a natural stabilising force for the climate. In particular, they regulate ecosystems, protect biodiversity, play an integral part in the carbon cycle, support livelihoods, and supply all essential ecosystem goods and services that can drive sustainable growth.

Therefore, increasing and maintaining forests are an essential solution to climate change and community resilience, which is the rationale for the MSG Forest Programme.

Participants of the meeting included Programme Manager, Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resource Management (ECC&NRM) Mr Stanley Wapot; Director, Griffith University Climate Change Response Programme, Australian National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Professor Brendan Mackey; Research Fellow at the Cities Research Institute, Griffith University Climate Change Response Programme; Dr Edward Morgan; and Senior Technical Advisor, Climate Change, Land Use Planning, and Forestry, GIZ Pacific, Christine Fung.

GIZ re-iterated their support to assist the MSG in developing a robust MSG Forest Proposal which can be discussed with other donors as well apart from the GCF.

In addition, Professor Mackey stated that his Griffith University team have also been discussing with potential private donors who are passionate about the forests and the environment to support the Griffith Global Forests Programme including the Melanesia Forest Programme. The Idea Note will be submitted at the end of November 2020.



The Idea Note to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) on the MSG Forest Programme Proposal focuses on the importance of the conservation of primary forests and restoration of other forests and land areas in Melanesian countries.

MSG SECRETARIAT RECEIVES 2019 FINANCE AUDIT REPORT

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat's 2019 Audit Report was completed and handed over to the Secretariat's Office on 7 August, 2020 and received by the Acting Director General, Mr. George Hoa'au. Manager Corporate Services, Mr John Palmer, said that the Secretariat receives assessed contributions from its Members to support its annual work programme and budget. Mr Palmer further stressed he was pleased that the completed 2019 audit report reflected a good and clean report, providing greater accountability and confidence to Members. The Year 2019 made many achievements including challenges, and these are reflected in the MSG Secretariat's 2019 Annual Report to be published soon. The 2019 finances of the Secretariat was audited by iCount Audit Firm based in Port Vila.



From L-R: Roy Mariasua, Accountant; George Hoa'au, ADG; Scott Proud, Director iCount; and John Palmer, MCS.

MSG SECRETARIAT DONATES COMPUTERS TO VANUATU INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY



Staff of the MSG Secretariat and Vanuatu Institute of Technology (VIT) after the donation of computers.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat has donated used computers to the Vanuatu Institute of Technology. Mr Roy Noel Mariasua, Chair of the Secretariat's IT Asset Disposal Committee, Corporate Services Division, handed over computers that were checked and tagged for donation to the VIT. "We had a need for desktops for our students to do their hands-on practical and these have come just in time, we were delighted when we received the call from the Secretariat to pick up these

computers," said Mr. Arsen Nedis, Head of the IT Department at VIT.

In response, Mr. John Palmer, Manager Corporate Services said, the MSG Secretariat was happy to donate a few of the used assets to institutions like the Vanuatu Institute of Technology.

"I am pleased that the donated computers will assist the students of Vanuatu Institute of Technology with IT training skills and development," said Mr. Palmer.



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