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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS LAUNCHES ITS FIRST EVER WEBSITE

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and external Trade on Friday 7th February has successfully launched its first ever website. Over the years the Ministry has not had a website and this had hindered the decimation of information from the Ministry to the General public.

However with funding from the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) project the Ministry has successfully launched its website on Friday.

Speaking during the launching of the website the Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade Hon. Clay Forau told guests that the launching of the website was a history for the Ministry as this is the first time that the ministry has got its own website.

Also speaking during the launching ceremony was the Supervising PS for Foreign Affairs and External Trade Mr. Jeremiah Manele who said that the aim of establishing the website was to enhance access of information to the general public both inside and outside of the country.

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade is Solomon Islands’ first line of defense in our foreign relations.

“Its principle role is to provide the government of the day with appropriate advice on the conduct of its relations and to meaningfully execute its policies.

“In many cases this website will be the first point of entry for people wanting to seek information about the Country and this website will provide the much needed information

“It will also help well-wishers of the Solomon Islands to access and spread information about our country globally and will help promote our people, our products, our tourism, our marine and forest resources



Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade Hon. Clay Forau formally launches the MFAEt website. Watching on is web developer Mr. Gordon Denty.

around the world,” the supervising PS said.

The supervising PS also took the chance to thank the EIF for providing funding to develop the website and also to the local website-developers, Mr. Gordon Denty and Carlos tatapu for constructing the impressive

website set-up.

Special mention was also made to the MFAET staff who had contributed to the development of the website.

The website is now up and running and can be found on www.mfact.gov.sb.



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Minister for Culture and Tourism Hon. Samuel Manetoali and Minister for Foreign Affairs & External Trade Hon. Clay Forau during the launching of the EIF Tier two project and the launching of the website for the Ministry.

EIF US\$1.5M Tourism project launched

The US\$1.5 million tourism project which was recently approved by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Board in Geneva was launched by the Minister of Tourism and Culture Hon Samuel Manetoali on Friday 7th February at the Mendana Hotel in Honiara.

The project document was put together by the EIF National Implementation Unit (NIU) within the External Trade Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Solomon Islands Visitors' Bureau (SIVB).

The project funding will go towards assisting the Ministry of tourism and SIVB in addressing some of the tourism related needs identified in the project proposal which when implemented will contribute to the overall development of tourism industry in the country.

Speaking during the event Hon. Manetoali

told guests that the launching of the Tourism project was an important milestone for the country.

“I am confident that the project will help address some of the issues affecting the tourism sector and I can assure you that my staff at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism will work closely with the EIF National Implementation Unit (NIU) to ensure that the project is implemented according to the requirements set out by the EIF board,” Mr Manetoali said.

Mr. Manetoali also took the opportunity during the launch to thank the EIF board in Geneva for funding the project and also the NIU staff for their hard work in ensuring that the project was secured.

The US\$1.5 million project will systematically intervene in the areas of policy and legislation related to the tourism sector; promote Solomon Islands as a distinct visitor's destination in the Pacific Region and

strengthen the linkages of the tourism sector with the auxiliary sectors such as agriculture and handicrafts in a way that help create additional livelihood opportunities for the public.

The project proposal was submitted in November (2013) after endorsement by the National Trade Development Council (NTDC) and an Appraisal Committee constituted by NTDC.

The Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) is multi-donor programme which supports the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) in their effort of promoting economic growth and sustainable development by addressing their trade and trade-related constraints in order to build their capacity to trade and take advantages of global trading.

The launching of the EIF Tier two project also coincided with the launching of the new website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade.



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Joy Kere pledges a ‘cost effective’ Embassy

Newly commissioned High Commissioner to New Zealand, Mrs. Joy Kere, has vowed to make a costly established of the New Zealand mission worthwhile for the country in yet another historic achievement for women.

She says she is mindful of the costly exercise by the government on any establishment of a permanent diplomatic mission overseas footed on limited finances.

