

# DFA NEWS



## Department of Foreign Affairs Newsletter



Issue 1

First Quarter January—March 2024

### EPG presents Interim Report of Foreign Policy White Paper



Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Justin Tkatchenko and Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs Elias Wohengu received the Interim Report of the review of Papua New Guinea's Foreign Policy White Paper.

The report was presented on Tuesday,

12 March 2024, by the Eminent Persons Group (EPG) comprised of senior officers and former diplomats who were tasked to undertake this important project. Foreign Affairs Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko MP, upon receiving the Interim report of the Foreign Policy White

Paper, urged the EPG to furnish in good time, a comprehensive White Paper to be presented at the upcoming Parliament session which commences on May 28 - *Continue to Page 5*

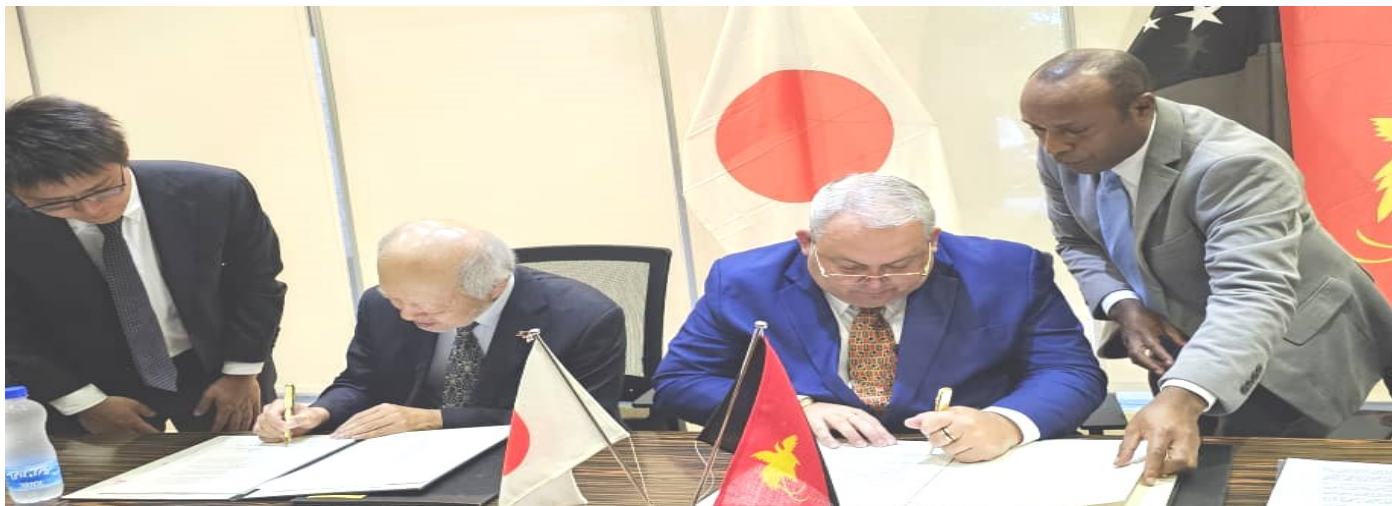
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" Capitalizing Information for  
Institutional Strengthening and  
Modernization "

## PNG and Japan sign K23 Million Grant Aid Project



Foreign Minister Tkatchenko and Japanese Ambassador H.E. Watanabe signing the agreements at the DFA Conference Room

**The Japanese Government has injected massive Grant Aid Project valued at K23 million into Papua New Guinea's Internal Policing and Higher Education Sectors.**

Minister for Foreign Affairs Honourable Justin Tkatchenko and Japanese Ambassador His Excellency Mr. Nobuyuki Watanabe signed the project in Port Moresby on February 19, 2024.

Under this Grant Project, the Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary (RPNGC) was allocated a total of 60 brand new police vehicles valued at K12.8 million for logistics to support police operations in the country.

Police Minister Peter Tsiamalili Jnr who witnessed the signing and exchange of notes, expressed appreciation to the Japanese Government for the timely assistance which will help the Police Department address some of its operational challenges.

The Higher Education sector will receive advance Information & Communication Technology (ICT) equipment valued at K10.2 million for Teachers Colleges, which include online education.

