



Achieving **Economic Prosperity**, a core objective of the **MSG 2038: Prosperity for All Plan!**

A bi-monthly newsletter to inform readers about *key work activities undertaken at the MSG Secretariat*, including those supported by the European Union through the Pacific Integration Technical Assistance Project.

WINSTON WREAKS WIDESPREAD RUIN IN FIJI

The vulnerability of the Pacific region to climate change-induced natural disasters, causing mayhem to the livelihood, security and well-being of people - especially Melanesians who comprise over 90 per cent of the region's population – was evident from the impact of Cyclone Winston on Fiji.

After being first observed as a tropical disturbance near Vanuatu on 07 February 2016, then passing the south of Fiji before moving on to Tonga, Cyclone Winston struck the country as a Category 5 system on 20-21 February. This happened just one week after Fiji became the first country in the world to ratify the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement that was agreed upon at the 21st Conference of Parties (COP) in Paris, France last December, and just three weeks shy of the first anniversary of Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, let alone the floods in Solomon Islands and drought in PNG during 2014 and 2015, respectively.



A devastated family of Nayavutoka Village in Ra Province

Source: ADRA Fiji

Described by the renowned *Discover* science magazine as “second only to Super Typhoon Haiyan” (that hit the Philippines in 2013) “as the strongest cyclone to make landfall anywhere on Earth in recorded history”, Winston claimed the lives of 44 people, damaged or destroyed over 30,000 homes and caused extensive damage worth hundreds of millions of dollars to infrastructure, agriculture, businesses and other sectors of the economy.

To allow the coordination of rehabilitation works and relief supplies to affected communities on the main island of Viti Levu and the outer islands, the Government declared a 30-day state of natural disaster. Overwhelming support is being received from the international community, NGOs, the Pacific region including MSG (see page 2), and from various stakeholders within the country.

COMMON ABBREVIATIONS

- ACP** - African, Caribbean and the Pacific Heads of Government Meeting
- CEO** - Chief Executive Officer
- CHOGM** - Commonwealth
- COP** - Conference of Parties
- CITES** - Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
- DG** - Director General
- EIF** - Enhanced Integrated Framework
- EU** - European Union
- FLNKS** - Front de Liberation the Nationale Kanak et Solcialiste
- FNPF** - Fiji National Provident Fund
- IPA** - Investment Promotion Agency
- LDC** - Least Developed Country
- MC10** - 10th WTO Ministerial Conference
- MOU** - Memorandum of Understanding
- MSGTA3** - Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement 3
- NGO** - Non-Government Organisation
- OCTA** - Office of the Chief Trade Advisor
- PIC** - Pacific Island Country
- PIFS** - Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
- PITAP** - Pacific Integration and Technical Assistance Project
- PNG** - Papua New Guinea
- PSD** - Private Sector Development
- SPC** - Pacific Community
- SMS** - Skills Movement Scheme
- TEOM** - Trade and Economic Officials Meeting
- TMM** - Trade Ministerial Meeting
- UCSI** - United Church in Solomon Islands
- US** - United States
- VIPA** - Vanuatu Investment Promotion Authority
- WTO** - World Trade Organisation

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MSG MEMBERS SUPPORT POST-WINSTON RECOVERY IN FIJI

Solidarity within the MSG Sub-region not only during good times but particularly at bad times was demonstrated by the substantive support extended by the MSG Family, through Member Governments and their people, to Fiji to assist the country's rehabilitation following the devastation caused by Cyclone Winston.

MSG Chair and Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, presented a cheque of FJ\$1.277million in Suva to the Prime Minister of Fiji, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama. Solomon Islands High Commissioner to Fiji, H.E. Patteson Oti, was present as well at the handover. The Prime Minister of PNG, Hon. Peter O'Neill, also announced in Port Moresby that the Government and people of PNG would be providing PGK5.5million (FJ\$3.9million). Hon. Sogavare, who met Hon. O'Neill in Port Moresby during his round of Chair's visits to the MSG capitals prior to his visit to Suva, also announced the readiness of both Solomon Islands and PNG to ship building and other relevant materials to Fiji.

