



Australian High Commission
Vanuatu

27 March 2024

Joint Media Release

Vanuatu and Australia committed to growing partnership

PORT VILA, VANUATU: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade the Honourable Matai Seremaiah Nawalu, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu Her Excellency Heidi Bootle and their delegations have returned to Port Vila after a five-day visit to Australia.

On his visit to Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane, Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah had productive discussions with Australian Ministerial counterparts, opened Vanuatu's Consulate-General in Sydney and conveyed Vanuatu's national and foreign policy priorities.

“This visit has been an excellent opportunity to discuss our shared priorities and aspirations, and to celebrate and strengthen the deep bond between our two countries,” said Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah.

In Canberra, Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Honourable Richard Marles MP met Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah at Parliament House. The discussions between counterparts included Vanuatu's economic and social development priorities, as well as close security cooperation through humanitarian, policing and maritime partnerships. Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah also called on Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Senator the Honourable Penny Wong.



Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence the Honourable Richard Marles MP and Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah at Parliament House.



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Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific the Honourable Pat Conroy MP thanked Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah for his visit, and said Australia deeply valued its partnership with Vanuatu.

“I had a rich discussion with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Seremaiah on Vanuatu’s foreign policy, economic and development priorities. Australia and Vanuatu have an ambitious, shared agenda and we will continue to deliver by working together in partnership.

“I congratulate Vanuatu on officially opening its Consulate-General in Sydney. Australia welcomes Vanuatu’s expanding diplomatic footprint – it is a strong symbol of how our longstanding relationship continues to grow,” said Minister Conroy.



Senator the Hon Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs meets with The Hon Matai Seremaiah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade of Vanuatu.

Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah had significant discussions on trade, economic and agricultural priorities for the partnership with Australia’s Minister for International Development and the Pacific the Honourable Pat Conroy MP, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Senator the Honourable Murray Watt, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs the Honourable Andrew Giles MP and Assistant Minister for Trade Senator the Honourable Tim Ayres.

These included opportunities for Vanuatu to maximise its benefits from the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER) Plus regional trade and development agreement and Vanuatu and Australia’s mutual commitment to strengthening the Pacific



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Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme to ensure economic and social benefits for both countries.

With Minister Giles, Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah discussed visa and immigration settings. Visa service delivery is an essential part of people moving between Vanuatu and Australia – family members, workers, volunteers, officials and politicians – and, in recognition of this, Australia established an Immigration office in Port Vila in 2023.

Vanuatu will also participate in Australia's Pacific Engagement Visa program. This initiative has great potential to deepen links between nations, people and economies by providing permanent residency to a discrete number of Vanuatu citizens, with access to Australian education, training, workforce and community services.

While at Parliament House, the delegation observed Australian parliamentarians conduct Question Time in the House of Representatives chambers. Speaker of Parliament the Honourable Milton Dick acknowledged Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah as a special guest in the chamber.



Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah and his delegation in the Chamber of Parliament.



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Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese met Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah and his delegation in the Chamber of Parliament.



Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah and the Honourable Pat Conroy, Australian Minister for International Development and the Pacific in the Chamber of Parliament.

On arrival in Sydney, Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah and his delegation received a Welcome to Country from the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Traditional Owners of the Sydney area – a testament to the enduring connections between people and cultures of Vanuatu and Australia.



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The delegation also attended a FIFA World Cup qualifier match between Australia's Socceroos and Lebanon in Canberra, joined again by Minister Watt and Assistant Minister Ayres as well as Minister for Sport the Honourable Anika Wells and Minister for Regional Development the Honourable Kristy McBain.



At the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers between Australia and Lebanon.



Deputy Prime Minister Seremiah and Senator Tim Ayres, Australian Minister for Trade at the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers between Australia and Lebanon.



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Deputy Prime Minister Seremiah and delegation received a Welcome to Country.



Deputy Prime Minister Seremaiah convened a trade and economic roundtable with stakeholders from Australia's private sector, multilateral development banks based in Sydney and business and industry groups to discuss investment opportunities in Vanuatu.



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The Honourable Matai Seremaiah Nawalu, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and External Trade and Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales cut cake at the opening of the new consulate-general in Sydney's Central Business District.



At the opening of the Vanuatu Consulate-General in Sydney.



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Her Excellency Heidi Bootle, Australian High Commissioner to Vanuatu, Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Governor of New South Wales, Councillor Sreeni Pillamarri, Liberal and Councillor Emelda Davis at the opening of the Vanuatu Consulate-General in Sydney.



Her Excellency Heidi Bootle and General Consul Donald Pelam with Australia Awards Vanuatu students and guests at the opening of the Consulate General in Sydney.



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