This project focus on improving students' learning

and use of advance technologies that can be properly utilized in the learning environment.

Japan and Papua New Guinea have long-standing bilateral relations in their various areas of engagements over the years. Minister Tkatchenko recognized Japanese Government's commitment and support to PNG's development. He affirmed that Japan is PNG's third largest trading partner.

Japan has implemented many projects in PNG in various sectors like fisheries, agriculture, forestry, education, development and environment. The signing of this Grant Project marked the 50years anniversary of Japanese and Papua New Guinea Economic Partnership.

Minister Tkatchenko reiterated that the K23 million Grant Aid Project is a gift from the Japanese Government to PNG to assist Policing and Higher Education sectors in meeting their development challenges.

This partnership will further strengthen the bilateral relations between both countries and enhance cooperation and collaboration on issues of mutual interest at different level of their engagements.



## Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Hon. Justin Tkatchenko, CBE. BEM. OL, MP

February 01-2024

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

## **PNG signs as Party to CNTBT—Against Nuclear Testing**

Foreign Affairs Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko MP on Tuesday January 30, 2024 officially signed off on behalf of the State, the Instrument of Ratification, making Papua New Guinea, official party to this critical - Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a key United Nations convention.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was presented and concluded on June 15, 2023 in the National Parliament, and this Instrument signifies that the Government of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea has considered and approved this key UN Convention, ratified and officially undertaken to perform and carry out the stipulations - conditions and requirements, contained in the Treaty.

The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is a multilateral treaty to ban nuclear weapons test explosions, and any other nuclear explosions, for both civilian and Military purposes, in all environments.

"The process has taken some time but Papua New Guinea has ratified, and given consent to be bound by the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty," Minister Tkatchenko said after the signing.

"It is a relief and Government is satisfied that this Treaty is an important stand against nuclear testing worldwide, and so we now take our place among our other world partner nations."

To date, 187 states have signed, and 174 have ratified the Treaty, and the 8 yet to sign. "Papua New Guinea, like all other world nations who are party to the Treaty, understand the challenges and impacts of nuclear testing worldwide - this is our part in support to stop nuclear testing.

Ultimately, we stand to stop the spread of radioactive nuclear material through atmospheric testing, and join those countries that have signed and or ratified, to set the precedent for a new wave of arms control agreements," Minister Tkatchenko emphasized.



## Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Justin Tkatchenko MP attended 5th Pacific Leaders Meeting (PALM) Ministerial Interim Meeting (MIM)

Foreign Affairs Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko participated in the 5th PALM Ministerial Interim Ministers (MIM) on Monday 12 February 2024 held in Suva, Fiji.



The PALM MIM—the lead-up to the Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM) that will convene its 10<sup>th</sup> meeting in Tokyo, Japan in July this year, was held in Suva, Fiji on February 12, 2024.

The Meeting was attended by representatives from Japan and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) members.

The Meeting was co-chaired by Foreign Minister of Japan Yoko Kamikawa and Honourable Tingika Elikana, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marine Resources and Parliamentary Services of Cook Islands, and current Chair of the PIF.

This was the first time for a MIM to be held in the Pacific Islands Region.

Foreign Minister Tkatchenko in attendance at the PALM MIM reiterated Papua New Guinea's support and commitment to the PALM process led by Japan.

He commended Japan not only as a valuable bilateral partner but also an integral development



Minister Tkatchenko presenting gift (bilum) to Foreign Minister of Japan Yoko Kamikawa

contributor to the development needs and aspirations of the Pacific Island nations.

Foreign Minister Tkatchenko confirmed that as Japan is also an island nation, it is in its interest to ensure that peace and stability is maintained amidst rising global and regional challenges such as climate change, the nuclear treated water issue, economic

recovery of these small island states.

Minister Tkatchenko also confirmed Prime Minister, Honourable James Marape's attendance at the PALM 10 where all eighteen leaders of the Pacific region will meet with the Japanese Prime Minister, Honourable Fumio Kishida.

# Foreign Policy Interim Report Presented

**Continue from page 1..**

"Foreign Policy White Paper is one of the key priorities of the Marape-Rosso Government over the years, successive governments have failed to produce one"

"Completion and presentation of the final document will ensure it is presented through Parliament, on the floor of Parliament in May," Minister Tkatchenko stressed.

