



MELANESIAN Tok

ISSUE 11, MAY - JULY 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"

MSG Secretariat Acting Director General George Dan Hoo'au



ACTING DIRECTOR GENERAL'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to be writing this foreword to another exciting *Melanesian Tok* edition. As the Acting Director General, it is a blessing to be a part of this unique regional organisation with a sub-regional focus on Melanesia.

Equally a blessing is to be serving the aspirations of MSG members with the everyday support of an amazing and professional staff. I am very grateful to them. Like every other edition, this *Melanesian Tok* highlights events and outcomes under the respective programmes of the Secretariat, since the publication of the previous edition for the January - April 2020 period.

To begin with, I would like to register my most sincere *Vinaka Vakalevu* to the outgoing, Director General, Ambassador Amena Yauvoli, now Fiji's Ambassador to Washington D. C, for the confidence that he has in me, and thus supporting my appointment as Deputy Director General in March 2020. We will do our very best in supporting the new Director General, and in the pursuit of serving our MSG Members better.

The various undertakings which are being delivered through the different programmes, and covered in this edition are informed by several ways of re-thinking and questioning. In general, the question we ask in light of the challenges around, against, and for us as an organisation is, "what do we do to continue quality service for our Members?" The COVID-19 pandemic and its related challenges, merely exposes some specific questions the MSG Secretariat now explores answers to. Nonetheless, the MSG Secretariat is confident that it will come out of all these better polished.

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As such, we cannot postpone our response to change. The MSG Secretariat's response to the "new normal" constitutes several approaches.

One of which is that we continue to host our meetings with our Members and partners through the ZOOM online medium. We have seen its success and will continue to improve on it. In other words, in light of COVID-19, we instinctively want to get better at serving our Members and have taken advantage of evolving technology to help us. Furthermore, while relating to our Members online has created a 'new normal', the MSG Secretariat cannot remain "normal", assuming that things will still be the same. We will never emerge out of these times normal. So, we have started initiatives to carve a refreshing online presence to ensure that we remain relevant in the current times for our Members.

Internally, we have strengthened our monitoring and evaluation measures.

This is to ensure that we must commit to measure what matters to us and our Members with the available resources. Simply put, we would like to prepare ourselves to work better for our Members, by factoring into what we are doing now, the future which has already occurred.

"We would like to prepare ourselves to work better for our Members, through factoring into what we do now, the future which has already occurred."

Therefore, we embrace changes that we are experiencing now and factor them into what we are doing.

Our working mantra is "We are waiting and working". This means that we focus on a handful of activities that can make a real difference.

Consequently, against the challenges we see, and experienced, and what work we want to measure, the MSG Secretariat has started exploring how it can use them to its advantage by asking itself the following specific questions:

- What do we do now?
- What is most important in the service to our members in the next 6 months?
- How do we plan to do this?

- How do we want to relate to our Members during this challenge?
- How do we attract new confidence and trust from our Members and partners?
- How do we want to make sure that our Members and partners understand as much as we do about what is going on, and how do we factor these into our planning?

Above all, we are seeing a "new normal", but the Secretariat's response is in respect to a better question:

How can we factor into what we are doing now, the lessons learned from this "new normal"?

In doing so, we are ready to engage with the future which has already occurred. The ability to remain relevant for our Members hinges on an acceptance to embrace and strategically use change and challenges for the better. On one hand, we are building our capacity to learn from the challenges we see and to improve in delivering against the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan. Conversely, futuristically, this drives into the broader big questions of MSG in regional cooperation as:

- i) What is the regional cooperation of the future; and
- ii) What is the future of regional cooperation?

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to register our most profound appreciation to our MSG Leaders, Members, their officials, and our partners.

Despite the challenges that they are experiencing with respect to COVID-19 and national health demands, their unwavering support to their MSG Secretariat and its approved work programme for 2020 remain. The Secretariat will continue to work with MSG Leaders, Members and their officials to ensuring that we continue to serve them better.

This *Melanesian Tok* is being published in July when the peoples of Solomon Islands have recently celebrated their 42nd Independence anniversary on the 7th of July, and The Republic of Vanuatu's 40th Anniversary on the 30th of July.

I have sent to their respective Heads of Government, congratulatory messages (more details in this Issue).

I again, wish their peoples with their proud cultures, history and Leaders, God's blessings.

We want this *Melanesian Tok* newsletter to be valuable for you so please, share your feedback and suggestions to help us improve.

Oleti, Tenkiu tru, Tankiu Tumas, Vinaka Vakalevu.

MSG SECRETARIAT WISHES VANUATU & SOLOMON ISLANDS WELL ON INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARIES



VANUATU EMI

HAPPY 40th INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS TO THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

The Chair of the Melanesian Spearhead Group, Honourable James Marape MP, Prime Minister of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, and the Acting Director General, Mr. George Dan Hoa'au and Staff of the MSG Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu wish to congratulate the Government, Church Leaders, Chiefs, Community Leaders and the good people of the Republic of Vanuatu on this milestone occasion, the celebration of 40 years of Independence.

The successful attainment of 40 years of nationhood, is indeed a testament of the toil and determination that the good people and citizens of Vanuatu have enriched as one people since 30 July 1980. May the occasion of this Independence celebration bring renewed spirits of hope and advance vision for more years of prosperity ahead.

The MSG Secretariat stands proud to celebrate with you all and we look forward for Vanuatu's continuous support to the MSG Secretariat and the Group.