Vanuatu's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Bruno Leingkone also paid a visit to Suva and handed over a donation of VUV10million (FJ\$188,000) to Fiji's Minister for Foreign

Affairs, Hon. Ratu Inoke Kubuabola. Hon. Leingkone also conveyed to Hon. Kubuabola the condolences of the Prime Minister, Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmas and the people of Vanuatu to the people of Fiji who lost family members and dear fiends during the cyclone. Hon. Bruno also expressed his appreciation for Fiji's assistance to his own country following Cyclone Pam in March of last year.

Besides donations through Governments, fundraising activities have also been conducted by various entities within each Member country such as the private sector, faith-based organisations, international and national NGOs, former scholars of educational institutions in Fiji, and community representatives including members of the Fijian community as well as friends and relatives of the people of Fiji.

Hon. Bainimarama acknowledged the overwhelming assistance received from the international community, including the MSG in the aftermath of Cyclone Winston and assured that the assistance would be used to help rebuild the livelihoods of all who were affected.



L-R: H.E. Oti, Hon. Bainimarama and MSG Chair, Hon. Sogavare
Source: Fiji Sun



Hon. Kubuabola (left) and Hon. Leingkone
Source: Fiji Government

GLIMPSES OF THE HAVOC CAUSED BY WINSTON



A village on Koro Island
Source: Fiji Government



A home in the Western Division
Source: Fiji Government



TOTAL service station in Ba Town
Source: Feroz Khalil / Mai Life



A school in Lomaloma, Vanuabalavu, Lau
Source: NZ Defence Force / Fiji Sun

STAFF SOCIAL CLUB RAISES FUNDS FOR FIJI

The MSG Secretariat's Staff Social Club collaborated with other staff social clubs and business houses in organising a fundraiser event at Independence Park, Port Vila on the afternoon of 26 February 2016 in support of the post-Winston recovery efforts in Fiji. The social clubs were from the Reserve Bank of Vanuatu, National Bank of Vanuatu, Office of the Chief Trade Adviser, National Tourism Office, Lenakel Hospital and Vanuatu Institute of Technology. Former students of Fiji-based also helped out with the event.

The event started with lunch sales, followed by raffles, movies, darts plus lots of Fijian and ni-Vanuatu music. The programme culminated with a dinner, at which Chief Worwor Isaac, President of the Port Vila Council of Chiefs was chief guest.

The total of VUV800,000 (approx. FJ\$15,090) raised from these activities has been transferred to the "Prime Minister's National Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation: Cyclone Winston" account with ANZ Bank in Suva, Fiji. "We are very grateful for the support of all who backed



Guests queuing to buy lunch

the fundraising effort for Fiji, just as we did too for Vanuatu after Pam last year," said Acting Director General (DG), Mr Molean Kilepak.

MSG OBSERVES VANUATU SNAP ELECTION



Voters lining up at the Beverly Hills Polling Station in Port Vila

In response to a request from the Vanuatu Government, an MSG Elections Observers Group was commissioned by the Chair and Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, to observe the country's Snap Election on 22 January 2016. Vanuatu is the second Member to benefit from MSG Observer Election support after Fiji in 2014. The Group monitored, assessed and observed the conduct of the Snap Election in accordance with international and regional standards for elec-

tions, taking into account Vanuatu's Constitution and laws.

The MSG Observers were led by former Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Sir Francis Billy Hilly, and included Ratu Epeli Nailatikau (former President of Fiji), H.E. Francis Agwi (PNG High Commissioner to NZ); Mr. Reuben Kaiulo (former Electoral Commissioner, PNG), Mr. Philippe Ajapunya (FLNKS), Mr. Mohammed Saneem (Fiji's Supervisor of Elections), Mr. Rence Sore (Secretary to the MSG

Chair's Office, Solomon Islands) and Mr. Navneel Sharma (Chief Administrative Officer to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Fiji).