"That's our deadline, our schedule and we have to be realistic going forward." "There is a lot of work to do in a short period of time but we can do this if we all work together to ensure that we get a professional and quality outcome that serves the best interest of the country."

Minister Tkatchenko reassured the team of the Government's and Foreign Affairs Department support right through to completion, and delivery.

Team Leader and EPG Chairman, Sir Charles Lepani expressed that the team had put in a lot of work



EPG Chairman Sir Charles Lepani (left) and Dr Clement Waine presenting the Foreign Policy White Paper Interim Report to Minister Tkatchenko and DFA Secretary Elias Wohengu

to come up with the document its content and substance the bases of the Foreign Policy White Paper.

He added that the presentation of the Interim Report also ensures that the Minister, and Department Secretary have the opportunity to review, recommend and have an input into the document.

"We need to have as much of the views of provincial governments including the premiers, administrative arms, Chamber of Commerce, Non-

Government Organizations, and groups including churches."

"The Foreign Policy White Paper takes the essence of the Interim Foreign Policy Report," Sir Charles said.







## Minister for Foreign Affairs

### Hon. Justin Tkatchenko, CBE. BEM. OL, MP

February 02-2024

**MEDIA STATEMENT**

## PNG & New Zealand Share Deep Bilateral Relations

**Papua New Guinea and New Zealand share and value deep rich cultures and traditions, Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Justin Tkatchenko MP says.**

Speaking at the 184<sup>th</sup> New Zealand National Day (Waitangi Day) celebrations, Minister Tkatchenko said the bilateral relationship of both nations continues to be strengthened since its establishment 48 years ago.

Minister Tkatchenko acknowledged New Zealand's continued assistance of various projects in sectors including agriculture, rural electrification, trade and development, labour mobility, education and scholarships, other State-Owned Entities and fiscal reforms including support for Bougainville.

"Our increased interactions have become more pronounced with the signing of the Statement of Partnership in 2021, setting out the principles and priorities under which both our countries will cooperate, coordinate and partner in the Medium-Term Development Plan IV."

"We also acknowledge New Zealand's humanitarian support for Mt. Ulawun volcanic eruption in West New Britain last year."

"We value and appreciate, among others, the Foreign Service training of our Foreign Service Officers by New Zealand and look forward to more educational scholarships and exchanges."

"PNG also looks forward to diversifying our relations to consider other areas including sports, tourism, mineral and resource sectors, women empowerment programs and cultural exchanges."

"Your continued assistance in these areas will greatly contribute towards achieving self-sustaining rural economies at the grassroots level."

Minister Tkatchenko said the three main priorities of the Government include National Census, Local Level Government Elections and addressing Youth Issues to get them engaged through Technical Vocational Educational Training and Small to Medium Enterprise.

"PNG will continue to engage with New Zealand and our Pacific brothers/sisters through the Pacific Islands Forum and other regional bodies to ensure our region is secure strategically, stable economically and sovereign politically," he said.

New Zealand High Commissioner H.E. Mr Peter Zwart said the bilateral partnership with PNG aspires to mutual respect and partnership and stability and prosperity for Papua New Guinea and the region.

"We have long standing Deference Cooperation with movements in both directions."

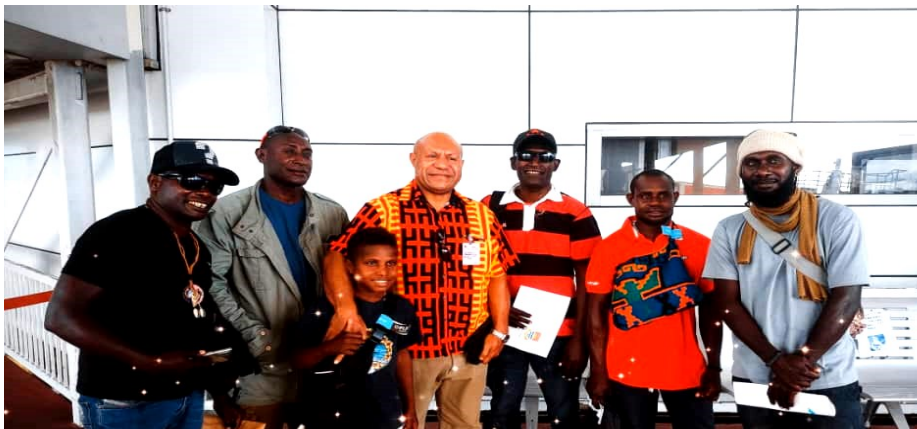
"For two decades, New Zealand police have contributed to Bougainville's peace and development."