SOLOMON ISLANDS

42

07 July 1978 - 07 July 2020

MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP

HAPPY 42nd INDEPENDENCE ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Chair of the MSG, Hon. James Marape, MP, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, and the Acting Director General, Mr. George Dan Hoa'au and Staff of the Secretariat in Port Vila, Vanuatu wish to congratulate the Government, Church Leaders, Chiefs, Community Leaders and the good people of Solomon Islands on this occasion as you celebrate 42nd years of nationhood.

May the occasion of this Independence celebration resonate as a time of reflection and reassurances of the successes and challenges that Solomon Islands had overcome as one nation since the attainment of self-determination on 7 July 1978 and looking ahead for more opportunities.

The MSG Secretariat will continue to promote the vision for Melanesian Solidarity in all political and socio-economic spheres, and I am endowed with confidence that with the able and steadfast leadership of Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, MP, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, we will march forward despite of the challenges posed by COVID19 even further into new heights together.

GOD BLESS THE SOLOMON ISLANDS FROM SHORE TO SHORE

MSG SECRETARIAT CALLS ON VANUATU PM HONOURABLE BOB LOUGHMAN



Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Hon. Bob Loughman (3rd from left), ADG George Hoa'au and staff of the MSG Secretariat at the Prime Minister's Office

Senior officials at the MSG Secretariat led by the Acting Director General George Hoa'au, paid a courtesy call to the newly elected Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Hon. Bob Loughman on Wednesday 13 May 2020.

The courtesy meeting was made possible following an official invitation for the Secretariat to meet and update the Prime Minister on matters of importance that required his attention. Acting Director General (ADG), George Hoa'au described the first meeting as a successful one.

"I took the opportunity to congratulate the new Prime Minister and to convey to the Hon. PM important MSG related matters for his information," Mr Hoa'au said.

Among the many issues discussed during the courtesy meeting was the appointment of the new Director General of the MSG Secretariat.

Mr Hoa'au informed the Hon. Prime Minister that there was an established process agreed to by the MSG Leaders' in June 2015, pertaining to the appointment of the new Director General. To that end, the MSG Secretariat will be facilitating the process. Mr. Hoa'au also conveyed to the Hon. Prime Minister that following the MSG Governing Body Meetings in February 2020, Vanuatu pledged to host the Biennial Leaders' Summit in Port Vila at an agreed time in 2020. This also includes the hosting of the revived Melanesian Football Cup, now renamed, the Prime Ministers' Cup in Vanuatu in November this year. The Prime Minister welcomed these updates. In return, Hon. Loughman conveyed his acknowledgement to the MSG Secretariat and gave assurance for his Government's support to the work of the MSG Secretariat and to the solidarity of the MSG Group.

VANUATU FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER MEETS WITH MSG SECRETARIAT ADG



ADG George Hoa'au (L) and the Hon. Min. of Foreign Affairs of Vanuatu, Marc Ati MP

The Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat George Hoa'au, formally met with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of Vanuatu, Hon. Marc Ati MP on Thursday 14 May 2020. This was part of a formal undertaking by the Vanuatu Government to meet with heads of international and regional organisations in Vanuatu. During the meeting, ADG Mr Hoa'au re-iterated that the MSG Secretariat is committed to continuing the cordial working relationship that it

enjoys with the Vanuatu Government as the Host, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade.

The Hon. Minister was also briefed on the various programmes of the MSG Secretariat and the path that the Secretariat is taking in re-branding itself to further enable it to effectively deliver to Members.

The MSG Secretariat is the service delivery arm to advance the MSG Leaders' Mandates at the sub-regional level, hence the MSG Secretariat is always at the disposal of the MSG Members', and Vanuatu is no exception.

In response, Hon. Minister Ati thanked the MSG Secretariat for the ongoing improvements undertaken as a result of the successful reform agenda, which was presented during the Governing Body Meetings in Suva, Fiji, in February this year. He also assured that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade remains committed to upholding its commitments to the MSG Secretariat and to the Group. The MSG Secretariat was also reassured of Vanuatu's commitment to host the next MSG Biennial Leaders' Summit. The date is yet to be confirmed.

MSG SECRETARIAT HOLDS ONLINE MEETING WITH INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE



MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs, Mr Ilan Kiloe having an online discussion with Ms Amie J. Woeber, Resident Programme Director and Ms Elenoa Fuli, Resident National Programme Officer, Pacific Islands Programme

An online introductory meeting was held between the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat and the International Republican Institute (IRI) in May 2020.

The meeting was held between Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs MSG Secretariat, Ilan Kiloe; Resident Programme Director, Amie J. Woeber; and Resident National Programme Officer, Elenoa Fuli, Pacific Islands Programme.

IRI is the premier international democracy-development organisation that has performed high-impact work in many countries in Africa, Asia, Eurasia,

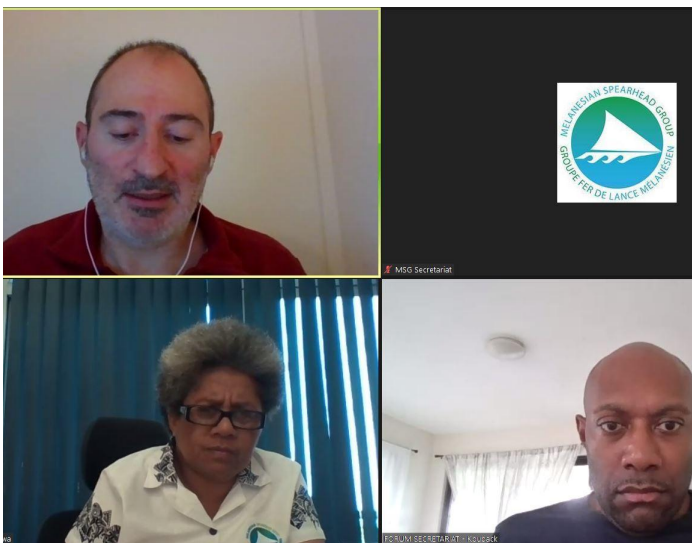
Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa since 1983. It currently has offices in 40 countries worldwide.

