



# MELANESIAN Tok

ISSUE 10, JANUARY - APRIL 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"



*Outgoing MSG Secretariat  
Director General Ambassador  
Amena Yauvoli*

## AMBASSADOR YAUVOLI REFLECTS ON HIS LEADERSHIP AT THE MSG SECRETARIAT

It is my pleasure to present to you my final contribution to the Quarterly Melanesian Tok Newsletter. This edition is a special one and as you know, my term as Director General came to an end on 11 April 2020.

Like previous newsletters, this edition summarises the undertakings that your Secretariat has accomplished during the first quarter of 2020.

I take this opportunity to provide my thoughts since I took office in mid-April 2016, by highlighting my experiences, challenges endured and reflections of what lies ahead.

### YEAR 2020

This year started with a lot of energy and determination to implement the 2020 Work Programme and Budget. It commenced with the much needed Governing Body Meetings that was kindly hosted by the Fijian Government in Suva, from 10 – 13 February, 2020. This provided the necessary overarching guidance to the work of the Secretariat.

Subsequent to this event, the Secretariat convened its inaugural MSG Ministers' of Women Conference, also hosted by the Fijian Government in Nadi on 2-5 March 2020.

Whilst activities seem to be progressively on track, the COVID-19 pandemic and its challenges encouraged the Secretariat to be innovative in its work approaches.

Despite the challenges, I am proud that the MSG Observer Group (MSGOG) was able to complete their observer mission to the 2020 Vanuatu National General Elections (NGE). This is a strong manifestation of the Secretariat's commitment to

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## MY JOURNEY

our Memberships.

Since 11 April 2016, my journey was extraordinary yet rewarding. I walked into the MSG Secretariat, unknowingly of the extent of various organisational challenges. It was obvious that drastic reforms were required to fix it. I embraced the opportunity with optimism and sheer excitement.

My recommendation for a structural reform was approved by the Governing Body Meetings in December 2016 and for which I am thankful to the then Chair of MSG Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM), Hon. Milner Tozaka (Minister of Foreign Affairs & External Trade of Solomon Islands) for his able leadership that allowed the reforms to be undertaken and completed. It was challenging as some components of the reforms were challenged before the Vanuatu Supreme Court. The Court ruled in my favor.

However, it became apparently clear that the reform agenda was bitter sweet, but necessary for the good of the Organisation and our Membership.

In these three years, we have strengthened our internal governance processes and reformed governing policies. This provided a clearer pathway for our decision making and realignment of our programmes to strengthen delivery within a leaner and smarter structure.

We have also built a leadership culture which is reflected within the organogram and empowered our Programme Managers to deliver within the Corporate Plan and relevant organisational documents. A few highlights stood out for me which I wish to briefly share here.

I am elated to see the reprioritisation of the Kanak and Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) activities under the Political and Security Affairs Programme, and the Arts and Culture Programme, the successful hosting of the 6th MSG Festival of Arts & Culture in the Solomon Islands, and the revival of the Melanesian Cup now referred to as the MSG Prime Ministers' Cup along with other related activities under the Sports Programme.

Under Climate Change, using the global convening power of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), we have also formulated a Needs-Based Finance Strategy in the area of Climate Finance, one of the first in the world; a Sub-Regional security document is currently being drafted; and am proud of the creation of the MSG Election Management Board; and lastly our inaugural Ministerial Conference on Eliminating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR MSG

The Secretariat is strategically positioned (after the reforms) and could be even more successful when member support is strong and vibrant. This is when real issues and challenges faced are handled in a very strategically responsive and effective manner.

First and foremost is that the Secretariat relies very much on annual Membership Contributions to deliver its work programme. Members have to take full ownership of the Secretariat and their respective obligations, particularly in meeting their Membership (financial) contributions on a timely basis (end of every Qtr1).



*Ambassador Yauvoli (R) at the recent Foreign Ministers' Meeting with Hon. Patrick Pruaitch, Minister Foreign Affairs & International Trade, PNG Govt and Chair of the MSG FMM in Suva, Fiji. Source: MOFA, Fiji*

The lessons of the recent past are evidently showing that without full commitments from all Members, and with delayed payments and non-payment of all contributions in one year, the Work Programme of the Secretariat is affected. The current trend of Membership Contributions remain a challenge.

## WAY FORWARD FOR THE SECRETARIAT

Going forward, on one hand with a fixed standing budget ceiling, the income base of the Secretariat budget has to be sustainable during the financial year.

Conversely, since the budget ceiling is only a nominal amount, the reserves may potentially erode over the years against a high cost of living in Port Vila.

The alternative is deficit financing through loans and overdrafts, whereby the Secretariat should avoid at all cost. We have been successfully managing it during my tenure. Third, and my last reflection, as the only intergovernmental organisation with its Headquarters in Vanuatu, forging a cordial relationship with the host government in respect to its host country obligations is crucially important - one that will enable the MSG Secretariat to undertake and perform its functions to its maximum benefit.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Today, as I bid farewell to the Members, Associate Members, Observers, and staff members of the Secretariat, I stand proud and honoured to profess that the MSG Secretariat is truly on its way to becoming an organisation that is second to none in the region. A truly re-energised Secretariat that is now responsive to the development and political aspirations of our Members.



*Ambassador Yauvoli takes a break with MSG Secretariat staff at the Governing Body meeting in Suva earlier this year.*





Ambassador Yauvoli at the recent MSG SOM in Suva, Fiji. Beside him is Ms Barbara Age, Secretary PNG Dept of Foreign Affairs & International Trade & SOM Chair. Source: MOFA, Fiji.