The Observers were deployed to polling stations in Port Vila, Efate Rural and Luganville (Santo). Their report, which noted the outcomes of the Election as being "embraced by the citizens of Vanuatu with an atmosphere of calm," has been submitted to the Vanuatu Government and will also be presented to Leaders at their Summit in Port Vila on 05 May 2016.

MSG CHAIR VISITS CAPITALS



MSG Chair, Hon. Sogavare (left) hands over the MSG Elections Observers Group report to Vanuatu Prime Minister, Hon. Salwai

The MSG Chair and Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Hon. Manasseh Sogavare, began his series of visits to the MSG capitals for consultations with Leaders when he arrived in Port Vila, Vanuatu on 16 February 2016. Among those accompanying him were his wife, Mrs Emmy Sogavare; Mr Rence Sore who is the Secretary to the MSG Chair and Mr Joseph Ma'ahanua who is the Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs & External Trade.

The highlight of the programme was the visit that Hon. Sogavare

paid to the Prime Minister of Vanuatu, Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimamas, who was congratulated for his new appointment following the Snap Election on 22 January 2016. The discussions between the two Leaders covered key issues pertaining to MSG, including the services of the Secretariat that would deliver tangible benefits to Members. Hon. Sogavare then took the opportunity to present to Hon. Salwai the report of the MSG Elections Observers Group on the country's Snap Election. He

also visited the Secretariat where he was engaged in meaningful dialogue with staff on the implementation of its 2016 work programme as well as on other pertinent issues.

The Chair's delegation left Port Vila on 19 February for Noumea for meetings with FLNKS authorities. They then went to Port Moresby to meet with the PNG Prime Minister, Hon. Peter O'Neill, and to Suva to meet with the Fiji Prime Minister, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama. Acting DG, Mr Molean Kilepak was also part of the delegation.

NEW CORPORATE PLAN FOR SECRETARIAT



The MSG Secretariat's Corporate Plan for 2013-15 has been replaced with a new five-year Corporate Plan 2016-20, which was adopted at the Foreign Ministers Meeting in Port Vila on 16 October 2015. The key difference between the two Plans relates to the decision by Leaders in 2013 to endorse the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan and its Implementation Framework. The new Corporate Plan thus depicts the roadmap to achieve the aspirations of Leaders on Political Stability, Economic Prosperity, Social Inclusivity and

Sustainable Development in line with the pillars of the MSG 2038 Prosperity for All Plan.

The strategic goal of the Executive in the new Corporate Plan is "To provide effective overall leadership and oversight of the MSG Secretariat to ensure it delivers the mandates of Members." The various programme goals are as follows: Promoting and Strengthening Good Governance, Peace and Security, and Sustainable Development; Facilitating and coordinating the effective and efficient implemen-

tation of the Melanesian Free Trade Area; Strengthening national policymaking capacity for equitable and inclusive socio-economic development; Strengthening the capacity and operational effectiveness of the Secretariat; and, Promoting strategic partnerships for collaboration and funding. These goals help design the Secretariat's annual work programme. For more information on the new Plan, please contact Mrs Laisiana Tugaga, Manager Corporate Services, l.tugaga@msg.int.

SOLTUNA—WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?



A work shift in progress



A female forklift operator



After the MSG PSD consultations in Noro, L-R: Vitu, Jim and Petros

Soltuna Ltd, descended from Solomon Taiyo and Soltai Ltd, is the manufacturer of the well-known Solomon Blue and Soltuna canned tuna products. So established that the word “Taiyo” from the original company is synonymous with canned tuna in Solomon Pidgin. Canned tuna sales in 2015 exceeded 650,000 cases including exports to Fiji, Vanuatu, PNG and various small island countries and, due to its value and shelf life is one of the most important pillars of food security in village communities.

Located at Noro in the Western Province of Solomon Islands, Soltuna employs 1,800 persons, two thirds of whom are females, in a two-shift rural operation. Along with the NFD Fishing Company, Soltuna is the principal source of economic development in Noro and Western Province. The companies make significant contributions to the Helena Goldie Hospital in Munda, Noro Schools and Town Council, and many local activities such as World Tuna Day and the Lagoon Festival. Soltuna has also helped with disaster relief in MSG countries.