"Our discussions were based on the conduct of Election Observation in the MSG, including training and capacity-building initiatives.

We also discussed the potential for a partnership between the two organisations," stated Mr. Kiloe.

The meeting was made possible following the new approach to meeting online, via virtual meeting rooms recently adopted by the MSG Secretariat.

MSG SECRETARIAT MEETS ONLINE WITH PIFS ON E-COMMERCE PROJECT



MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager for Trade, Investment & Economic Development, Mrs Sovaia Marawa during discussions with Mr Kouback and Mr Giacomelli

An e-Commerce project was discussed online between the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on Friday 15 May 2020.

The MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager for Trade, Investment and Economic Development, Sovaia Marawa, hosted the online trade meeting with Andrea Giacomelli (Aid for Trade & Trade Policy Adviser) and Noach Kouback (Programme Adviser Trade) of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's Geneva and Suva-based offices.

The meeting discussed developments and identified possible collaborative approaches to facilitate the delivery of an electronic commerce project.

With the support of the ACP Tradecom II Programme, the project is focused on creating an enabling environment for e-commerce in the Pacific, including Members of the MSG.

MSG SECRETARIAT CO-HOSTS INAUGURAL VANUATU VIRTUAL 9TH HEADS OF MISSION CONSULTATION MEETING



ADG George Hoa'au welcomes the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Marc Ati MP to the MSG Secretariat



ADG George Hoa'au (sitting, 2nd from right) attends the opening formalities

The MSG Secretariat co-hosted the inaugural virtual 9th Heads of Mission Meeting of the Republic of Vanuatu on Friday 5 June 2020.

In a brief ceremony, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of Vanuatu, Hon. Marc Ati MP was formally welcomed by the Acting Director General of the MSG Secretariat, George Hoa'au.

For the Secretariat, it was an honour to co-host this very important event. "Your decision to convene this important meeting here at the MSG Secretariat, shows your ongoing commitment and support to our work and for that I convey my sincere appreciation on behalf of the MSG Secretariat," Mr Hoa'au informed the Honourable Minister.

The 9th Heads of Mission meeting was also graced with the presence of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, Hon. Bob Loughman MP.

PARTICIPATION IN VANUATU'S 40TH INDEPENDENCE VICTORY PARADE

A sense of pride and patriotism filled the atmosphere as adults and children in their colourful attire & traditional wear swarmed the Kumul Highway from Tagabe to the Independence Park.

Green, red, black and yellow painted the skies and the highway as the Vanuatu flag flew high, carried, waved and swayed to by residents of Port Vila, both NiVans and foreigners who have called Vanuatu home.

In a show of Melanesian solidarity, staff and families of the MSG Secretariat participated in the Victory Parade,

marching proudly behind the MSG flag and banner led by the Acting Director General, George Hoa'au. Independence Day will be celebrated on Thursday 30 July.

The Victory Parade of 23 July 2020 will go down in Vanuatu's history as the "the biggest parade ever", marking the start of the 7-day Public Holiday and Vanuatu's YUMI40 Independence celebrations.

God bless the Government and People of the Republic Vanuatu.



The MSG Secretariat crowd included our staff, their children and families. More pictures on pages 9 & 10

MSG DIRECTOR GENERAL TO BE APPOINTED ON MERIT



Member flags of the Melanesian Spearhead Group

The MSG Secretariat has invoked the recruitment process for the new Director General beginning with the advertisement of the position which closed in May 2020.

The process of appointment of the new Director General was agreed to and adopted by the MSG Leaders' during the 20th Leaders' Summit in Honiara, Solomon Islands on 26 June, 2015.

Following that, a troika of MSG members from the Senior Officials Meeting will then meet to go through the shortlisted candidates and begin the formal process of interviews.

The troika will then submit their recommendations to the MSG Leaders for their consideration and decision.

Article 14 of the MSG Agreement states that, "The Director General shall be appointed by the Leaders' Summit under such terms and conditions as the Leaders' may decide."

The emphasis has always been that the process agreed to by the Leaders', is to ensure that the recruitment of a Director General must be based on merit.

So once a recruitment is finalised by the panel, it will be submitted to the MSG Governing Body Process, of which the Chair of the MSG will then announce the next Director General.

Hon. Prime Minister James Marape is currently the chair of the MSG Leaders and will be handing over the chairmanship of the MSG region to Prime Minister Hon. Bob Loughman when the MSG Special Biennium Summit is convened next.

Also high on the MSG's agenda is the recruitment of the Director General of the MSG Secretariat.