"We have an equally long-standing volunteers program sharing skills and gaining understanding."

"We have invested in access to electricity, enforcing gender equality addressing gender violence, strengthening SOE government reform, child immunisation, growing the fresh produce industry and markets, tackling climate change, supporting peace and development in Bougainville and providing to higher education," he said.

H.E. Mr Zwart appreciated the Marape-Rosso Government's support and looks forward to working with Minister Tkatchenko in continuing the diplomatic relationship for the long-term benefit of the country and the people of Papua New Guinea.

# Survivors return safely in country



Mr. Bill Olmi, Papua New Guinea Acting High Commissioner to Fiji with the survivors

The Department of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Bougainville Disaster & Emergency Directorate, National Disaster Centre (NDC), and National Coordination Office of Bougainville Affairs (NCOBA) announced the successful repatriation of six (6) survivors of a sea voyage mishap, out of Tarawa, Kiribati and into Port Moresby, on Wednesday March 20, 2024.

The survivors arrived in the country with the assistance of the Foreign Affairs Consular Branch team at the Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby.

The survivors, who were adrift at sea on a 23-foot banana boat for 31 days were found at sea, in Kiribati waters, on Monday February 26.

Foreign Affairs Minister Hon Justin Tkatchenko MP, expressed utmost appreciation to the Chinese Government through its Embassy in Port Moresby, the Government of Kiribati, the Fiji High Commission in Port Moresby, NDC, NCOBA, Bougainville Disaster and Emergency Directorate, and the Department of Foreign

Affairs and its overseas mission in Suva, Fiji for the joint efforts in ensuring the safe arrival of the survivors in the country.

"We are very grateful in this particular case, for our relations with the Government of the Peoples Republic of China, and the Chinese Embassy for their efforts through their monitoring systems, and for the prompt communications of the rescue," Minister Tkatchenko said.

"I was able to personally convey the news of this rescue to the immediate families on the day they were found, as a result of their stringent protocols.

"Additionally, we salute and thank the crew of the fishing vessel, the Lometo for their part in the month-long search and rescue, and for their care and rehabilitation efforts for the survivors."

The Lometo discovered the missing boat in the waters of Kiribati. The boat, which had departed Lihir Island bound for Buka, had run out of fuel, causing it to drift for over a month. The survivors, including a nine-year-

old boy, were found aboard the boat, rescued and taken onboard by the crew of the Lometo.

The journey of the missing boat began on Saturday, 27th January, when it departed Lihir Island.

Despite dropping off a passenger at Anir Island enroute to Buka, the boat failed to reach its destination, prompting concern from the owner, Mr. Bartholomew Sareke of Lontis village in the Haku Constituency of Buka.

Mr. Sareke promptly reported the incident to the Bougainville Disaster Office & Emergency Directorate, which initiated search efforts in collaboration with PNG Maritime Rescue Coordinating Centre.

It was revealed that two persons onboard did not survive the tough ordeal at sea right through to the end. Despite the challenges posed by bad weather, relentless search efforts led to the eventual discovery and rescue of the survivors by the Lometo.

Out of the eight passengers that travelled out from Anir Island, Nason Koesana (48), Stanis Logan (41), Bensley Kaskas (35), Max Ben (9), Raynard Raiasok (25) and Liddy Birigin Kenehata (25) were rescued.

The survivors are currently in Port Moresby undergoing humanitarian assistance in medical checks, care and trauma counselling, spiritual support, and also awaiting interview by the NCD Homicide team.

## Foreign Minister Hon. Tkatchenko meets Head of the International Committee of the Red Cross in PNG



**F**oreign Affairs Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko MP, met with the head of international humanitarian organization, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Papua New Guinea, Mr Georgios Georgantas, in Port Moresby on March 22, 2024.