## MSG SECRETARIAT, SECOND TO NONE IN THE REGION: YAUVOLI

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The Secretariat's financial standing has improved immensely, and has survived in the last three years without financial and organisational difficulties. We are on track.

I pay tribute to our Almighty God and His Son Jesus Christ, who have been my pillar of strength and whom I continue to surrender my confidence in over the years.

All successes and honour are ascribed to Him only. My mantra for leadership is derived from the teachings of the Bible and I recognise Paul's edification in Colossians 3:23-24;

*"Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

I commend the sacrifice and important support I received from my loyal and hardworking staff, past and present, of the MSG Secretariat.

They have been instrumental in my leadership in turning around the organisation and have demonstrated the highest professionalism expected of them.

They are true sub-regional civil servants of Melanesia. More importantly, I wish to thank our MSG Leaders who have supported my tenure at the MSG Secretariat.

I thank you most sincerely for your confidence in me to lead the Secretariat.

This tenure will be one of the most rewarding highlights of my career.

To the FMM and SOM, I am forever grateful for your directives, leadership and support.

Finally, to my beautiful wife and family, thank you for supporting me in this role. I am eternally grateful.

I pray for God's blessings over Melanesia and may the MSG Secretariat continue to do greater things in 2020 and beyond in the Memberships of Melanesia.

Vinaka Vakalevu, Tankiu Tru, Tenkiu tumas, Oleti!



From L-R: Outgoing Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli; MSG Secretariat, Acting Programme Manager Trade, Investment & Economic Development, Sovaia Marawa; Laisiana Tugaga, OCO; and Barbara Age, Secretary PNG Department of Foreign Affairs & International Trade SOM Chair at the GB Meetings in Suva, Fiji earlier this year.



## SUCCESSFUL GOVERNING BODY MEETINGS IN SUVA, FIJI



Staff of the MSG Secretariat with other participants of the Governing Body Meeting in Suva, Fiji in February 2020. Seated in front (middle) are outgoing Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli & Ms Barabara Age, Secretary PNG Foreign Affairs & SOM Chair. Source: MOFA, Fiji.

The Governing Body (GB) Meetings (Senior Officials Meeting and Foreign Ministers Meetings), took place from 10-13 February 2020 at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva, Fiji.

Hosted by the Government of Fiji, the GB meetings were held to deliberate on the Secretariat’s 2020 Work Programme and Budget as well as other outstanding policy issues.

The 3-day meeting was not only successful but exemplified a strong commitment of the Melanesian block to working together as one united Melanesia.

Not only did the meetings provide the opportunity for SOM and the MSG Foreign Ministers to have a better understanding and appreciation of the various programmes and undertakings of the Secretariat, but it provided them with the avenue to reaffirm their commitment to further advancing the work of the Secretariat.

Outgoing Director General, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli also took the opportunity to present to the Governing Body Meeting the progress report of the Secretariat, which contained the achievements of the reforms taken during his tenure as Director General since April 2016.

The Meetings also emphasised on the need to commit to advance the ratifications of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement and other core MSG Treaties which have been signed by the MSG Leaders.

Furthermore the need to advance our ambitions in developing a framework model on strategic partnerships that would link with Members’ priorities at all levels using the MSG Secretariat as the platform for South-South and triangular cooperation was also agreed to.

Other issues discussed included the need to look out for and help each other and to raise a common voice on the international front to assist in the MSG’s mitigation and adaptation ambitions.

Since it is undeniable that MSG Members are vulnerable to natural disasters, low depressions, cyclones, earthquakes, and tsunami, coupled with the ongoing effects of climate change and sea level rise, members agreed to work together in this regard.

The protection and preservation of our Melanesian cultures and heritage was also recognised during the meetings with strong emphasis that Melanesian cultures and way of life remain pivotal to our identity.

One of the important considerations was particularly on the continuous support rendered to FLNKS and the Kanaky people by the Secretariat especially as they prepare for the second referendum for independence in September 2020.

The Foreign Ministers’ Meeting concluded to advancing the Melanesian block in facing up to the many challenges that continue to hamper the MSG region and most especially to turn the Melanesian sub-region into an arc of stability and also one of opportunities for our people.

It is anticipated that the next MSG Biennium Leaders’ Summit will be hosted by Vanuatu this year. The meeting will see the handing over of the MSG Chairmanship from the current Chair, Papua New Guinea to Vanuatu. Also, the Leaders will deliberate on important policy issues including the appointment of the new Director General for the MSG Secretariat.

## 2020 WORK PROGRAMME AND BUDGET APPROVED

The MSG Secretariat 2020 Work Programme and Budget was approved by its Governing Body (Foreign Minister’s Meeting) on 13 February 2020 in Suva, Fiji.

The Work Programme and Budget is a reduced and balanced budget compared to previous years.

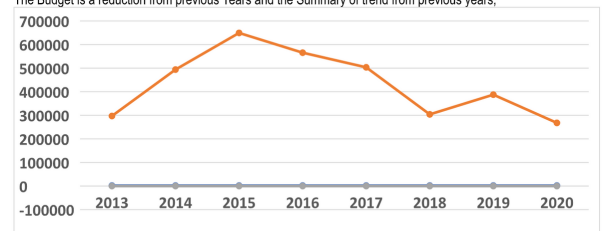
The Secretariat was reminded to work within its means and urged to implement activities at the best economical use of limited resources in achieving our Leader’s mandates. The 2020 Annual Work Programme is a transparent and visible one that links to the annual budget for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

The ongoing reforms to strengthen the Secretariat in the implementation of its work programme in 2020 and beyond is key to the Secretariat’s budget and workplan.