MSG SECRETARIAT RAISES SUPPORT FOR TC HAROLD VICTIMS



Members of the MSG Secretariat's Social Club sell food in support of efforts to fundraise for TC Harold victims

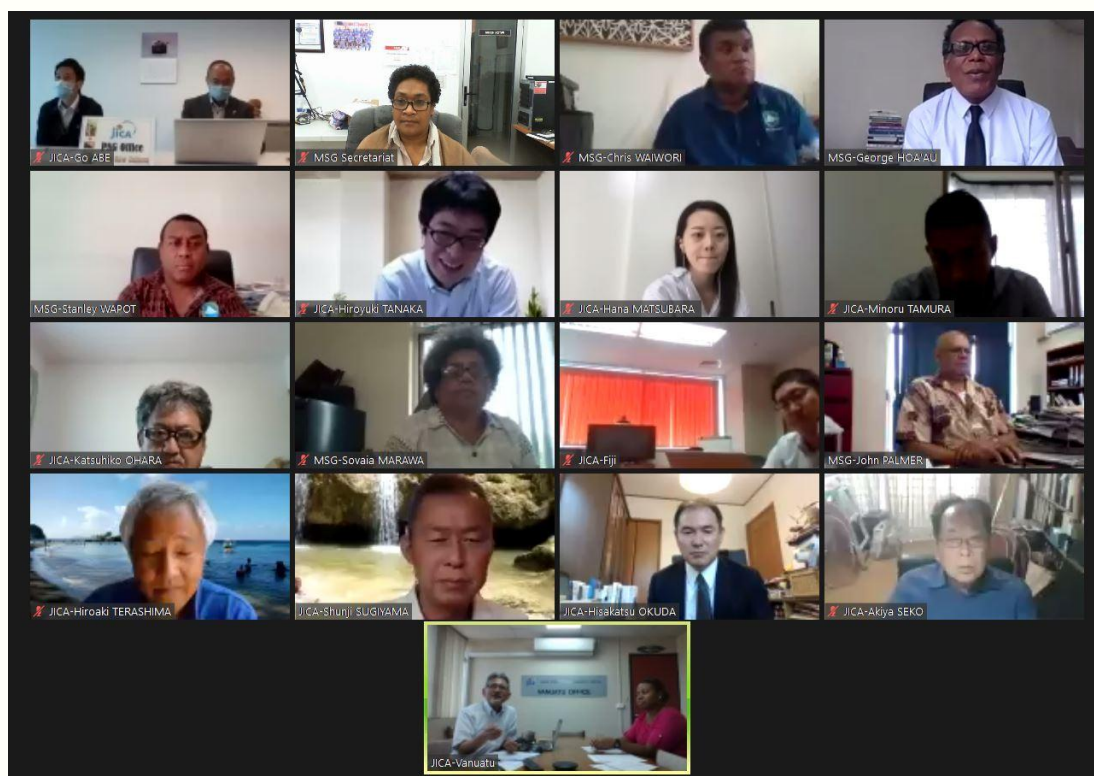
The MSG Secretariat's Staff Social Club participated in a fundraising drive in support of victims of Tropical Cyclone Harold, who were left homeless and without food in the northern part of Vanuatu, SANMA and PENAMA province.

The fundraiser took place on 9 June 2020 at Etmat near Erakor village in Port Vila. It was a whole day affair, featuring food stalls, music and stage activities that attracted a good number of people

who came on board to support the worthy cause. The MSG Staff Social Club concluded the fundraising by giving 50,000 VATU to the organising committee. It was not the first time the MSG Staff Social Club took part in a charity event, as it has previously visited the Children's Ward in Vila.

Talks are also underway to start the Social Club programme activities once the State of Emergency is lifted and things begin to normalise.

MSG SECRETARIAT & JICA DISCUSS MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION



The first virtual online meeting between officials from the MSG Secretariat and JICA discussed the expected modalities of the partnership, and other related areas of collaboration

The MSG Secretariat successfully convened an online meeting with the Japan Technical Cooperation Agency (JICA), to deliberate on a partnership arrangement through a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on Wednesday 17 June 2020.

The proposed MOC is a result of JICA's willingness to collaborate with the MSG Secretariat through the MSG Roadmap for Inshore Fisheries Management and Sustainable Development 2015–2024.

The MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager responsible for Natural Resources Management, Mr Stanley Wapot said that the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap was an MSG Leaders' Mandate taken in 2012, to develop a regional strategy for national implementation on the protection and wise use of inshore fisheries and marine resources. Mr Wapot said that the roadmap was developed by the Fisheries Departments of the MSG Members, with technical assistance from the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), and specifically focused on the sustainable development of inshore fisheries and aquaculture development in MSG Members.

He said that one of the key areas of the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap is the need to empower resource owners in their communities to sustainably manage,

and benefit from their marine resources.

He said, that JICA's successful implementation of their "Grace of the Sea" project in Vanuatu on integrated community-based coastal and marine resource management, is a testimony that such initiatives can be promoted through the MSG platform to have it extended to other MSG Members.

The discussion with JICA for partnership arrangement has been an ongoing one, and the proposed MOC aims to promote mutual cooperation between the two organisations to promote the objectives of the MSG Inshore Fisheries Roadmap.

While supporting the partnership with JICA, ADG George Hoa'au is adamant that the partnership will promote sustainable inshore fisheries that is well managed using community-based approaches, that provide long-term socio-economic benefits for the communities in Melanesia.

