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STATEMENT BY SOLOMON ISLANDS
31ST SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Geneva, 15th March 2016

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Thank you Mr President,

Firstly, allow me to congratulate you on your election.

Solomon Islands is the incumbent chairperson of the Melanesian Spearhead Group (MSG), and a member of the Pacific Island Forum. When the MSG granted observer status to the United Liberation Movement of West Papua (ULMWP) and associate membership to the Government of Indonesia, this was the premise that dialogue between the two parties on issues affecting West Papua could be forged.

Further, Solomon Islands encourages the Government of Indonesia to establish a peaceful dialogue with the representatives of West Papua.

Mr President,

Indeed, we commend the adoption in 2001 of the Special Autonomy Law for Papua, through which the framework, more resources are made available for development projects in the West Papua region including health care and educational services. We also appreciate the increased attention given by the Indonesian President Mr Joko Widodo to West Papua, since his election in 2014.

We, however, are greatly concerned by continuous reports of cases in West Papua of arbitrary arrests, summary executions, tortures, ill treatment and limitations of freedom of expression, assembly and association, mainly committed by Indonesian security forces. The occasions of violence shows a strong pattern of racial discrimination that disadvantages indigenous Melanesian Papuans in their own land. We consider that Indigenous Papuans are being demographically marginalized, making up only some estimated 43% of the population. Access for international human rights observers to West Papua, including journalists and human rights organizations has also been reported as limited.

The rise of illiteracy and the high number of maternal mortality of 500 per 100,000 indicate that access to education and health services for the Papuans has deteriorated. As a result, indigenous Papuans are now experiencing a far lower population growth than the people in other parts of Indonesia or Melanesia.

We encourage the Government of Indonesia to cooperate with the Council especially by facilitating the access to West Papua for the UN Special Procedures planning to visit Indonesia specifically for the Mandates on Freedom of Expression, Association and Assembly as a priority.

Finally, Solomon Islands strongly encourages and urges the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to positively respond to the request by the Chairman of the Pacific Leaders Forum, the right Honourable Mr. Peter Oneill, Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, to allow for a human rights fact-finding mission to be dispatched to West Papua to ascertain the allegations of human rights violations there.

Thank you Mr President