### BUDGET SUMMARY

2020 Regular Budget (Vatu)	2020 Programme Budget (Vatu)	Total Budget (Vatu)	Total in USD
218,411,661	49,483,914	267,895,575	2,678,955

The Budget is a reduction from previous Years and the Summary of trend from previous years;





## MSG EMBARKS ON A SUB-REGIONAL FOREST PROGRAMME FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On the 26-27 February, the MSG Secretariat, GIZ and Griffith University held a joint project planning meeting in Port Vila to complete the Idea Note for the MSG Forest Programme proposal to the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

GIZ is the accrediting entity partner to the MSG Secretariat in the proposal to GCF with Griffith University as technical partner.

The MSG Forest Programme is an integrated programme of work to demonstrate an alternative paradigm for building resilience by harnessing benefits that protecting primary forests can provide.

The expected outcomes of the Programme are having sustainable and resilient local economies; strengthened food, water and energy and health security of forest communities across Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands in phase I (A phase II proposal will be developed for Papua New Guinea and Fiji in consultation with Members); and protection and management of around 150,000 ha of primary forests that support the climate resilience of the community and the broader landscape.

The programme of work will target two sites in each country namely Vanuatu – Tanna (cloud forest) & Espiritu Santo (Butmas and Nabauk); and Solomon Islands – Makira

(Weather Coast Ward) and Isabel (Koviloko Ward).

It is estimated that the programme will directly benefit around 6,000 people in Vanuatu and 3,000 people in the Solomon Islands and indirectly benefit up to 100,000 people. Programme Manager Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resource Management (PM – ECCNRM), Mr. Stanley Wapot said the meeting was to identify information gaps, review the draft Idea Note and the latest draft of the “Theory of Change” or the Logical framework of the proposed project, as well as aligning the theory of change with the Idea Note. He stated that the MSG Forest Programme proposal will pass through the GIZ system and project evaluation process before a final draft is submitted to the GCF. The MSG Secretariat is also exploring opportunities with other donors to support an MSG Forest Programme.

“If successful, this project will benefit Members at community level and also help to build capacity at the MSG Secretariat to better support Members’ initiatives in Forest ecosystem conservation, wise use and sustainable economic opportunities,” Mr. Wapot said.

### MSG 1ST IN ASIA PACIFIC TO IMPLEMENT COP 23 MANDATE

The Melanesian Spearhead Group is the first in the Asia Pacific region to implement the COP 23 mandate through its *Climate Finance Strategy*.

It is also maintaining communications with Members at technical level on the implementation of the objectives of the *Climate Finance Strategy* 2019-2021.

Climate Financing is a specific and key element of the climate change agenda, required for implementation of mitigation and adaptation measures and many developing countries and small island states face a huge challenge in mobilising and enhancing finance for climate action,” Mr. Wapot said.



The MSG Members have identified national priorities and needs on climate action which need financing. The MSG needs-based Finance Strategy is an important first step in carefully analysing the finance landscape in the sub-region and exploring traditional and innovative financing options, both public and private for supporting regional climate mitigation and adaptation action implemented at the national level. The current status of the MSG Climate Finance Strategy is for Members to collaborate closely on implementing the six strategic areas.

### MSG COOPERATION ON FISHERIES

On the MSG Fisheries cooperation, Mr Wapot confirmed that the MSG Secretariat is talking with Members and Partners namely SPC, to complete some outstanding activities supporting the Members as outlined in the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries and Sustainable Development 2015-2024.

Other discussions are focused on the Secretariat and SPC to facilitate the Fisheries Technical Advisory Committee to meet and review the Roadmap and implementation framework in 2020.



Above Photo: A coastal village in Vanuatu.

Left Photo: Mr. Stanley Wapot, Programme Manager, Environment, Climate Change & Natural Resource Management (ECCNRM), MSG Secretariat is flanked by staff from the UNFCCC Secretariat in Bonn, Germany, at the margins of UNFCCC’s 50th Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies.

## AMBASSADOR YAUVOLI MAKES FINAL COURTESY CALL

Outgoing MSG Secretariat Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli wrapped up his 4-year term in office by embarking on a farewell courtesy visit for the final time. During the margins of Israel President Reuven Rivlin's visit with Pacific Leaders in Nadi, Fiji on 21 February 2020, Ambassador Yauvoli met with the MSG Chair and Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Honourable James Marape MP and updated him on the Governing Body meetings in Suva, including presenting him with his final Progress Report.

This was also his final meeting with Ambassador Yauvoli as the DG. Ambassador Yauvoli was scheduled to travel to Honiara, Indonesia and New Caledonia respectively before concluding his courtesy visits in Port Vila.

On 14 March, accompanied by the Senior Executive Officer, Christopher Waiwori, the Director General travelled to Solomon Islands for a final meeting with Prime Minister, Honourable Manasseh Sogavare MP and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Jeremiah Manele MP.

The visit to Solomon Islands was regarded as a special one, as it was during Honourable Manasseh Sogavare's Chairmanship of the Group in April 2016, that Ambassador Yauvoli was appointed as the MSG Director General. As the then MSG Chair, Hon. Sogavare was confident of Ambassador Yauvoli's able leadership to steer the MSG Secretariat clear from financially troubled waters.

During the courtesy meeting, Prime Minister Hon. Sogavare expressed his gratitude to the Director General for his loyal and dedicated service to the MSG Group and the MSG Secretariat and expressed his pleasure in having appointed Ambassador Yauvoli in 2016 as Director General.

The remaining courtesy farewell trips to Indonesia and New Caledonia, however, did not eventuate due to travel restrictions resulting from COVID-19.