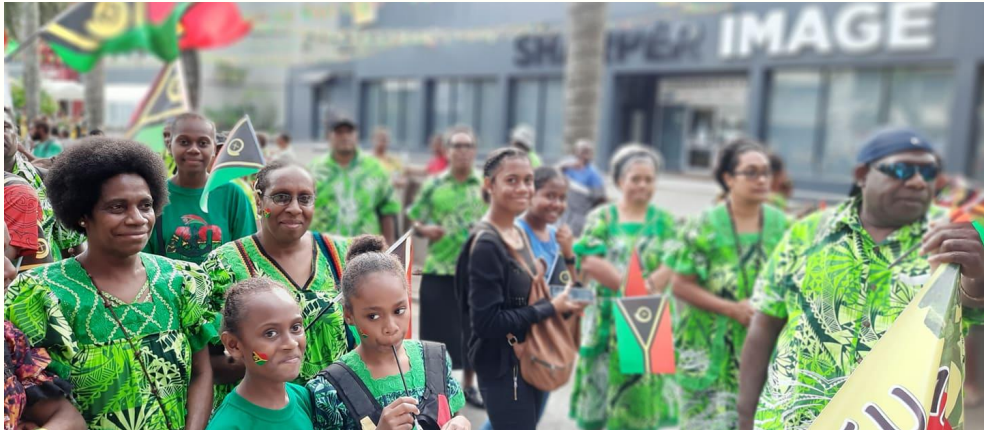
The virtual online meeting between officials from the MSG Secretariat and JICA also discussed the expected modalities of the partnership, and other related areas of collaboration.

The MOC is expected to be finalised soon including a framework for joint action and an Action Plan.

VANUATU 40TH INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS PICTORIAL



In a show of Melanesian solidarity, staff and families of the MSG Secretariat participated in the Victory Parade, which marked the start of the 7-day Public Holiday and Vanuatu's YUMI40 Independence celebrations



VANUATU 40TH INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS PICTORIAL



MSG SECRETARIAT AND FLNKS DISCUSS PROGRESS OF 2020 WORK PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION



Officials from the MSG Secretariat and FLNKS during the online virtual meeting on Thursday 18 June 2020

The MSG Secretariat conducted a successful virtual meeting with the Front de Libération Nationale Kanak et Socialiste (FLNKS) on Thursday 18 June 2020.

The meeting was formally opened by the Acting Director General, George Hoa'au and facilitated by Ilan Kiloe, Programme Manager for Political & Security Affairs.

The common objectives of the MSG are to support the Independence struggle of the People of Kanaky through the FLNKS – a Member of the MSG. Mr Hoa'au expressed appreciation to the FLNKS delegation for agreeing to meet with the Secretariat and for their ongoing commitment to the MSG.

The purpose of the meeting amongst other issues, was to consider updates on the implementation of the 2020 FLNKS Work Programme and activities. In particular, it provided updates on the preparation towards the 2nd UN-sanctioned Referendum, in accordance with the Noumea Accord 1998. The FLNKS delegation was represented by Mr. Mikael Forrest, Permanent Secretary; Mr. Jean Creugnet, 1st Vice President of New Caledonia Congress; and Mr Charles Wea, Advisor to Congress. The Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs, Mr Kiloe, mentioned that the affairs of FLNKS remained an integral part of the programme in the MSG Secretariat.

He provided an update on the implementation of the 2020 FLNKS Work Programme particularly on the meeting of the Special Committee on Decolonisation

(C24) in February 2020, and the Melanesian Spearhead Group Observer Group (MSGOG) to the Vanuatu Election in March 2020.

The FLNKS also contributed to the discussions.

As well, Mr Kiloe noted the importance of the need for the MSG Secretariat to further strengthen its partnership with the Congress of New Caledonia through the MSG - Congress Partnership Agreement. It covers a number of agreed activities including Melanesian Parliamentary Cooperation.

The FLNKS delegation provided a brief update on preparations towards the 2020 Referendum, and the role that MSG plays in supporting the aspirations of the people of Kanaky.

Speaking in support of this, ADG, Mr Hoa'au, reiterated the MSG Secretariat's commitment to support FLNKS in advancing their aspirations for Independence through the current decolonisation process in New Caledonia, as provided for in the Noumea Accord 1998. Recently the ADG presented a podcast in support of the FLNKS and the Kanaky people to show solidarity and support and to coincide with the international solidarity week for Non-Self-Governing Territories (NSGTs) on the UN decolonisation list.

The 2nd referendum of independence for the people of Kanaky in New Caledonia is scheduled to be held later this year.

MSG SECRETARIAT'S 5-POINT SUSTAINABILITY PLAN ON MELANESIAN BUBBLE

In light of the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the MSG Secretariat has developed a 5-Point Sustainability Plan on the Melanesian Bubble. This was done through the Acting Director General, utilising the Director General's 'Good Offices' responsibility, provided for under Article 14 (6) (vii) of the Agreement Establishing the MSG.

Article 14 (6) provides the responsibility for the Acting Director General to take appropriate actions to respond to impending challenges on the welfare of the organisation and to bring matters to the attention of Members.

Developed as a result of internal consultations, the 5-point sustainability plan focuses on five specific areas which can secure the MSG Members in current times to be adaptable and resilient to the challenges posed by COVID-19. These targeted areas of the 5-Point Sustainability Plan are

1. Health Networking and Visibility;
2. Education, Social and Family Connectivity
3. Economic Recovery;
4. Sports and Recreation; and
5. Traditional Agriculture & Food Security.

Point 1 (Health Networking & Visibility), is a commitment to support national efforts on common health checks and verification processes through facilitation and harmonisation of medical checks, verification processes, data collection and information sharing between Members.

Point 2 (Education, Social & Family Connectivity) relates to Border Control for MSG Members.

It calls for a regional commitment to agree on a timeline and personnel safety measures to ensure that MSG Members' Airlines continue to travel between MSG States. This is in order to facilitate an agreement on

ease of travels for the movement of MSG nationals' between MSG borders.