On a daily basis, 100-120 metric tons of whole tuna are processed into frozen loins for export to Italy and canned tuna for sales to Pacific Island markets. The weekly schedule begins with the larger sizes of tuna leaving the cold stores on Sunday afternoon for a tightly controlled schedule of thawing, butchering, cooking and cooling to be ready for hand cleaning at 5:30 am on Monday. The production week ends with the last frozen loins leaving the plate freezers, canned tuna leaving the retorts and last sacks of fishmeal filled early Saturday morning. Saturdays and Sundays are also busy with maintenance, getting paperwork finished and equipment ready for the next week’s run.

In order to operate a large manufacturing operation in a remote rural setting, you have two choices: bring in large numbers of specialists or, train up your local workforce. Soltuna has always followed the second path currently employing less than 10 expatriate workers out of the 1800-strong workforce. Training extends beyond technical areas such as mechanics, refrigeration, and instrumenta-

tion, electrical and building trades to leadership, family budgeting, literacy and numeracy.

Having a predominantly female workforce provides Soltuna the opportunity to help women enter into non-traditional positions which have higher pay. Recently, Soltuna trained a group of women to be qualified to operate a forklift and now have two full time female forklift drivers and another licensed in the purchasing department. Female staff hold other key positions in the company.

The Noro community and Soltuna workforce are unusual in that they are multi-cultural, made up of significant communities coming from all of the country’s provinces. Last year, the plant shut down before Christmas for annual maintenance and vessels were chartered to all parts of Solomon Islands so workers and their families could enjoy the holidays with their extended families.

Melanesian Tok thanks Mr Jim Alexander, General Manager, Soltuna Ltd for this article and the photos. Please email him, jalexander@soltuna.com.sb for queries on this article or for any business-related matter.

ADVOCATING ENTERPRISE GROWTH THROUGH CHURCHES

To address social problems in local communities, faith-based organisations are increasingly paying attention to small-scale income-generation projects which can help support the livelihood of their members, especially youths. This was recognised early during work on the MSG PSD Strategy, which led to dialogue last year between the Secretariat and the Vanuatu Christian Council.

The second encounter with a faith-based body occurred during the MSG PSD consultations in Solomon Islands in May 2015 when the PSD Mission Team was

hosted by the United Church in Solomon Islands (UCSI) at their national headquarters in Munda, Western Province. A key issue then was the recognition that the lack of income-generating opportunities was not only prevalent among youths but was a cross-cutting issue that also affected middle-aged men and women.

A more recent interaction with Churches took place on 08 December 2015 when upon the invitation of the Vanuatu Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Secretariat’s Private Sector Development Adviser, Mr Henry Sanday,

spoke at three sessions on PSD issues, covering the significance of the informal sector in sustaining livelihoods. Over 400 participants, including 111 from Solomon Islands and most of whom were women, converged at the week-long Efate District Congress in Mele Village. Supplementary practical workshops were also held on Floral Decoration, Furniture Making, Fish Farming, Soap Making, Basic Photography, Vegetarian Cooking and Sewing Machine Maintenance. For more on the Draft MSG PSD Strategy, please email Henry, h.sanday@msg.int.



The MSG PSD Mission Team, with UCSI Leaders in Munda

SUPERANNUATION HEADS DISCUSS INVESTMENT FUND



FNPF in downtown Suva, hosts for the Superannuation Heads meeting

Source: Emosi Radrodro

The Heads of MSG Provident and Pension Funds convened their second meeting, which was hosted by the Fiji National Provident fund (FNPF) in Suva on 07 December 2015. They considered the draft report prepared by Consultants Mr Gilbert Veisamasama and Mr Viliame Vodonaivalu on the proposed MSG Development and Investment Fund (MDIF). Representing the Solomon Islands National Provident Fund were their CEO, Mr Tony Makabo and Mr Gideon Zoleveke, Chair of their Investment & Credit Committee. Mr Santos Vatoko, CEO, Vanuatu

National Provident Fund was also present with FNPF Executives including Mr. Jaoji Koro, Chief Operating Officer and Mr. Alipate Waqairawai, Assistant General Manager of Member Services. The then Director General, Mr Peter Forau, represented the Secretariat.