*Solomon Islands PM Hon Sogavare welcomes and presents A Shell Money to Ambassador Amena Yauvoli at the Office of the Prime Minister in Honiara. Looking on (above) is MSG Secretariat Senior Executive Officer Chris Waiwori*



*Hon. Jeremiah Manele MP, Solomon Islands Minister of Foreign Affairs presenting a gift to Ambassador Amena Yauvoli.*



*Outgoing Director General Amena Yauvoli & MSG Chair PNG Prime Minister Hon. James Marape at the Pullman Hotel in Nadi. Looking on is Ms Barbara Age (L) Secretary to PNG Foreign Affairs & SOM Chair and H.E Lucy Bogari, PNG High Commissioner to Fiji.*



## GOVERNANCE AND LEGAL AFFAIRS PROGRAMME DELIVERS KEY ACTIVITIES



*MSG EMBs with DG Ambassador Amena Yauvoli at the inaugural MSG EMB Conference in November 2019.*

The MSG Secretariat's Governance and Legal Affairs (GLA) Programme has successfully delivered two key inaugural activities since it was reconstituted three years ago, following the MSG Secretariat reforms. The GLA serves both internally for staff in the areas of Good Governance albeit the Secretariat's rules and regulations and externally in working with our Members to advance their development goals and aspirations from legal and governance lenses. Two key activities stood out for this quarter.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES (EMB)**

The MSG Secretariat was pleased to support the Election Management bodies (EMB) within our membership to host the inaugural MSG EMB conference in the final quarter of 2019.

The Conference provided a platform for our EMBs to discuss electoral reforms, share their experiences of electoral processes and practices and map out strategies of engagement and coordination of the MSG EMBs.

"This historic gathering also saw the formation of the inaugural MSG EMB Association which then signed an MOU with the MSG Secretariat to facilitate its activities going forward," said Mr. Romulo Nayacalevu, Manager of the Governance and Legal Affairs programme.

Moreover, "the conference brought together the world's three key electoral support bodies, namely the International Institution for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), Association of World Election Bodies (A-WEB), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) while joined by UNDP, EU, NZ & Australian High Commissions in Suva and the NZ Electoral Commission. We will be building on this platform in 2020," Mr. Nayacalevu added.

### **MSG WOMEN MINISTERS' MEETING - NADI**

In a first, the MSG Secretariat was excited to host the inaugural MSG Ministers' for Women and Senior Officials Conference on Eliminating Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Fiji.

The Conference was timely as the MSG Secretariat's reforms are geared towards implementing activities identified by the MSG leaders in our 2038 Prosperity for All Plan which includes gender equality. Unequal distribution of power and discriminatory gender norms are often the root causes of SGBV, a global pandemic which is also prevalent in the MSG region.

"In fact, our governments have taken measures to address SGBV such as the passing and criminalising of domestic violence, among other things.

In addition, the conference saw the endorsement of an outcome statement calling for the MSG Secretariat to develop a gender framework for the Secretariat's work in the region," Mr Nayacalevu said.

He noted that while gender has been identified as crucial to the work of the Secretariat, "we now see through the outgoing Ambassador Yauvoli's leadership the re-prioritising of this activity within MSG's programmes, given its important development aspirations for each of our countries in Melanesia".

"The Secretariat is pleased to partner with SPC's Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT); UN Women; PIDF and PIFS in the delivery of this important conference. The second conference is planned for Noumea in 2021," he added.

As an outcome to the inaugural Conference, the MSG Secretariat is also working towards drafting its first Gender Framework.



*Participants at the inaugural MSG Ministers for Women and Senior Officials Conference on Eliminating Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGBV) in Fiji. Source: PIFS*

## MSG INVITED TO OBSERVE VANUATU NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTIONS



Members of the MSGOG to the 2020 Vanuatu National General Elections

The Political and Security Affairs (PSA) Programme was involved in a number of activities in the first quarter of 2020 including the observation of the 2020 Vanuatu National General Election through the MSG Observer Group (MSGOG), upon the invitation of the Vanuatu Government.

The Observer Mission was led by Ratu Inoke Kubuabola, former Foreign Minister of Fiji. The MSGOG was mobilised and successfully observed the elections on 19 March. Despite the prevailing challenges posed by the current global pandemic of COVID-19, the MSGOG managed to put in extra efforts to observe the elections in and around Efate Island, Tanna Island, Malekula Island and Santo Island. "The MSGOG was committed to observe the Vanuatu National General Election in honour of the invitation extended by the Government," stated the Programme Manager PSA, Mr Ilan Kiloe. The Election observation to Members is in line with the MSG Leaders' Mandate under the 2038 "Prosperity for All Plan". The Plan calls for Members to work closely to strengthen national and sub-regional cooperation not only in people to people relationships, and trade and investment but in the area of good governance and strengthening of democratic processes for the well-being of our Melanesian People. The PSA Programme also engaged two consultants to draft the MSGOG Report to Vanuatu National General Elections and to develop MSG Election observation Guide and Handbook respectively. According to Mr Kiloe, these consultancies addressed two additional outputs under the PSA work Programme under Priority 1 - "Strengthening Democratic processes in the MSG region". He noted that the development of the MSG Election Handbook and Guidelines is a milestone achievement that will guide future election observation missions in the MSG. The Guidelines will be presented to the Governing body later in the year for their endorsement. The MSG Observer Group has participated in the past observing elections in PNG, Solomon Islands and Fiji elections.

### ONGOING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO FLNKS

Earlier on, Mr Kiloe provided technical assistance and accompaniment to the Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front (FLNKS) during the opening session of the Special Committee on Decolonisation (C24) from 17-22 February 2020.