Point 3 (Economic Recovery) calls for a commitment to supporting national priorities on the development of economic measures for macroeconomic stability, including supporting and strengthening domestic economic activities in the tourism sector, through effective marketing and promotions of MSG country brands for instance Vanuatu-Made, Fiji-Made, PNG-Made and Solomon Islands-Made etc. This plan also includes a commitment to support the rebuilding of confidence, through facilitation and improving transparency in regulations for international travels and trade.

Point 4 (Sports and Recreation) advocates for regional commitment to supporting sporting activities within MSG-sanctioned sporting activities and how to relate to other regional and international organised sporting activities.

Point 5 (Traditional Agriculture & Food Security) calls for a commitment to encourage social coherence in community on traditional farming methods and traditional barter system, and to sustain our food security and provide assistance on our national economic development. It further calls for a commitment to encouraging home and urban gardening through traditional arts and culture and cash crops to further encourage nutrition and food security through collaboration and partnerships with government and regional agencies. The MSG Secretariat will be consulting with officials from Member countries to progress the 5 -Point Sustainability Plan on the Melanesian Bubble, further through the MSG Governing Body process.



Programme Managers and senior staff of the MSG Secretariat led by the ADG George Hoa'au (middle) discuss the sustainability plan on the Melanesian Bubble.

MSG SECRETARIAT HANDS OVER ELECTION REPORT TO VANUATU GOVERNMENT



Officials from the MSG Secretariat and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with the MSGOG Report after it was handed over to the Vanuatu Government. Standing 3rd from left is Mr Joe Pakoa, senior official who represented the Director General of MOFA; followed by George Hoa'au, Acting DG, MSG Secretariat; and Ilan Kiloe, Programme Manager, Political & Security Affairs.

The Melanesian Spearhead Group Observer Group (MSGOG) Report was officially handed over by the MSG Secretariat to the Government of Vanuatu on Tuesday 23 June 2020.

Programme Manager for Political and Security Affairs, responsible for Elections programme, Mr Ilan Kiloe welcomed officials who were present to witness the handing over of the Report and stressed that the successful conclusion of the Observer Mission is a milestone achievement for the MSG.

Speaking during the official hand-over, Acting Director General George Hoa'au expressed his appreciation to the Government of Vanuatu, through the Vanuatu Electoral Commission, for the confidence given to the MSG Secretariat to observe the Vanuatu National General Elections on 19 March 2020.

Mr Hoa'au made the statements on behalf of the MSGOG Head of Mission, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola of Fiji.

"The MSGOG was committed to undertake the Observer Mission despite difficult circumstances posed by COVID-19 to honour the Secretariat's commitment to its Members and the invitation by the Government of Vanuatu," he said.

The ADG informed officials that "the MSGOG is a mandate of our Leaders to observe national elections upon request by our Members".

He said that these observation exercises are part of the MSG Secretariat's efforts to assist Members in strengthening their electoral processes in accordance with the "MSG 2038 Prosperity Plan for All". Mr Kiloe also emphasised that the MSG Observation Mission started in 2014 with the Fiji Elections, and followed by

the 2016 Vanuatu Snap Elections, 2017 PNG National General Elections, 2018 Fiji National Elections, 2019 Solomon Islands National General Elections and the 2020 Vanuatu National General Elections.

For the Vanuatu Elections, the MSG Observer Group comprised Member representatives from Fiji, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and FLNKS.

The MSGOG covered the four (4) largest constituencies in Vanuatu namely (Luganville (Santo), Tana, Malekula, and Efate – to ensure wider coverage of the election, in view of the limited resources it had.

The MSGOG Report observed that the outcomes of the 2020 Vanuatu Elections were embraced by the citizens of Vanuatu and that the atmosphere was calm and peaceful.

It was observed that all polling stations visited by the MSGOG teams were manned by committed polling officials performing their duties even in challenging circumstances.

There was also the overwhelming presence of political party agents and security personnel who allowed for appropriate scrutiny.

The MSGOG report also observed that there are some challenges that the Vanuatu Electoral Office (VEO) encountered during the election period.

However, while the report comprehensively covered all issues, one important matter that stood out was the drop in voter turn-out.

It was observed that the voter turnout was an average of 51 per cent, which is a significant

Continued from Page 13

decline compared to the 2016 Snap Elections. This may be due to many factors, some of which may relate to the recent challenges posed by COVID-19 and extreme weather patterns during the time of polling. He said that overall, the MSGOG found that the 2020 Vanuatu National General Elections was successfully conducted and that the Group was encouraged by the manner in which the elections were conducted. During his concluding remarks, Mr Hoa'au reiterated that the MSGOG had fully endorsed the recommendations put forward in the report and trusts that they will be found useful by the Vanuatu

Government to guide the conduct of future elections. He added that the MSGOG Mission was grateful for the opportunity to be in Vanuatu to conduct election observation. Senior Official from the Vanuatu Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Joe Pakoa, on behalf of the Vanuatu Government in receiving the report, conveyed his sincere appreciation to the MSG Secretariat for the Election Observer Report. He also assured the Secretariat that the report and its recommendations will certainly be put to good use.



MSG Secretariat ADG George Hoa'au (far right) hands over the Election Report to Joe Pakoa, senior official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who received it on behalf of the Government of Vanuatu. In the middle is MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager, Political & Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe



L-R: MSG Secretariat ADG George Hoa'au; Senior Foreign Affairs Staff, Joe Pakoa and Richard Balkonan; and MSG Secretariat's Programme Manager, Political & Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe.