“However I will ensure the Missions operations and work programmes are cost effective and that funds and resources entrusted to the Mission are expended or used as appropriated by Parliament,” the former Foreign Affairs PS pledged during an official commissioning by Governor General Sir Frank Kabui at the Government House.

“I will ensure that there is compliance to the public finance and management act, financial instructions and other necessary financial regulations.”

The inspiring mother of four and wife of a local prominent doctor said she is committed to an “utmost best” to deliver what is expected of her.

She says the establishment of the Solomon Islands High Commission in New Zealand is a significant milestone to the growing relationship of the two countries.



Newly appointed High Commissioner with the Governor-General

“Solomon Islands’ presence in Wellington will go a long way in further strengthening our bilateral, regional and multi-lateral ties with New Zealand.

“New Zealand offers a lot of opportunities of mutual benefit in the area of trade and investment. The mission will endeavor to explore and pursue such opportunities with both the government and the private sector

of New Zealand.”

Meanwhile the new High Commissioner also highlighted her promotion to an advocacy in promoting more women in taking up leadership roles in the various fields of their work.

To that she added: “I am mindful that the expectations for me to deliver on the expected tasks, will be even greater”.

MSG Subcommittee on legal and intuitional issues ends in Honiara



Delegates to the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Sub-Committee on Legal and Institutional Issues (SCLII).

A two-day long meeting hosted by Solomon Islands Government through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade for the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Sub-Committee on Legal and Institutional Issues (SCLII) in Honiara was successfully completed in February.

The SCLII is a sub-committee comprising of lawyers from Foreign Affairs and State Law Offices of MSG member countries including the Police and other government officials from respective inter-government agencies of member countries. The meetings are convened depending on relevant issues that form part of the meeting agendas.

The 9th SCLII, chaired by FLNKS and co-chaired by PNG, covered various legal texts and some outstanding legal frameworks that needed to be deliberated, reviewed and finalised in proper form and legal language. Once they are finalised, these will undergo respective national processes for vetting by

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EIF board approves Tourism Project

A project proposal to support Tourism development in the country has been approved by the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) Board in Geneva.

The project document was put together by the EIF National Implementation Unit (NIU) within the Trade Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & External Trade in close collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism and Solomon Islands Visitors' Bureau (SIVB).

The overall project development was overseen by the National Trade Development Council (NTDC).

Acknowledging the approval notification, the EIF Focal Point in Solomon Islands and Director for External Trade Mr. Barrett Salato said the approval of the EIF Tier 2 tourism project proposal is welcoming news indeed for Solomon Islands as one of the recipients of the EIF funding.

The approved project funding stands at more than US\$1.5 million.

"This project funding will go toward assisting the ministry of tourism and SIVB in addressing some of the tourism related needs identified in the project proposal which when implemented will contribute to the overall development of tourism industry in the country.

"Under this project we want to see tangible results. We want to see tourists' inflow increases in order to reach the target set by the government because tourism has the potential to really benefit Solomon Islanders," Mr. Salato said.

But Mr. Salato also cautions that the successful implementation of the project activities will depend entirely on the commitments and support by all the responsible ministries involved and other



Donor Facilitator European Union Charge d'Affairs Mr Eoghan Walsh and EIF Focal Point Mr. Barrett Salato signing off on the project proposal in November 2013 before it was submitted to the EIF board. Looking on are members of the appraisal committee Ms. Savita Nandan, Mrs. Ethel Saelea and Mr. Cornelius Donga.

stakeholders who are keen to see our tourism industry grow.

The project will systematically intervene in the areas of policy/legislation related to the tourism sector; promote Solomon Islands as a distinct visitor's destination in the Pacific Region and strengthen the linkages of the tourism sector with the auxiliary sectors like agriculture and handicrafts in a way that will help create additional livelihood opportunities for the public.

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November (2013) after endorsement by the National Trade Development Council (NTDC) and an appraisal Committee constituted by NTDC.