The concept of the MDIF emanated from the 2013 MSG Eminent Persons Group Report, which recommended a scheme to facilitate a degree of self-funding to support Members' development activities when aid is declining, and secondly to

assist Members with the national implementation of decisions reached at the MSG level as well as other initiatives which promote their developmental interests.

The principles discussed for the proposed Fund relate to: (i) responding to Members' priorities which other programmes cannot support; (ii) initially funding essential infrastructure projects; (iii) funding the implementation of key decisions that enhance Members' capacity to benefit from agreed initiatives. Mr David Hopa, Program Manager Economic Development, d.hopa@msg.int, has more details on this project.

STUDY ON MSG EXPORT PRODUCTS COMPLETED



Fiji's coconut oil-based products displayed in Noumea

The MSG Export Products Study conducted by Mr Jeff Blackburn and Mr Barry Hellberg of Blackburn, Croft & Co, from September to November 2015 has finally been completed after they submitted their final report in December 2015. This followed their incorporation of comments received from Members during and after a Validation Workshop attended by 38 participants including officials as well as representatives of producers and exporters, in Noumea, New Caledonia on 12 November 2015.

Issues and strategies were identified for enhancing the potential of products that Members classified as struggling with market access and supply-side constraints. The products were: Fiji – virgin coconut oil, sweet biscuits and yoghurt; FLNKS – tunnels and soil-less crop systems, cinder ash and solar water heaters; PNG – biscuits and snacks, corned beef and hand-made bilums; Solomon Islands – canned tuna, coconut oil, coffee and processed timber; Vanuatu – cocoa, sandalwood, beef and kava.

The Study's recommendations relate to Prioritising Products; Shipping and Transport Linkages; Trade Statistics; Procurement and Employment; Industry Assistance; Trade Representation; Customs Procedures and Accreditation and Certification Services. Also noted were other products that Members could offer to each other, the Pacific Islands and beyond the region. An analysis of market requirements for the products will be held in 2016. Contact Ms Tendai Chigwada, Trade Research Analyst, t.chigwada@msg.int for more.

WTO "NAIROBI PACKAGE" GOOD FOR MSG



In Nairobi, L-R: Dr Kessie, Petros and Mr Sumbue Antas, Director of External Trade for Vanuatu

The Secretariat's Trade Economist Legal, Mr Petros Shayanowako, and Head of the Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA), Dr Edwin Kessie, joined Vanuatu's delegation to the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference (MC10) in Nairobi, Kenya on 15-19 December 2015. Fiji, PNG and Solomon Islands also attended.

The MC10 Ministerial Declaration - "Nairobi Package" - has options beneficial to Members, including a Special Safeguard Mechanism for Developing Countries (Fiji

and PNG) on agriculture, allowing them to negotiate a solution to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes; immediate elimination of export subsidies by Developed Countries, elimination of export subsidies by Developing Countries by end of 2018; duty/quota-free access for cotton exported from Least Developed Countries (LDCs); simplification of preferential rules of origin for LDCs and extension of the preferential treatment of services and service suppliers of LDC to 2030 to boost

LDC participation in the services trade. LDCs Members - Solomon Islands and Vanuatu - stand to benefit from these resolutions.

LDCs may also seek assistance under the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Phase 2 launched at MC10, to strengthen capacity, building on EIF Phase 1 programmes. Support is also available to Members under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement when it enters into force. Petros, p.shayanowako@msg.int, has more on these facilities.

FIJI APPOINTS TRADE COMMISSIONER TO PNG

Fiji has made the groundbreaking appointment of its new Trade Commissioner to PNG. He is Mr Navitalai Tuivuniwai, Principal Economist - Trade with the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Tourism. The commitment to establish the Trade Commission, which was announced in the 2014 National Budget, is intended to facilitate trade and investment flows between the two largest MSG economies, namely Fiji and PNG.