Prior to the session, targeted bilateral meetings were held with a number of diplomatic missions to the UN as well as the Decolonisation Unit of the UN Secretariat. This was mainly to discuss important issues relating to the progress and preparations towards the second referendum that will be held on 6 September 2020. The technical assistance was part of the MSG Secretariat's ongoing effort to provide necessary support and assistance to FLNKS as they undergo political processes for the Referendum on Self-Determination in New Caledonia. Mr Kiloe confirmed that the MSG Secretariat had stepped up its approach in forging closer relations with UN-based MSG Ambassadors under the "Action Plan/Roadmap on the FLNKS process for self-determination," adopted by MSG Leaders during their 21st Leaders' Summit in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea.

### MSG SECRETARIAT MEETS COMMANDER BRITISH DEFENSE

A successful meeting was held between the MSG Secretariat staff and the Wellington-based Defense Advisor to the British High Commission Wing Cdr Andy Bryant on 30 January 2020. Discussions were based on security and defense related issues, including training with the MSG. This followed an earlier meeting Mr Kiloe had with Her Excellency Karen Bell, British High Commissioner to Vanuatu, and the UK Scoping team to the Pacific consultants, Mr. Graham Teskey and Dr. Priya Chattier.

### MSG SECRETARIAT & CAVR ON ATT

The MSG Secretariat through the PSA coordinated with the Centre for Armed Violence Reduction, (CAVR) the development of project proposals for MSG countries, with Fiji and Solomon Islands as key applicants to access the Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF) to support the implementation of the ATT. Mr Kiloe commented that activities relating to the implementation of the ATT are a key strategic priority (5) under the PSA programme. He said that the COVID-19 outbreak may have implications on the progress and consideration of applications to the VTF 2020 cycle, however, the MSG Secretariat is committed to strengthening closer cooperation with CAVR to pursue this activity this year.

"The Secretariat through this partnership aims to strengthen the provision of assistance to Members to advance the signing, ratification and implementation of the ATT," he observed.



Mr Kiloe meets Wellington-based Defense Advisor to the British High Commission Wing Cdr Andy Bryant



## MSG SECRETARIAT FACILITATES 1ST ONLINE BILATERAL TRADE MEETING BETWEEN FIJI AND VANUATU



*Staff of the MSG Secretariat and government officials from Fiji and Vanuatu take part in the first online bilateral consultations*

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat embarked on a new initiative using virtual meeting rooms where Members can continue to collaborate online in real time via the internet.

This online platform is a crucial vehicle to continue to see its work for Members at this difficult time.

On 29 April 2020, the MSG Secretariat successfully facilitated an online bilateral meeting between trade, biosecurity and health officials of Fiji and Vanuatu through the Trade, Investment and Economic Development Programme.

"The success of the first bilateral meeting between our Members, facilitated through the use of online platform, will now set precedence going forward from here," Acting Director General George Hoa'au stated.

"This is a positive way to respond to this adversity,

and a manifestation of innovations that the MSG Secretariat explored to ensure delivery of services to Members."

The use of zoom facility was recently tested by the Secretariat's Information & Technology (IT) division, and the bilateral meeting on 29 April proved that despite travel restrictions, the Secretariat can still continue to implement its work programme, which was recently approved during the Governing Body Meetings in Suva in February this year.

Mr Hoa'au emphasised that the MSG Secretariat will further expand on the use of virtual meeting rooms and internet technologies across all its programmes and will be working in close collaboration with its Members and development partners to ensure that while we continue to wait for COVID-19 to pass through, work must continue.

## MSG TO BENEFIT FROM EDF 11 FUNDING

The MSG Secretariat aims to benefit from the European Union funded EDF11 Pacific Regional Economic Integration (PRISE) Programme.

Acting Programme Manager for Trade, Investment and Economic Development, Mrs. Sovaia Marawa confirmed that the MSG Secretariat had been partici-

pating in meetings convened by PIFS and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), alongside other Pacific regional organisations, on programming and identification of specific areas to support under the

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#### EDF11 PRISE.

A significant achievement reached in February was the signing of the Financing Agreement for the EDF11 PRISE (37 million euros) by the Secretary-General of the PIFS, Dame Meg Taylor and the Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation for the Pacific, Mr. Christoph Wagner.

The signing was held within the margins of the Pacific ACP Trade Ministers Meeting held at PIFS in Suva, Fiji. The EDF11 PRISE aims to deliver actions focused on achieving the specific objectives of increasing intra-regional and international trade and participation of the private sector in economic integration.

The next phase requires the MSG Secretariat to finalise its programme activities and work with the EU Delegation and UN Conference on Trade & Development (UNCTAD), as the implementing partner for Output 1 on Trade Facilitation.

Mrs. Marawa confirmed that bilateral discussions were held in February with representatives from UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) Secretariat in Suva,

Fiji to discuss the EU Delegation responses to the MSG Secretariat proposal on programme activities and third party arrangements.

The Secretariat is hopeful that outstanding issues would be resolved with major stakeholders to ensure that our MSG members mutually benefit from the EDF11 PRISE.

"Consultations were also held in February with the OCO Secretariat to synergise on activities for the MSG Secretariat," Mrs Marawa said.

A joint collaboration with OCO Secretariat is necessary as its functions complement and support the core mandate of the Secretariat to achieve the MSG Leaders vision of regional integration in the MSG sub-region.

In supporting the work programme of the MSG Secretariat, the EDF11 PRISE is specifically targeted at capacity building programmes to enable MSG countries to implement the MSG Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) and institutional capacity on Private Sector Development.



*Benjamin Czarnik (PIFS), Laisiana Tugaga (OCO Secretariat), Jayvee Santos (UNCTAD ASYCUDA) and Sovaia Marawa (MSG Secretariat) during the PACP Trade Ministers Meeting in Suva earlier this year*

## PROGRESS ON THE RATIFICATION OF THE MELANESIAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

The progress on the ratification of the Melanesian Free Trade Agreement (MFTA) was one of the key issues discussed at the Senior Officials Meeting held in Suva, Fiji in February.