Top of the agenda was the outstanding Host Country Agreement, yet to be ratified by Parliament since 2016; and the ratification of the additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions inclusively.

Mr Georgantas, in his brief to the Minister, noted that PNG signed and ratified in 1977 – the four Geneva Conventions – on how to conduct hostilities during a conflict, adding however that two additional protocols which were signed then are yet to be ratified by PNG.

Mr Georgantas also expressed that the host country agreement had the same legal value and procedure as an international treaty, and needed to be ratified by the National Parliament.

He added that Red Cross has signed host country agreements with 106 countries around the world – the

majority of which parliaments have ratified, and highlighted the need to formalize their presence in the country.

“We have not had serious problems functioning in the country, but sometimes when we have to import equipment and so on, we need a more formal basis. These include, among others, for purposes of tax and duty clearance, as well as to formalize the status of our international staff.” he said.

Minister Tkatchenko assured Mr Georgantas of the commitment of the Department of Foreign Affairs to ensure immediate action on the processes toward ratification, to have the submission presented at the NEC and tabled at the Parliament session in May 2024.

Minister Tkatchenko affirmed support with a National Executive Council (NEC) submission that is already in progress for submission.

This includes approval for the amendment to PNG's International Organization's Privileges and Immunities Act 1975 – to include the ICRC's Privileges and Immunities Regulation 2024.

Minister Tkatchenko added that the “amendment and ratification of the Privileges and Immunities Regulation,

will enforce and give effect to the host country agreement.”

Mr Georgantas also informed Minister Tkatchenko that though PNG had signed the additional protocols to the Geneva Conventions, it is yet to ratify. The protocols are; to strengthen the protection of victims of international (Protocol I) I, and non-international (Protocol II) armed conflicts and place limits on the way wars are fought.

The ICRC head stated that “It's important, as these are rarely ratified during conflict. You have to ratify them during peace to be prepared for conflict. So I think it is important for PNG internationally,” he said.

Minister Tkatchenko acknowledged the details of process pending in relation to ratification, and requested for the relevant documents to be furnished, for the same to be progressed.

Minister Tkatchenko affirmed the National Governments full support to ratify the outstanding additional protocols of the Geneva Convention and the host country agreement.

“The Red Cross is a significant partner, as an institution recognized worldwide for your dedication to Humanitarian work, and all else that you do. In many different ways, we appreciate your work.” “Because where governments cannot go, the Red Cross can, with your flag flying high.”



## PNG-Solomon Island commit to sign Outstanding Agreements

**P**apua New Guinea is committed to work with its closest Melanesian neighbour, Solomon Islands, to move forward outstanding bilateral agreements, and further strengthen diplomatic relations, Foreign Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko made this undertaking in a meeting with Solomon Islands High Commissioner His Excellency William Soaki on February 2, 2024, at his office.

High Commissioner H.E. Soaki on his official visit to Minister Tkatchenko offered his congratulations to the Minister for his reinstatement, and committed to move the outstanding bilateral agreements.

"We noticed that during your previous tenure in this role, we achieved a lot in the short period of time and we look forward to working with you to continue this relationship," H.E Soaki expressed in the meeting.

Minister Tkatchenko, in his remarks, expressed that PNG is mindful of its Pacific Island neighbour going to the polls in April, but that Papua New Guinea was committed to sign the outstanding bilateral agreements as soon as the instruments are ready.

The agreements to be signed include the Basic Agreement between Governments on Border Arrangements; a Treaty of Sovereignty on Maritime and Seabed Boundaries; an Agreement between both Governments on the Administration of Special Areas; and a Memorandum Of Understanding on Combined Surveillance and Common Marine Border.

Discussions also included a brief on ongoing negotiations on an Air Services Agreement, where point of entry is under review considering the opening of major airports including Lae and Mt Hagen.

Tertiary Education Cooperation, another progressive MOU under revision and had taken two (2) years, was also on the agenda.

Minister Tkatchenko assured the High Commissioner that the parties will work towards having this agreement signed by May after the new Solomon Islands government is formed.



Minister Tkatchenko and Solomon Islands High Commissioner H.E. William Soaki

Other MOU's currently under review are the Bio-Security Customs, and the Police Cooperation on general policing.