MSG SECRETARIAT HOSTS CONSULTATIVE MEETING ON PRELIMINARY DRAFT OF “NATIONAL E-COMMERCE ASSESSMENT OF PNG” REPORT



Participants of the Consultative Meeting organised by the Government of PNG and hosted by the MSG Secretariat

A virtual consultative meeting on the preliminary draft of the National E-Commerce Assessment of Papua New Guinea Report was successfully hosted by the MSG Secretariat on Friday 26 June 2020. The meeting was organised by the Government of Papua New Guinea (PNG), through the National Trade Office (NTO) within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade.

Representatives from the PNG government ministries, departments and private sector attended the consultative meeting that was chaired by Mr. Philip Mercado, Assistant Secretary - Trade Policy Coordination in the National Trade Office in Port Moresby, PNG.

The consultative meeting was facilitated by Mr. Pablo Quiles, Manager I Trade Advisory Services of International Economics Consulting Ltd, and assisted by Mrs. Sovaia Marawa, Programme Manager for Trade, Investment and Economic Development (TIED) at the MSG Secretariat.

The COVID-19 pandemic and related challenges he said, has had a profound impact on the world economies including the MSG region and the closure of national borders has led to a slump in demand for international travels and impacted the tourism, retail and services-related sectors.

This unprecedented event has resulted in mass redundancies, unemployment and so have affected many livelihoods and global recession.

Acting Director General, George Hoa'au while welcoming the participants said that the COVID-19 pandemic has triggered and brought to the fore the need for countries, more so the MSG region, to examine the challenges and develop national e-commerce strategies, with accompanying policies and regulations to create an enabling business environment to encourage economic growth.

He said some of the policy issues that the MSG region may need to consider, amongst others, include safe and secure online platforms, consumer protection, incentives, innovation, statistics and national forums for e-commerce.

He said that with this background, the national dialogue was organised in a timely manner to consider the preliminary draft National E-Commerce Assessment Report for PNG.

He said the National E-Commerce Assessment Report is helpful particularly to provide guided actions to create an enabling environment for faster and secure cross-border movement of goods and services that will also generate opportunities and contribute to economic growth.

"This project, is a joint initiative of the MSG Secretariat and Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to assist the Forum Island Countries (FICs) and indeed our MSG members develop national E-Commerce Strategies.

The second phase of this project will require the development of a Regional E-Commerce Strategy and Implementation Roadmap for FICs and MSG," he added. Finally, Mr Hoa'au expressed his sincere appreciation to Tradecom II Programme funded by the European Union for supporting the Pacific through this technical assistance programme, to prepare national assessments of e-commerce environments in Fiji, PNG and two other countries in the Pacific.

"In particular, we would like to thank our partner, the Permanent Delegation of the Pacific Islands Forum - Geneva Office for spearheading this initiative," he said. International Economics Consulting Limited (IEC), represented by Mr. Pablo Quiles, conducted the national e-commerce assessment for PNG.

"I am pleased that stakeholders from both government and private sector are present in this meeting," Mr Hoa'au added.

He encouraged participants to provide their contributions to guide the development of an informed and well-researched national assessment report on the e-commerce environment in PNG.

MSG SECRETARIAT DEVELOPS ELECTION HANDBOOK & OBSERVER GUIDELINES

The MSG Secretariat is embarking on an exciting exercise to develop its inaugural MSG Election Handbook and Observer Guidelines to guide the conduct of future election observation missions.

The Handbook and Guidelines adopts best practices, stipulated in the Declaration of Principles on International Election Observation, and will ensure the ongoing integrity, value and impact of MSG observer missions as they continue to support the strengthening of electoral democracy and the political rights of its member countries' citizens.

According to the Programme Manager, Political and Security Affairs, Ilan Kiloe, the MSG had conducted six (6) observation missions to observe national elections in Member Countries from 2014 - 2020.

"Over the years, the organisations had benefited from experiences and lessons learned from these missions and the time is now right for MSG to have the Election Handbook and Guidelines to guide future elections missions," he stated.

"Election observation has become an important core

activity of the Secretariat's work in advancing the MSG's promotion of common political values and principles," he commented.

"Since 2014, there have been many developments in the approach to election observation by the MSG and in the conduct of elections member countries. Upon which these guidelines are prescribed yet susceptible to changes as elections in the region evolve and the MSG's continuing commitment to review and incorporate new changes," he added.

The MSG's '2038 Prosperity for All' Plan recognises under its pillar on Political Stability that the MSG is to be the 'arc of stability' towards good governance, political stability, lasting peace and unity.

Promoting also amongst other key reflections, is the respect for the rule of law and order among all Members.

Aligned to international recognition of rights of all citizens that the inalienable right of individuals to participate in democratic processes, particularly and expressly through free and fair elections.



Mr Ilan Kiloe, Rodrigue Tiavoane and former DG Mr Amena Yauvoli at Uzamba Village, Southeast Vella La Vella Constituency in the Western Province, Solomon Islands during the SI Elections on 14 April 2019



MSGOG Head of Mission Ratu Inoke Kubuabola (far right) paid a courtesy visit to the Chairman of the Vanuatu Electoral Commission Late Martin J. Tete and members of the MSGOG delegation, Mr Leonard Louma and Ilan Kiloe (far left).



Members of the MSGOG to the 2020 Vanuatu General Elections



Former DG Mr Amena Yauvoli and Rodrigue Tiavoane during the Solomon Islands Elections on 14 April 2019

MSG SECRETARIAT SIGNS HISTORIC MOU WITH OFC

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on Friday 3 July 2020, between the MSG Secretariat Acting Director General, George Hoa'au and the President of the Oceania Football Confederations (OFC), Lambert Maltok to establish a mutually cooperative relationship between the two organisations, in promoting and developing football and futsal in Melanesia.