Since the completion of the negotiations on the MFTA in 2016, Fiji and Solomon Islands have signed the Agreement but are still to complete the parliamentary process to effect its ratification.

The MFTA is a progressive trade agreement that aims to achieve economic integration through trade in goods, services, cross border investment and labour mobility. Vanuatu and PNG had confirmed to sign the Agreement in

the near future.

Whilst the Agreement is yet to be ratified, the MSG Secretariat has received technical assistance programmes from International Organisation for Migration earmarked to assist Members implement key aspects of the MFTA once it becomes operational. Some of the key projects involved development of a remittances assessment policy, labour mobility and Melanesian Travel Card to facilitate the movement of MSG personnel within the MSG sub-region.



## SPORTS PROGRAMME UPDATE

The MSG Secretariat through the Sports Development programme is on the edge of reviving the once fancied Melanesian Cup. The famous tournament was scheduled to take place this August but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The MSG Ministers of Sports in September 2019, met in Port Vila and agreed on the revival of the football tournament but under a new name “the MSG Prime Ministers’ Cup”. The name change was done in compliance with FIFA naming protocols to avoid any discrimination as the term ‘Melanesian’ refers to only one ethnic group.

The MSG Prime Ministers’ Cup will be a Tier 1 Tournament which simply means that it will gain full recognition by FIFA through OFC.

This year’s proposed tournament will be a special one as it will form the basis for our MSG countries preparation for the 2024 World Cup qualifications and the South Pacific Games that will be hosted in Honiara, Solomon Islands in 2023.

### MSG SECRETARIAT AND OFC TO SIGN MOU

The Sports Development Officer (SDO), Mr. Bill Henry had a successful meeting with the Oceania Football Confederation (OFC) President Mr. Lambert Maltok in Santo earlier this year to discuss possible collaborations and partnerships with (OFC).



*MSG Sports Development Officer Bill Henry after meeting with OFC President Mr. Lambert Maltok*

Meanwhile a draft MOU is being finalised with the OFC headquarters in Auckland, New Zealand for signing. The MOU reflects and caters for the arrangements made for OFC to support the MSG Secretariat in facilitating the football tournament.

In this agreement, OFC will assist in providing FIFA Badge officials to officiate and offer a 3-day workshop on competition manager training.

Representatives will be from the MSG Member countries’ national football federations and the training, which is part of the tournament legacy, will be facilitated by OFC. The results of the matches will affect the country’s ranking in the FIFA rank table. Mr. Lambert confirms that he will ensure that OFC under his leadership will work closely with the MSG Secretariat to make this tournament a reality. He is impressed with the discussions and stressed that, “For our countries to perform better in the football arena, we must engage in a lot of tournaments.”

### SPORTS DOCUMENTS & CONSULTATION

The Sports Development Programme is finalising a Games Charter, an umbrella document that will regulate various sports initiatives of the Secretariat. These include the Prime Ministers’ Cup and the Melanesian Netball Challenge, among others.

The MSG Legal body (SCLII) will eventually scrutinise the Games Charter.

## MSG AND IUCN SIGN PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Outgoing Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Secretariat’s Director General, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 9 April 2020 with the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s (IUCN) Oceania Regional Director, Mr. Mason Smith, sealing a partnership to further conservation commitments for both organisations.

Through the MOU, both parties agree to develop a mutual partnership to address nature conservation and promote sustainable development in the region.

At the signing, both the MSG Secretariat and IUCN Oceania heads recognised the significance of the joint collaboration and what it meant for the Pacific region.



*IUCN Oceania Regional Director Mr Mason Smith & the MSG’s Outgoing Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli*

“MSG Leaders envision that green growth shall be the pillar of MSG Members’ development into the future as championed in the Leaders Declaration on Environment, Climate Change and Green Growth Goals. Therefore the MSG region has a lot of opportunities to offer in terms of strengthening our efforts in the areas of climate change, environment protection, conservation and other sustainable development initiatives,” Mr Yauvoli remarked.

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He was pleased to note that "the objectives of this MOU is to establish an effective collaborative partnership between IUCN and MSG to jointly undertake actions towards the achievement of the respective mandates in relation to nature conservation and sustainable development, through complementarity, reciprocal support and other principles of collaborations as outlined in this MOU". Established in 2007, the MSG Secretariat is an administrative arm of MSG which is an intergovernmental organisation comprising Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, and the Kanak and Socialist

National Liberation Front of New Caledonia.

"The IUCN Oceania Regional Office looks forward to working closely with the MSG Secretariat to find common approaches to common challenges facing the MSG countries, especially so now given the threat posed by COVID-19 and the devastation caused by Tropical Cyclone Harold.

It is only by working together in partnership that we can truly bring to the fore the benefits that valuing and conserving nature can bring to our local communities," Mr Smith said.

## MSG SECRETARIAT ICT UPDATE

The MSG Secretariat's IT department began the year with the provision of support for the Governing Body Meetings (GBM) in Suva, Fiji.

This support included the timely and efficient transmission of meeting papers to the MSG Membership, via a secure online portal accessed by registered users only.

Manager Corporate Services Mr John Palmer stated that all papers and documents were uploaded two weeks in advance and support was also provided to the Policy and Technical team in the preparation and collation of Policy Documents that were to be presented at the GBM.

"The GBM approved the MSG work programme for 2020, a major component being the upgrade / conversion of the current Financial and HR Systems and the training of the team who will be using and managing these systems," Mr Palmer said.

He said IT had to reprioritise and defer much of these major work plans due to the current global health situation and focus on provision of user support both within and outside the Secretariat, including the day-to-day administration and management of the Systems.