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MSG Subcommittee on legal and institutional issues ends in Honiara

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the Attorney General's Offices/State Law Offices before these documents form part of an agenda for endorsement by MSG Leaders later in the year.

The various legal frameworks and texts were under discussion and review in order to harmonise them with existing relevant national laws of member countries as well as areas where international and customary laws are seen fit to be considered.

Formed in 2005 initially as the Legal Issues Working Group (LIWG), the name was changed in 2010 to the Sub-committee on Legal and Institutional Issues. The reason for the change in name was to accommodate new issues that were raised at Senior Officials meetings and during the Leaders' Summit that premises on the work of various institutions such as the courts, quarantine and customs, and trade to name a few.

The meeting, held twice yearly, and alternatively hosted by member countries was ended with a small reception and presentation of gifts to officials from MSG member countries who attended the 9th SCLII in Honiara.

The 10th SCLII is proposed to be hosted in Noumea, New Caledonia later in the year..



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Minister Forau sends a strong message to the WTO membership

The Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade, Honourable Clay Forau Soalaoi, sends yet another clear message to successfully conclude the Bali Package to the wider WTO membership during the plenary session and Heads of Delegation in December.

Mr. Forau said, "Solomon Islands came to this conference with a high expectation and that is, for the Bali Package to be delivered.

"As an LDC, we need the Multilateral Trading System (MTS) to deliver on the promises of the Doha Development Agenda (DDA).

"Although the package before us may not fully capture everything we aspire to achieve, we hope it will be acceptable to all the members," Mr. Forau said.

The Foreign Affairs and External Trade Minister when delivering his statement as the Chair of the Pacific Islands country WTO members stressed that the Pacific Islands are some of the most vulnerable economies within the WTO membership given their smallness, remoteness, their geographical fragmentation, heavy reliance on a few goods and services exports and are on the frontline of climate change.

"The Bali package provides opportunities for some of our members and perhaps little benefit for others, but our presence here in Bali is to support a successful outcome of MC9 (Bali Package) that restores confidence in the multilateral rules based system which is predictable, fair and inclusive," Mr Forau said.

Mr. Forau also challenged the WTO members that, if an LDC like Solomon Islands and its neighbors in the Pacific can agree to the Bali package then he sees no reason why the developing and developed countries cannot agree to the package.

"We cannot negotiate forever," Mr. Forau said.

Minister Forau also urged all members to exercise the necessary political flexibilities to ensure that they have a package at the end of the conference.



Overseas Development Institute (ODI) expert Mr. Christopher Stevens facilitating the Trade capacity building workshop.

Trade Negotiation Capacity-Building Workshop

A four day Trade Negotiation Capacity-Building Workshop Organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade with the support of Overseas Development Institute (ODI) under UK's Trade Advocacy Fund (TAF) was done in the end of 2013.

The workshop is aimed to assist national stakeholders gain better knowledge and understanding of the role of trade policy and how government interventions can influence the way the country benefit from trade or not.

In September of 2012 the Department of External Trade (MFAET/SIG) submitted a project proposal to the Trade Advocacy Fund (TAF) – a DFID-UK supported initiative. TAF programme is supporting LDC's Low income countries or Lower Middle Income Countries to effectively participate in international trade negotiations.

The project proposal entitled "Strengthening Trade Negotiation Capacity of Solomon Islands (STNC - SI)" was approved by the TAF Grant Committee in November 2012. The project was designed by EIF NIU team at the Department of External Trade to strengthen the SIG's negotiating abilities through the following activities:

1. A cost/benefit analysis regarding a possible Interim or Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (IEPA or EPA) with the European Union;
2. Development of a Solomon Islands

Trade Negotiations Policy Framework;
3. Enhancement of the trade analytical capacity of the SIG for trade negotiations and

4. A workshop in Honiara on trade negotiation skills

The workshop is part of activity 3), which as a short term benefit, enable operational negotiators in the SIG/MFAET and relevant contributors in various agencies (public and private) to acquire a better understanding of techniques for the sourcing of trade data; of the techniques which may be used for data interpretation and analysis; and how such data can be utilized in order to devise negotiating strategies and bolster negotiating positions.

