

Melanesian Unified Front for West Papuan Self-Determination
and the West Papuan Students Association of the University of Papua New Guinea



MEDIA RELEASE

EMBARGO: 12noon, Wednesday September 4th, 2013

The “Sorong to Samarai Campaign Petition in Support of West Papua’s Membership of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) and other human rights matters relating to West Papua

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Date: Monday, September 9th, 2013
Time: 6pm to 8.30pm
Venue Main Lecture Theater, University of Papua New Guinea (Waigani Campus)

Previous attempts by West Papua to gain membership in the sub-regional forum, the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG) have always been unsuccessful. West Papuans have no representation in the MSG. Meanwhile documented and undocumented human rights abuses continue to be committed against them on their land, threatening their very survival as a people. It is now a matter of utmost urgency that the heritage and identity of West Papuans as a Melanesian people is promoted within the forum of the MSG.

Recognizing the continuous struggle by West Papuans, and their very close historical, cultural and ethnic affinity with the rest of the other Melanesian nations of the Pacific Islands, the Melanesian Unified Front for West Papuan Self-Determination (hereafter WUF) is leading this series of activities. The primary focus is the grassroots-based “*Sorong to Samarai*” Campaign Petition In Support of West Papua’s Membership of the MSG. The “Sorong to Samarai” Campaign Petition will include awareness on the status of West Papua as an occupied territory and paper signature collection activity.

The WUF is a group comprised of concerned Papua New Guineans, West Papuans and other fellow Melanesians. We are initiating the “Sorong to Samarai” campaign with the aim of reinforcing the legitimate calls by ALL Melanesians for West Papua to sit at the table of the MSG with its other Melanesian brothers and sisters. We believe that Papua New Guineans must support the unconditional inclusion of West Papua within the MSG forum.

PNG is obliged to reciprocate the contributions by West Papuans to PNG’s national development, by lobbying aggressively for the long-overdue membership of West Papua in the MSG. The same sentiments must be shared by concerned and informed Papua New Guineans and other fellow Melanesians.

The calls for West Papuan inclusion in the MSG is a legitimate act. Under rights-based treaties such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the inalienable rights of peoples to an identity and a collective heritage is promoted. In Article 15 (1) (a) the

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International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Parties to the Covenant recognize the right of everyone: “To take part in cultural life”.

West Papuans are distinctly Melanesians and they have historical, cultural and social connection to the greater Melanesian sub-region of the Pacific Islands. Formal membership of MSG by West Papua is not merely necessary, it is mandatory given the threat to the cultural survival and continuity of the Melanesian peoples in West Papua.

MSG membership will enable West Papuans to freely participate in expressing their cultural identity and existence as a Melanesian people. Any prolonged or continued denial of West Papuan membership of the MSG is an alienation of Melanesians from the larger Melanesian community, and ultimately the denial of their human rights as articulated in international treaties and conventions. The planned Monday, September 9th, 2013 event is being organized by WUF in coordination with the West Papua Students Association of the University of Papua New Guinea. This event will be staged at the University of Papua New Guinea’s Main Lecture Theater from 6pm to 8.30pm. The “Sorong to Samarai Campaign Launch” will also seek to address the human abuses perpetrated against Melanesians in West Papua with formal protests against foreign governments collaborating with the Indonesian State in its violation of West Papuans on their land.

Citizens of PNG and West Papua and throughout Melanesia, have the opportunity to express their support through this paper signature petition collection exercise. This activity will run throughout the course of the month of September. The signed petitions will be presented to government officials of PNG and MSG officials, and other notable members of the diplomatic corps in PNG.

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