Towards the end of February, the IT department provided support for the Governance and Legal Programme as they hosted the Inaugural MSG Ministerial & Senior Officials Conference on Eliminating Sexual & Gender Based Violence in Nadi, Fiji with the design of event logos and ID cards.

Earlier in March, in consultation with IDEA, they provided Call Centre support for the Political and Security Affairs Team as they embarked on the Observer Mission for the Vanuatu National General Elections.

Support for the Call Centre involved the design of an online portal which provided online forms for data collection in real time and data presentation for reporting, via an online dashboard and the creation of MSGOG merchandise i.e. ID cards and the collation of instant updates from the MSG Election Observer Group (MSGOG) who were out in their designated Areas of Responsibility.

Towards the end of March 2020, in preparation for a possible work-from-home, State of Emergency order, the department upgraded equipment for all users, both technical and support staff.

In addition, the department incorporated the use of instant messaging into communication strategies and successfully hosted online virtual meetings. Support was also provided in the finalisation of the 2018 Annual reports.

One of the department's work plan for 2020 was the IT Asset Disposal exercise which was initially given a lower priority, however this had to be re-prioritised in response to COVID-19.

"Staying safe and working safe during this challenging time is never an afterthought, they are at this point in time, the IT Unit's main priority - the main drivers of our commitment to help the team at the MSG Secretariat work and stay focused and remain connected at the Secretariat or virtually from home through internet technologies," said Mr. Palmer.



Left: Online portal for data collation and presentation in real time for the 2020 Vanuatu National General Elections



Right: A sample of the event visibility poster used at the Inaugural MSG Ministerial & Senior Officials Conference on Eliminating Sexual & Gender Based Violence in Nadi, Fiji



## EU AMBASSADOR COURTESY VISIT

Outgoing Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli received a courtesy visit from the Head of the European Union (EU) Delegation in the Pacific, His Excellency Ambassador Sujiro Seam, at the MSG Secretariat on 21 January 2020. In welcoming Ambassador Seam, Ambassador Yauvoli acknowledged the important contribution of the EU in the Pacific and most especially in the MSG Region both in social and economic enhancements and development. Particular discussion was on the importance of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) between the EU and MSG Countries and the enabling accessibility to the EU Markets through this partnership agreement. Ambassador Yauvoli assured the EU of the Secretariat's continuous support to the work of the EU in the region and looks forward to renewed collaboration in the year 2020 and beyond. Ambassador Sujiro Seam was in Vanuatu recently to meet with senior Government Officials.



*Ambassador Yauvoli hosting courtesy visits by His Excellency Seam (L) and Her Excellency de Zoeten (R) at the MSG Secretariat Office in Port Vila*

## AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR VISIT

The new Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu Her Excellency Sarah de Zoeten paid a courtesy visit to the outgoing Director General Ambassador Amena Yauvoli at the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila on 25 February 2020. In taking up her new role as High Commissioner, H.E Sarah de Zoeten took the opportunity to reaffirm Australia's continued presence and support in the MSG region. Ambassador Yauvoli expressed his appreciation and briefed her on the reforms and programmes undertaken by the Secretariat including potential areas where Australia and the MSG Secretariat could collaborate on. These areas include Climate Change, especially the implementation of the MSG Climate Finance Strategy, Governance Programmes in Women and Gender, Electoral Governance and other areas that the MSG Members may require technical assistance and finance from.



## MSG SECRETARIAT AND VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON IN TALKS

The MSG Secretariat Office received a courtesy visit from the Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning from the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand, Mr Jeff Ashford on Wednesday 15 January 2020.

Manager Corporate Services, Mr John Palmer and the Senior Executive Officer, Mr Christopher Waiwori received Mr Ashford on behalf of the outgoing Director General, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli. The Centre for Lifelong Learning of the Victoria University of Wellington is responsible for the provision of professional and executive education programmes in applied diplomacy, which are designed to cater for businesses and organisations both within New Zealand and globally. It offers short courses on areas of applied diplomacy, including communication skills for diplomats, tradecraft and diplomatic practice, speech writing for diplomats, international law and treaties, negotiation skills, regional security, protocol and other specialised areas of diplomacy.

The meeting discussed ways in which the MSG Secretariat can partner with the Victoria University of Wellington's Centre for Lifelong Learning in an effort to see how best the University can effectively provide professional training for MSG Member countries.

The MSG Secretariat will continue to strengthen its relationship with the Centre for Lifelong Learning of the University, to explore avenues where these specific training programmes/short courses can directly benefit professional development in the MSG Member countries.



*MSG Secretariat Manager Corporate Services, Mr John Palmer & the Senior Executive Officer, Mr Christopher Waiwori (close to camera) in talks with Mr Jeff Ashford (L), Director, Centre for Lifelong Learning, VUW.*

## MSG SECRETARIAT ISSUES INTERNAL ADVISORIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19



Members of the MSG Advisory Committee on COVID-19 at the MSG Secretariat HQ in Port Vila

Under the leadership of the Outgoing Director General, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli, an in-house Advisory Committee on COVID-19 (AC COVID-19) was established on 18 March 2020 to provide ongoing advisories for the safety and well-being of staff and their families.

The advisories imposed suspension on duty travels involving staff and MSG Members, as per the 2020 approved Calendar of Events (COE) until further advised. However, while these suspensions are in place, senior managers were advised to continue liaising with their respective MSG member counterparts on the substance of their respective deferred events preferably through online means. Additional measures for staff were taken including the necessary steps to avoid being infected, avoidance of public places, and safe distancing for social gathering. This also required that all sanitary and hygiene standards must be in place at the Secretariat, including the provision of gloves, masks and sanitisers for all staff. To date, there is still no confirmed COVID-19 case in Vanuatu, but this does not mean that we must be complacent. The AC COVID-19 has issued four advisories already and will be relaxing the conditions comparatively to various State of Emergency situations of the Host government and advisories from MSG Members.