The Trade Commission is expected to enhance Fiji-PNG bilat-

eral trade, which was quantified by the Ministry as having totalled FJ\$22.77million in 2012 and grown by 67.5 per cent from 2005 to 2012. This prospect of further trade and investment growth is to be expected given that Fiji and PNG are parties to the MSG Trade Agreement which is being reviewed to extend from goods alone to include trade in services, investments and labour mobility.

Mr Tuivuniwai has had extensive experience with regional and sub

-regional trade and investment policy issues. He participated in numerous MSG events, the last of which included the series of Trade Officials and Ministerial Meetings as well as the Investment Symposium and Trade Fair which were held in Noumea, New Caledonia last November. Mr Tuivuniwai also took part in various MSG consultations last year in Fiji including for the design of the PSD Strategy and also the Export Products Study.



Mr Tuivuniwai (left) in Suva with MSG Export Products Consultant, Mr Barry Hellberg

Source: Mr Tuivuniwai

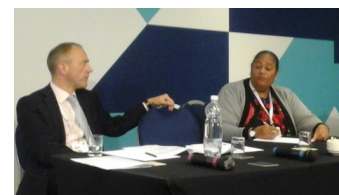
FROM MALTA TO MALEKULA: VIPA AT WORK

Investment opportunities in Vanuatu were promoted at the Commonwealth Business Forum in Malta on 24-26 November 2015 in the run up to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Upon the invitation of Vanuatu's former DG for Foreign Affairs & Trade, Mr Johnny Koanapo, CEO for the Vanuatu Investment Promotion Authority (VIPA), Dr Andrina Thomas attended the Business Forum. She joined the Prime Minister of Fiji, Hon. Voreqe Bainimarama as speakers at the Forum in the presence of 1,200 business leaders, 15 Heads of Governments and their officials.

The Forum presented the opportunity to raise awareness on Vanuatu as many participants did not know where the country was located, as well as its investment regime," Dr Thomas said. Policy reforms to enhance the business climate and investment incentives were also highlighted.

Just as vital as global outreach is local outreach. Thus Dr Thomas and two members of the VIPA Board namely, Mr Benjamin Malas who is the Director of Department of Customs & Inland Revenue and Mr Noel Kalo, who is the Acting Director of the Department of Industries, travelled to Maleku-

la on 02-06 February 2016 for the EU Enhanced Integrated Framework-funded Trade Mainstreaming & Visibility Workshop, which was opened by the then Prime Minister, Hon. Sato Kilman. Consultations were held with the Malampa Provincial Government, businesses, cooperatives, traditional resource owners as well as women's and community groups. Discussions focused on foreign investment and allaying fears about such investment, so as to improve the well-being of citizens. For more on these undertakings, please contact Dr Thomas via email, athomas@vipa.org.vu.



Dr Thomas (right) in Malta



Malekula workshop participants

Source: VIPA

REVISED VANUATU HANDICRAFTS GUIDE LAUNCHED

Development partner collaboration was exemplified at the launch of the revised Vanuatu Handicrafts Vendor Guide in Port Vila on 15 December 2015. This work was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of New Zealand through the Pacific Horticulture and Agricultural Market Access Program. The Guide is intended to help ensure that handicraft products sold to tourists are compliant with Quarantine requirements as

well as with those of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, or CITES.

In undertaking the programme with handicraft vendors in 2015, Vanuatu's Department of Tourism secured funding for the training of vendors and printing of the Guide from the 10th European Development Fund through the South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO). This work is considered to be relevant to the Draft MSG PSD Strategy, especially in

relation to two of the Strategy's goals: "Unleashing Entrepreneurship in Rural and Informal Economies" and "Encouraging Inclusive Private Entrepreneurial Development." In response then to the Department's invitation, the MSG Secretariat was represented at the launch by the Private Sector Development Adviser, Mr Henry Sanday. Copies of the Guide are available from the office of the Department of Tourism in Port Vila.