Terms for a cooperation agreement are also underway, in consultation with the Autonomous Bougainville Government for Bougainville Internal Waters, to regulate trading that has been a regular occurrence at the border with the region for years.

"It's not going to be an easy journey and it will come down to the leadership and the way they agree and handle the situation," Minister Tkatchenko said.

High Commissioner Soaki also noted the proposed formation of the Solomon Islands and PNG Business Council which was discussed at the last senior officials meeting.

"We have a big number of Papua New Guinean investors in Solomon Islands and the establishment of a business council is being considered."

# Foreign Affairs Minister, Hon. Justin Tkatchenko meets Australian Cabinet Ministers

The Foreign Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko met with Australian Cabinet Ministers, Senator Penny Wong, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Honourable Pat Conroy, Minister for International Development and the Pacific Affairs of Australia on 7 February 2024 at the Australian National Parliament, in Canberra, Australia.

Foreign Minister Tkatchenko met and discussed with the Australian Ministers the Official Program for Prime Minister Honourable James Marape's Guest of Government visit to Australia later that week and the agreed Announcements which would include law and justice, immigration, climate funding, critical infrastructure investments, scholarships amongst others.

Minister Tkatchenko also took the opportunity to reassure both Senator Wong and Minister Conroy of the PNG Government's commitment to its traditional security partners in working with them to securing the peace and stability of the region, hence, dispelling the misinformation that PNG is entering into a security cooperation with the People's



Minister Tkatchenko with the Australian Cabinet Ministers Hon. Pat Conroy and Senator Penny Wong

Republic of China. Foreign Minister Tkatchenko acknowledged Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese's reciprocal invitation to Prime Minister Marape to address the Australian Parliament at his Guest of Government visit. He stressed that key common arrangements have been progressed in the bilateral partnership between the

two countries and that there was great need to ensure implementation. These include the implementation of the Bilateral Security Agreement and the labour mobility schemes such as the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM), and all outstanding.





## Secretary Elias Wohengu attends DWU Graduation

The Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs Elias Wohengu attended the 42<sup>nd</sup> Graduation Ceremony of the Divine Word University in Madang on March 8, 2024.

Secretary Wohengu presented two (2) awards on behalf of the Department to two students in the PNG Studies and International Relations faculty for excellent academic achievements, at this occasion.

These students were, Jayson Ray and Vanese Bulu. The presentation of awards affirmed continuous support and commitment of the Department of Foreign Affairs in its engagements to drive capacity building and the development of human resources in the country.

The Department of Foreign Affairs has been involved in a number of capacity building programs over the years. These programs include foreign service training, workshops and further studies for officers to build a strong institutional knowledge.

Secretary Wohengu committed to recognize human resource Development for the country



Secretary Wohengu presenting DFA award to one of the students

through his leadership in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Secretary Wohengu also honored to witness the graduation of Mr. Sini Namori, Director General of the Corporate Services Division, who attained a Masters in Public Administration.



## Secretary Wohengu attends MSG Tatalonga Tok Stori



Secretary Wohengu and Senior Officials of MSG Member Countries taking a group photo

The Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs Elias Wohengu attended the Inaugural Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) Tatalonga Tok Stori in Honiara from February 18-19, 2024, as an informal discussion of the SOM heads and representatives of the Independent Members of the MSG Group.

This inaugural meeting was for the Senior Officials of the MSG member countries to discuss and identify the challenges and opportunities to bring relevance to the MSG status.



## Foreign Service Officers Complete Training Programme



**N**ineteen young Papua New Guinea Foreign Service Officers successfully completed the Pacific Diplomatic Training Programme and received their certificates on Friday March 9, 2024 at the New Zealand High Commission in Port Moresby.

These officers were among other trainees from Pacific Island countries including Fiji and Vanuatu who were all part of this training under the 2023 New Zealand MA NAAKI Scholarship Programme.

The training focused on empowering young diplomats with necessary skills for effective foreign service engagements. This includes

development of skillsets and knowledge relevant to the practice of modern diplomacy in the regional and global context.

For the PNG trainees, the completion of the programme certified them as fully fledged Foreign Service Officers. They are the first batch of the 2023 Pacific Diplomatic Training Programme. Nine more officers also undergo this programme in 2024 as the second batch.