Participants of the workshop were introduced to various trade and economic theories and how countries in the world apply them to drive their development agenda through various trade negotiations and what lessons we can learn to benefit from trade.

The workshop which is now underway brings together various stakeholders who will assist in creating the new trade policy framework for the Country and it follows up on earlier consultations where a team of expert from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) came over to the Country.

This workshop is being facilitated by Overseas Development Institute (ODI) trade and economic experts.



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Don't Let Us Down - Sisilo tells Seasonal Workers



Mr. Sisilo showing the 68 women an article titled '02 Cases In Apple Farms' splashed on the front page of the Island Sun Paper of 13 November 2013. "This kind of publicity is simply not acceptable." Mr. Sisilo warned.

Seasonal workers bound for the orchards of New Zealand were sternly warned to behave well and work hard while they are in New Zealand.

Speaking during a Pre Departure briefing for the workers, Trade Negotiations Envoy Mr. Robert Sisilo, warned the workers that

the Ministry would not tolerate any incidents which would bring into disrepute Solomon Islands' standing in the seasonal workers scheme.

Mr. Sisilo told the workers that such recent incidents which came out in the headlines of a local newspaper will receive zero tolerance

and must not be repeated.

"I must strongly warn all of you that the future of this scheme depends on all of you and as such you must behave well and always be punctual to work and adhere to the laws of the host country, in your case New Zealand. Don't let us down." Mr. Sisilo appealed.

"You are the lucky ones to have been selected from hundreds of other applicants around the country and as such you should make use of the scheme to try and improve your lives and also of that of your families, villages, islands, provinces and Solomon Islands. "Mr Sisilo told the workers.

He also told the workers that they must set a specific goal to achieve so that they can invest in projects that would benefit not only them but also their communities when they return from New Zealand. He also stressed to the workers that they must work hard on the farms and be good ambassadors of the Country.

Also speaking during the briefing was the Director of External Trade Mr. Barret Salato who echoed similar sentiments saying that workers should be always punctual to work and always watch out for each other.

Solomon Islands currently has more than 150 locals who are recruited by various farms in New Zealand.

Another 32 locals bound for the shores of New Zealand

As the orchards of New Zealand become ready for harvesting more and more of our local workers are now heading overseas to join hundreds of other Pacific Islanders in harvesting fruits from various farms and orchards.

32 seasonal workers under the New Zealand Recognised Seasonal Employer Recruiting (RSE) who are bound for the shores of the New Zealand received a pre departure briefing from officials within the Trade department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade.

The pre departure briefing is essential for the workers whom some of them have never travelled overseas before.

For returning workers the pre departure briefing is an opportunity for them to get more information from officials about what they should do to try and gain more from their work. The briefing provides an avenue where the officials from the Trade Department will advise the workers on what they should do and what they should not do while in New



Some of the workers who will be leaving for New Zealand under the RSE scheme posing for a group photo.

Zealand.

During the briefing the workers were told by the Director of External Trade Mr. Barret Salato that they were very fortunate to be chosen from hundreds of other applicants and that they should try and make use of the once in a life time opportunity.

"You are very fortunate to be chosen from hundreds of other applicants and as such I ask you to make use of the once in a life time opportunity.

"Many other workers who have returned working in other farms overseas have greatly benefited from their hard work by building houses and running their own small businesses to improve their lives.

"You are not travelling as Tourists to go and just enjoy yourselves, rather you are there to work so all of you must act responsibly and work hard," Mr. Salato told the workers.

He also stressed to the workers that they must obey and respect the laws of the host nation while working there.

"You are ambassadors for the Country and anything you do will reflect back on the country," Mr Salato said.