Displaying the Guide, L-R: Mr Timothy Tumukon (Director of Biosecurity), Mrs Rosalie Vatu (Handicraft Association), Mrs Adela Issachar Aru (Dept. of Tourism), H.E. Georgina Roberts (NZ High Commissioner), Mrs Sonia Gray (Australian High Commission) and Mr Filipe Tuisawau (SPTO)

SPC BOLSTERS COLLABORATION WITH MSG

Pursuant to the MOU signed on 17 July 2012 between the Pacific Community (SPC) and MSG (renewed 11 November 2014), a Letter of Agreement dated 16 December 2015 between them marked the hosting of a new SPC Regional presence for Melanesia at the MSG Secretariat.

During his visit to Vanuatu on 23 February 2016, SPC Director General, Dr Colin Tukuitonga described this latest development as “part of SPC’s strategic alliance with MSG” and also formally announced that a member of their Senior Leadership

Team, Ms Mia Rimon was relocating to Port Vila to become SPC’s Regional Director of Melanesia. “This also signals SPC’s strong commitment to improving development outcomes in this region in conjunction with other regional agencies,” he added.

Priority areas for collaboration between the two organisations relate to Agriculture and Forestry, Capacity Development, Coastal Fisheries, Cultural Industries, Deep Sea Mining, Statistics, Sustainable Energy, Transport and Shipping, Water Quality and, Youth@Work.

Strategies for pursuing these priority areas were discussed at a meeting on 04 February 2016 by Ms Rimon and Mr Moses Amos, SPC’s Director of Fisheries, Aquaculture & Marine Ecosystems, with MSG Secretariat officials including Mr John Licht, Acting Director Programs; Mr Stanley Wapot, Program Manager Governance and Sustainable Development; and Mr David Hopa, Program Manager Economic Development. For more information on these initiatives, Ms Rimon can be reached via email, miar@spc.int, whereas Mr



Ms Rimon, SPC’s Regional Director of Melanesia

John Licht, Acting Director Programs, j.licht@msg.int, is the contact person at the MSG Secretariat.

PACIFIC ISLANDS MERCHANDISE TRADE REPORT LAUNCHED

A longstanding regional concern on the lack of updated and reliable data on the trade performances of Pacific Island Countries (PICs) has been addressed by the recent publication of the “Pacific Islands Trade 2010 to 2014” report. Prepared by the Pacific Community (SPC) with funding assistance from the European Union, the report provides relevant stakeholders including governments, exporters and development partners with a snapshot of the status of trade in 15 PICs, including MSG Members, from 2010 to 2014.

Highlights from the report include PNG’s US\$9.9 billion (b) share of the PICs’ total merchandise exports to the world, which stood at US\$13.4b in 2014. Fiji was second at US\$1.5b. Total merchandise imports into the PICs that same year stood at US\$27.4b, over twice the value of exports. Only PNG and Solomon Islands recorded trade surpluses. Thirty per cent of the PICs’ exports, valued at US\$93.97b, were from the primary sector (agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture and forestry), with the top three sources being PNG (US\$2.2b), Solomon

Islands (US\$659.8 million [m]) and Fiji (US\$637.2m). The leading primary sector imports for most PICs are meat, cereal-based products, beverages, food preparations and sugar. On intra-Pacific regional trading, the value of PIC exports to other PICs amounted to US\$329.8m in 2014. Fiji dominated exports to other PICs, accounting for 96 per cent of all intra-regional exports. Fiji’s export figures here also include re-exports, mainly fuel. The report is available from http://www.spc.int/lrd/iact-publications/cat_view/420-iact-publications.

Intra-regional trade is challenging for many Pacific Island countries because of shipping, competition, distribution and market constraints.

- SPC (2015) *Pacific Islands Trade 2010 to 2014*

GROWING INTEREST IN TRADE AND SKILLS MOVEMENT

The potential for increased intra-Msg trade, investments and skills movement is believed to be significant. This follows the growth in enquiries received at the Secretariat from Members’ Government officials as well as from the private sector. This trend is both interesting and encouraging given that Members are preparing for the finalization of the relevant chapters of the revised MSG Trade Agreement and its signing by Ministers this year.