The Department of Foreign Affairs through its partnership with the New Zealand Government, continue to recognize this

programme as part of the Department's steadfast commitment in capacity building for institutional strengthening and modernization.

The 2023 Pacific Diplomatic Training Program was facilitated and delivered by the Uni-Professionals of the Victoria University of Wellington.



## Foreign Affairs Department recognizes Ms Vani Nades, Belgium Honorary Consul



Minister Tkatchenko Presenting Exequator Certificate to Belgian Honorary Consul Ms Vani Nades

**F**oreign Affairs Minister Honourable Justin Tkatchenko presented Belgian Honorary Consul Ms Vani Nades with formal Foreign Affairs Exequator Certification, as formal recognition of her representative role March 18, 2024.

Minister Tkatchenko highlighted Papua New Guinea and Belgian relations since 1976, and the opportunity for greater investment and development activity.

Minister Tkatchenko also echoed his sentiments to former Belgian Honorary Consul Sir Mick Nades,

who was awarded high honours by the King of Belgium - Officer in Order of the Crown in October 2023, for his long service as Honorary Consul for 29 years.

"I wish you the best as you take over from your father. You have worked with him in that capacity anyway, so I am sure you are very much aware of your role," Minister Tkatchenko said.

"We congratulate you, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Protocol Offices look forward to working with you in this regard for

Belgium as well going forward.

Ms Nades, while thanking Minister Tkatchenko added that opportunities exist, and that it would take regular and closer consultations to unearth.

"I want to say thank you very much to the Honorable Minister, additionally for giving that support and confidence to us young Papua New Guineans to actually represent Belgium in the country and also Papua New Guinea in Belgium as well.

Ms Nades' recommendation followed interviews and an internal selection process by the Belgian Ambassador.

"It's not the first time I have been doing work for the Belgium consulate. I have been doing consulate work as well, so it's not a new thing," Ms Nades said.

"It's a great honor to represent Papua New Guinea, and our government of the day.

There are a whole lot of opportunities that we can look at and work towards together.

We will work closely with the office of Honorable Minister Tkatchenko to see to what we can do in terms of our bilateral relationship," Ms Nades said.

"I believe from the guidance of the department of foreign office, the office of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and his team, we're able to do better things, and represent our country when we go to Belgium and likewise, vice versa."



## Foreign Minister Hon. Tkatchenko meets Prime Minister of Vanuatu Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmass



**The Foreign Affairs Minister Hon. Justin Tkatchenko met the Prime Minister of Vanuatu Hon. Charlot Salwai Tabimasmass at the margin of the 2024 MSG Budget Foreign Ministers Meeting in Port Vila on 28 March 2024.**

In advancing the bilateral relations, Foreign Minister Tkatchenko expressed that there are valuable partnerships that both countries can look forward to working together on both at the bilateral and regional levels, particularly in the areas of trade and investment, health and education, climate change and disaster preparedness, tourism including technical cooperation in areas of mutual interests.

In terms of development assistance, Minister Tkatchenko reassured Prime Minister Tabimasmass that relevant PNG Government authorities are now working on transmitting the K10 million assistance to Vanuatu for the rehabilitation of the Kumul Highway that was pledged by the previous PNG government.

Prime Minister Tabimasmass expressed appreciation to the PNG Government for the K10 million assistance towards his government and also expressed its government's strong desire to venture into technical cooperation with PNG in the areas of Air Service Agreement; education scholarship programs for Vanuatu students particularly for nurses/doctors and engineers to be PNG trained in PNG tertiary institutions.

Minister Tkatchenko acknowledged the desire to elevate level of the bilateral engagement and indicated PNG's intention to elevate its diplomatic representation in Vanuatu to a Consul General status with an office to be established in Port Vila in the near future.

In closing, Minister Tkatchenko extended an invitation from Prime Hon. James Marape to Prime Minister Salwai to visit PNG during the visitation of His Holiness Pope Francis in September.

A formal invite will be sent to all Pacific Island Leaders in due course.