Meanwhile similar sentiment were also echoed by the LMU Coordinator Mr. Jack O'oi who stressed to the workers that they must always watch out for each other and act as a family when working in New Zealand.

They were also told to always obey and respect the laws of the host nation while working there.



Various stakeholders involved in the RSE scheme during their workshop.

Workshop for local RSE stakeholders underway

A workshop for the Country’s Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) officials and Stakeholders was organised at the Mendana Hotel, Honiara.

The workshop is purposely for RSE officials and stakeholders to refine their RSE processes and build their ability to provide more effective interagency and stakeholder’s leadership and coordination to ensure the continued successful operation of their seasonal labour mobility schemes.

The four day workshop organized by the New Zealand Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) through the Brandhearth trainer is designed to assist the stakeholders in the Country like the Police, Immigration Department, Health Department, public sector and official within the External Trade Department to better manage the growing RSE scheme and to provide a platform for future growth and seasonal mobility success.

Speaking during the opening of the

workshop the acting High Commissioner for the New Zealand commission Mr. Luke Kiddle told the participants of the workshop that the success of the RSE will depend entirely on how the different stakeholders collaborate together.

“I hope that this training will help all of you participants to be able to communicate well with each other so that the RSE scheme can continue to expand into a very successful scheme for the Country,” Mr. Kiddle said in his opening remarks.

Also speaking during the opening was the Director for External Trade Mr. Barret Salato who also spoke of the need for effective collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in the RSE scheme.

Mr. Salato highlighted that even though the RSE scheme is being hailed as a success more needs to be done between the stakeholders to effectively collaborate.

“Without effective collaboration between stakeholders the RSE scheme will continue to

grow at a small pace and as such I would like to call upon stakeholders to collaborate with each other for the success of the scheme,” Mr. Salato told the participants.

Meanwhile Ken Mitchell who is the facilitator from the BrandHearth highlighted the Solomon Islands has been one of the outstanding Pacific Island Countries with good records from the RSE scheme.

Mr. Mitchell said that he has been receiving a lot of positive feedbacks from New Zealand employers who have been recruiting local Solomon Islanders to work in their farms and Orchids.

This he said was a positive sign for the RSE in the Country as such the various stakeholders should work more closely with each other to ensure that the New Zealand RSE scheme continues to expand.

The New Zealand RSE scheme as of date has seen more than 300 locals being sent over to New Zealand to work in various farms and Orchids there.



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New Zealand Seasonal workers posing for a group photo after their pre departure briefing.

NEW ZEALAND BOUND WORKERS RECEIVE PRE DEPARTURE BRIEFING FROM MFAET

As part of the Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) seasonal workers bound for New Zealand received a Pre departure briefing from officials in the Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) within the Department of External Trade of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade.

The pre departure briefing was an essential briefing for the workers whom some of them have never travelled overseas before.

When opening the pre-departure training the Director for the External Trade Department Mr. Barret Salato told the workers that they must perform well to earn enough income to save and sustain their

stay while working in the orchards in New Zealand.

“You are very fortunate to be chosen from hundreds of other applicants and as such I ask you to make use of the once in a life time opportunity.

“Many other workers who have returned working in other farms overseas have greatly benefited from their hard work by improving their livelihood from the money they earned.

“You are not travelling to New Zealand as tourists to go and just enjoy yourselves, rather you are there to work so all of you must act responsibly and work hard,” Mr. Salato told the workers.

He also stressed to the workers that they must obey and respect the laws of the host nation while working there.

“You are ambassadors for the Country and anything you do will reflect back on the country,” Mr Salato said.

Meanwhile similar sentiment were also echoed by the LMU Coordinator Mr. Jack O’oi who stressed to the workers that they must always support each other and act as a family when working in new Zealand.

The Director for the External Trade Department Mr. Salato also praised the local recruiting agent for selecting a balanced group of workers that represented nearly all the provinces in the Country.

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