Enquiries received for export markets and investment opportunities are usually disseminated through Members’ Trade and Investment Promotion Agencies, peak industry bodies such as the Chambers of Commerce & Industry or National Private Sector Organisations, participants and exhibitors of past Investment Symposiums and Trade Fairs, respondents of past MSG studies and consultations as well as those on the MSG mailing list.

Queries have also been received from companies keen to hire qualified personnel from within the Sub-region. In response, the interested party is informed about the MSG Skills Movement Scheme (SMS) in place to facilitate the temporary movement of skilled MSG nationals between MSG countries, without compromising national laws and policies on health and safety, minimum working conditions and border

requirements. The SMS is governed by an MOU signed between Fiji, PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which entered into force on 30 September 2012. More details are available via the link: <http://www.msgsec.info/index.php/publicationsdocuments-a-downloads/msg-skills-movement-scheme>. Mr John Licht, Acting Director Programs, j.licht@msg.int, is the contact person for these issues.

**THE SECRETARIAT
MELANESIAN SPEARHEAD GROUP (MSG)**



**SECRETARIAT
GROUPE DE FER DE LANCE MÉLANÉSIEN (GFLM)**

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Contact Melanesian Tok by email

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SECRETARIAT FAREWELLS VULORI

Following the farewells of management staff in December as reported in the last issue of *Melanesian Tok*, another senior staff member of the MSG Secretariat, Ms Vulori Baleisolomone of Fiji, was farewelled on 01 February 2016.

Vulori joined the Secretariat on 01 February 2010 as Manager Finance with the Corporate services Division. Following an internal restructure, she became Manager Corporate Services and then later assumed the role of Chief Operating Officer for Melanesian Solutions Ltd until her last day at work.

Vulori was acknowledged by the Acting Director General, Mr Molean Kilepak, for her services to the Secretariat over the last six years and wished her well with her future endeavours.



Vulori receives her plaque for services rendered to the MSG Secretariat from Acting DG, Mr Kilepak

US ARMY PACIFIC SUPPORTS VANUATU DISASTER RESPONSE

The US Army Pacific team visited the Secretariat during the week of 29 February 2016 as part of an initial scoping visit for their Pacific Resilience Project, which entails a Disaster & Emergency Relief exercise for Vanuatu in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Office, Vanuatu Military Force, Vanuatu Police Force and other relevant stakeholders. The US Army Pacific Team included MAJ Shane Vinales, MSG Anthony Lark, SFC Rachel Harris and LTC Leslie Vazquez, as well as CDR Balsinger of the US Embassy in Suva, Fiji.

Further details are available from Mr Stanley Wapot, Program Manager Governance & Sustainable Development, sj.wapot@msg.int.



Vanuatu-US Army Pacific meeting in session at MSG Secretariat

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2016

March

- 01-04 Mar: Vanuatu-US Army Pacific Meetings, Port Vila
- 08 Mar: International Women's Day
- 10-11 Mar: MSG Aviation & Tourism Sectoral Dialogue, Port Vila
- 16 Mar: Head of EU Delegation to the Pacific, H.E. Andrew Jacobs visits Port Vila

March (con't)

- 17-18 Mar: MSG Sub-Committee on Legal and Institutional Issues Meeting, Honiara, Solomon Islands
- 25-28 Mar: Easter Holidays

April

- 19-20 Apr: Technical Working Group Negotiations on the MSGTA3 Trade in Services, Port Vila

April (con't)

- Launch of MSG Forestry & Mining Consultancy Studies

May

- 02-03 May, MSG Senior Officials Meeting, Port Vila
- 04 May: MSG Foreign Ministers Meeting, Port Vila
- 05 May: MSG Leaders Special Summit, Port Vila

May (con't)

- 06 May: MSG Donors Roundtable Meeting, Port Vila
- 23-24 May: MSG Trade & Economic Officials Meeting, Port Vila
- 25 May: MSG Trade Ministerial Meeting, Port Vila