## Foreign Minister Hon. Tkatchenko reaffirms PNG commitment to bilateral relations with Vice Foreign Minister Mansuri



**F**oreign Minister Hon. Justin Tkatchenko reaffirmed Papua New Guinea's commitment to bilateral engagements with Vice Foreign Minister Mansuri of Indonesia at the margins of the 2024 MSG Budget Foreign Ministers Meeting in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Foreign Minister Tkatchenko and Vice Foreign Minister Mansuri met on March 27, 2024. Minister Tkatchenko acknowledged and commended the increased level of engagement with Indonesia. He expressed satisfaction and paid tribute to relations under the leadership of the current respective governments, pointing to elevated interactions in addressing outstanding bilateral commitments in: ratifying the Mutual Visa Waiver Exemption for

Diplomatic and Official Passport Holders by PNG; ratifying and reviewing the Basic Border Agreement; ratification and review of the PNG/Indonesia Defence Cooperation Agreement; signing of the MoU on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters; and signing of the MoU on Combating Transitional Crime.

Minister Tkatchenko also indicated other areas of partnership that can be progressed between both countries including: consultations on possible Visa on Arrival for PNG and Indonesia travelers with ordinary passports; conclusion and signing of a MoU on Cross Border Land Transportation; conclusion and signing of a MoU on Education; Mutual Power Purchasing Agreement between Indonesia PLN and PNG Power; conclusion and signing of a MoU on Intelligence Sharing; Conclusion of a Joint Feasibility Study on the PNG-Indonesia Preferential Trade Agreement; and Conclusion and signing of a MoU on Women Empowerment and Child Protection.

He welcomed and acknowledged Indonesia's Grant Assistance of K60 million earmarked for two major projects; the development of an Intensive Care Unit, and the redevelopment of the Mortuary at the Port Moresby General Hospital at a total cost of K55 million; and the West Sepik Integrated Development Project with a total cost of K5 million.

Foreign Minister Tkatchenko reaffirmed his satisfaction and expressed hope that this elevated partnership will continue to advance and expand in the tenure of the new Indonesian Government. PNG has a standalone consideration in security space in the region. Under the Bilateral Security Agreement, PNG will be a security policing partner to Australia in regional security matters.



## Foreign Minister Hon. Tkatchenko meets Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs of Fiji Hon. Lenora Qereqeretabua

**F**oreign Minister Tkatchenko met with Assistant Foreign Minister Qereqeretabua at the margins of the 2024 MSG Budget Foreign Ministers Meeting on March 28, 2024 in Port Vila.

Both Ministers acknowledged the elevated bilateral engagements following the recent visits by Prime Minister James Marape and Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka in each other's capitals last year. This included the reopening of the Fiji High Commission in Port Moresby.

The Ministers reaffirmed support and commitment to ensure the building of each country's respective diplomatic chanceries in the capitals of both countries is facilitated and implemented forthwith.

Noting the K5.5 million pledged by PNG to support affected schools in Fiji following tropical cyclone Wilson in 2016, Minister Tkatchenko urged Fiji to quickly identify the needy schools for these funds to be utilized to renovate selected and affected schools.

Both Ministers acknowledged the need to promote trade and investment at the bilateral level including under the MSG Trade Agreement. Minister Tkatchenko congratulated Fiji for signing onto the Melanesian Spearhead Group Trade Agreement (MSGTA), and informed Assistant Minister Qereqeretabua



that PNG is committed and will sign onto the agreement once internal requirements are completed.

In terms of security cooperation, Minister Tkatchenko also noted the Pacific Security Training Center that PNG, in partnership with Australia under the Bilateral Security Agreement, will establish the center in Bomana, and invited Fiji to send its security personnel to receive training there.

In noting the existing MOU on Security Cooperation of 2018, both Ministers expressed the need for both countries to review that MOU noting the evolving security dynamics and to consider entering into a SOFA arrangement and agreed for concerned parties to commence discussions on this going forward.

## Courtesy Call on Honourable Jeremiah Manele, Minister For Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands



**T**he meeting between Honourable Jeremiah Manele, Minister for Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands and Secretary for the Department of Foreign Affairs Elias Wohengu was convened at the office of the Minister at 9am on Friday 16 February 2024.

The meeting was attended

by Secretary Wohengu, High Commissioner Moses Kaul and First Secretary Ms Vaburi Riu.

The meeting discussed a number of issues of mutual concern which included politics, energy, PNG-Solomon Islands Police Arrangement, air services agreement, security issues and Bougainville.





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