The MoU's objective include a long-term legacy plan in which prior to the opening of the competition, will provide a fora for coaches and game officials training and development, experience sharing on the basis of mutual respect, and establish terms and conditions concerning the agreement, in developing and strengthening the level of football within Melanesia.

According to the MoU, the Secretariat will, among other things, prepare a programme for the Tournament in consultation with OFC, which will be hosted by a MSG member on a rotational basis, for the MSG Prime Ministers' Cup and Melanesian Games.

The signing ceremony was history in the making, when it took place at the Northern Town Provincial Headquarters with the presence of Honourable Minister for Youth Development and Sports, Willie Pakoa Satearoto; SANMA Provincial President Malmal Langi Touve; the Lord Mayor of Luganville town, Peter Pati; Police Commander of Northern Town, Mr. Willie Samuel; the Principal

Education Officer, Thomson Paul; Secretary General of Vanuatu Football Federation, (VFF) Albert Manaroto; Senior Government Officials and prominent representatives of the business houses.

Hon. Minister Willie Satearoto expressed his appreciation to the two organisations, the MSG Secretariat and Oceania Football Confederation for finally arriving at this signing ceremony saying it is a milestone achievement and he was pleased to witness the historical event.

He concluded that, "Sports is everybody's business, a healthy nation is a nation with healthy citizens and one that has youths with the utmost respect and responsibility. President Oceania Football, Mr. Lambert Maltok said, he was elated and the historic signing was a dream come true.

"I started this discussion even before I became President of the OFC but I was determined to see it come to fruition during my 4-year term. I am proud that the MSG Secretariat has taken a strong move to ensure our football is elevated to another level and our agenda behind this MoU is to ensure that one or two MSG members qualify to take part in the 2026 FIFA World Cup. MSG Acting Director General, George Hoa'au acknowledged Hon. Willie Pakoa Satearoto, saying his presence signified the Government's unwavering



Signing of the MSG Secretariat & OFC MoU, witnessed and supported by the Hon Minister of Sports Mr. Willie Pakoa Satearoto (centre in suit), President of SANMA province to the left, Malmal Langi Touve and Lord Mayor of Luganville Town, Peter Pati, to the right of the Hon Minister. Seated are the President of the Oceania Football Confederations (OFC), Mr. Lambert Maltok (left) and MSG Secretariat Acting Director General, Mr. George Hoa'au.

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support towards sports development in Vanuatu and through Melanesia, and in particularly eyeing Vanuatu to be the host in reviving this Tournament.

"This MoU is a milestone for us in Melanesia because I understand that this tournament will be a Tier 1, a level recognised by FIFA which will leverage Football in Melanesia," he remarked.

Following the MoU signing and when our borders are open and countries return to normalcy,

"we will start the dialogue with the proposed host on a way forward and a date to be confirmed for the revival of the tournament, however at this stage we are yet to follow suit with the advice given from OFC".

The Sports Programme is not a new one at the Secretariat, however it is now re-aligned to a stand-alone programme with a new officer and there are now a lot more activities and programmes expected to be developed within the region. Within the Secretariat, there are a number of constituent bodies and the MSG Sports Committee, which meets once or twice a year, is one of them. This committee he said, decides on

sports programmes and activities, out of which outcomes are then discussed at the Ministerial level. In September 2019, the Inaugural MSG Sports Ministers meeting was held in Port Vila, which subsequently endorsed the revival of the Melanesian Football Cup but with the change of name to, "MSG Prime Ministers' Cup".

The signing of the MoU concluded efforts by the MSG Secretariat's Sports Development Officer, Mr Henry Bill, a successful round of consultation in 2019 through all MSG members beginning from Vanuatu, to New Caledonia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea and to the Solomon Islands.

In these consultations, the discussions included the revival of the Melanesian Cup, now known as the MSG Prime Ministers' Cup.

During these consultations all Football National Federations agreed to the initiative and also proposed that the MSG Secretariat take the lead in dialogue with the biggest Football Body, FIFA, through the Oceania Football Confederation.

MSG SECRETARIAT CONDUCTS ASSET DISPOSAL



Old printers and equipment are being handed over to PVTC

Old printers belonging to the Melanesian Spearhead Group Secretariat have been donated to the Pacific Vocational Training Centre by the Secretariat's Asset Disposal Committee.

The committee comprised the Senior Accountant, Mr. Mariasua, the HR and Administration Officer, Ms Mothy Sisi and the ITWO, Monica Abau-Sapulai.

The conditions of the printers ranged from uneconomical to repair, obsolete, and written-off, with brands ranging from Brother to HP.

The IT Department followed the Asset Disposal process as outlined by the MSG Governing Body where Assets of Value worth VT1M and below can be disposed on the approval by the Director General.

Over a period of 2 weeks the IT team tested the printers to reconfirm their statuses, a list compiled and passed onto the HR/Admin and Finance Team, who then inspected and estimated its book value.

A recommendation was then made to the Manager Corporate Services who then forwarded the list to the Acting Director General for disposal by donation. The Pacific Vocational Training Centre was delighted to receive the printers.

"We will use these printers for hands-on practical lessons," said Mr. Waqatabu.

The asset disposal process continues with the testing and preparation of old PCs to take place next.



678 27791



678 27691



msg.secretariat@msg.int



msgsec.info



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