## ARTS AND CULTURE UPDATE

Arts and Culture embodies substantial knowledge and is an important component of sustainable development in the Melanesian sub-region. It highlights and demonstrates our traditional bond with our environment and defines the way we live and do things in Melanesia. Significantly, it is the glue that binds Melanesia together. In the face of modernisation and globalisation, the Melanesian sub-region and its unique arts and culture has also undergone immense change. Given today's unpredictable circumstances where our indigenous Melanesian people are struggling with our indigenous arts and culture, the younger generation are the ones who are heavily impacted. Therefore, the need for the MSG to explore ways in which arts and culture is to be imparted to our younger generation in a more sustainable way. Arts and Culture is one of the prominent pillars in the establishment of the MSG Secretariat.

### 7TH MELANESIAN ARTS & CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Ministers meeting endorsed their support for Vanuatu to host the 7th Melanesian Arts and Cultural Festival that will take place in Vanuatu in 2022. Last year's success of the Vanuatu National Arts and Culture Festival in Malekula Island, Malampa

Province has set the platform and laid the building block for the 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Festival.

### MISS MELANESIA MUSIC FESTIVAL

Vanuatu will chair the development of the Concept and Guiding Document of the Melanesian Music Festival. The first draft has been completed and will be circulated for Members' comments and input before finalisation.

### MISS MELANESIA BEAUTY PAGEANT

Fiji was requested by the 7th Melanesian Arts and Culture Meeting to set up a Working Group, with a terms of reference (ToR), to develop a Concept and Guiding Document on the Miss Melanesia Pageant. The ToR has been circulated for comments and input.

### INAUGURAL MELANESIAN ARTS & CULTURE SYMPOSIUM

In the lead up to the 7th Melanesian Festival of Arts and Culture in 2022, Vanuatu will host the symposium as a biannual event in the same year. It sets a platform to bring our Melanesian Arts & Culture experts together to share their knowledge on gaps and strengths within our Melanesian Arts and Culture Sector.



The people of Vanuatu (left) and Papua New Guinea (right) celebrate the 6th Melanesian Arts Festival in 2018 in Honiara, Solomon Islands



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The symposium will also be an opportune avenue for the MSG Secretariat to strategise our Arts and Culture Policy in order to provide support in terms of framework and programmes, that will sustain our cultural diversity and social development.

#### IFACCA MEMBERSHIP

The MSG Secretariat has renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with the International Federation of Arts Council and Culture Agencies (IFACCA). Subsequently, the MSG Secretariat is now working on an Action Plan to operationalise the Memorandum of Understanding for the benefit of our Members. Fiji and Solomon Islands are members while consultation for Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea are currently in progress to become members.

#### CONCLUSION

The safeguarding, protection and promotion of Melanesian Arts and Culture is one of the priorities of the MSG Secretariat. Therefore, the urgent need to reinforce the collective determination of the MSG as a sub-region that is respected for its promotion of Melanesian arts and culture, customs, traditions and values. Our culture is our land and our identity, our culture is our environment, our culture is our food, our culture is our people and our culture is our future. As a sub-region, we must safeguard our unique arts and culture and ensure that they are instilled well in our people for our sustainable future.



*Member flags of the Melanesian Spearhead Group*

## MSG SECRETARIAT EVENTS CALENDAR

### EVENTS

- Validation Workshop on MSG Diaspora Contribution Assessment and Remittances Policy Report
- MSG Trade & Economic Officials Meeting
- MSG Trade Minister's Meeting
- Handing Over of MSG Chairmanship from PNG to Vanuatu
- Appointment of New Director General
- 2nd Referendum on Self-Determination in New Caledonia

### DATE

- 9-10 March 2020 - Port Vila, Vanuatu [deferred]
- 11-12 March 2020 - Port Vila, Vanuatu [deferred]
- 13 March - 2020 - Port Vila, Vanuatu [deferred]
- TBC
- TBC
- 6 September 2020

## STAFF MOVEMENTS

### OUTGOING STAFF



Amena Yauvoli ended his tenure as Director General with the Secretariat after serving four years. He served at a challenging time for the MSG. His commitment in building and leading the MSG from its previous challenges to what it is today is admirable. He will take up a new position with the Fiji Government as Ambassador Designate to the United States of America, and we wish him well in his new posting.



Romulo Nayacalevu was the first Manager of the Governance & Legal Affairs Programme. Prior to joining MSG, he worked at the UN OHCHR and the SPC. He was instrumental in identifying and progressing key governance/legal issues within the Secretariat for the MSG Group. He resigned after serving the MSG for over two years to pursue further studies. We wish him well.



Epineri Seibouma was the Peace and Security Officer. He was involved in the establishment of the Department of Peacekeeping Operation and was instrumental in the drafting of a concept paper for the MSG Leaders Conference. He completed his tenure of three years and we thank him for his service to the sub-region. He will return to his home country Fiji, and we also wish him well.

### INCOMING STAFF



George Hoa'au is the new Deputy Director General. He is from the Solomon Islands. He took up position in March 2020 for a term of three years. Hoa'au brings with him immense experience as former Assistant Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Under Secretary for Health with the Solomon Islands Government.



Ana Tudrau-Tamani joins the MSG as the new Media & Communication Officer. A former seasoned journalist from Fiji, Tamani brings with her considerable experience as a Public Relations professional having worked both in Government and the private sector and primarily in a regional setting at USP for a number of years.



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