**«DAYS OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA IN SAINT-PETERSBURG» FESTIVAL OPENING**

**Post release**

On November 26, in the course of development of bilateral relations between Russia and the Independent state of Papua New Guinea (PNG), the opening ceremony of the "Days of Papua New Guinea in Saint-Petersburg" festival took place in the cultural capital of Russia.

This kind of event was held in our city for the first time and it is especially relevant on the eve of celebration in 2021 of the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Russian Federation and PNG and the upcoming 175th anniversary of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay's birth, due to whose expeditions we remember the Maclay Coast of the distant New Guinea Island.

Opening the festival, the Governor of Saint Petersburg addressed the guests with a welcoming speech. Alexander Beglov noted that the festival gives a chance to learn about rich history, culture and nature of Papua New Guinea, and allows to see the prospects for mutually beneficial cooperation. He also noted that the descendant and namesake of the great ethnographer was contributing a lot to the development of relations between our countries.

Evgeny Grigoriev, Chairman of the Committee for External Relations of Saint-Petersburg, greeting the audience, noted the similarity of cultural diversity of Russia and Papua New Guinea and the importance of the festival.

Metropolitan and Exarch Sergius of Singapore and Southeast Asia gave speech at the opening ceremony. Then, Dmitry Petrovsky, staff member of the Moscow Patriarchate’s Department for External Church Relations, counsellor of the Patriarchal Exarch of Southeast Asia, addressed the guests. It was noted that the festival is a worthy beginning of the celebration of the 175th anniversary of the remarkable scientist N.N. Miklouho-Maclay's birth.

Also, the guests were addressed by the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation to the Republic of Indonesia and concurrently to the Republic of Kiribati, the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Independent State of Papua New Guinea, Lyudmila Vorobyova, as well as the Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in Saint-Petersburg, Vladimir Zapevalov. They noted that despite the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Russia and Papua New Guinea, celebrated in 2021, informal Russian-New Guinea contacts began much earlier, from the moment when the traveler and scientist N.N. Miklouho-Maclay visited the Island in 1871. The Ambassador also noted that Russia is ready to share its experience and best practices for building mutually beneficial relations in all areas with the Island state.

Oleg Chernyaga, Director General of the historical park "Russia - my history", addressed the guests on behalf of the host party the historical park "Russia - my history" and expressed hope for productive cooperation.

Founder and Director of the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation, Nickolay Miklouho-Maclay in his speech noted that the progressive ideological legacy of the Russian scientist N.N. Miklouho-Maclay on the equality of races and peoples, on the inadmissibility of the violent suppression of cultures, on the imposition of other people's stereotypes, on colonial or violent cultural expansion were of particular importance. Research and published scientific works are a solid and irreproachable foundation for opposing nationalist ideas and a good basis for bringing up the younger generation on the principles of respect for the cultures of the peoples of the world.

At the festival opening ceremony, the winners of the all-Russian competition "Travelers in Oceania" were awarded, and the guests were given memorable gifts.

Then, accompanied by the music of the indigenous people of the Maclay Coast, Nickolay Miklouho-Maclay made the "Maclay Coast" exhibition excursion. The exhibition includes the items of material culture of New Guinea (bow, arrows, drum, etc.) of high historical and cultural value; photos and copies of drawings showing the history of relations that began with the expeditions of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay in 1871; N.N. Miklouho-Maclay's expedition costume of the XIX century (replica); "Maclay Coast" small scale prototype, constructed in accordance with the archive materials, which dempnstrate the first historical meet of the Russian scientist and the indigenous inhabitants of the New Guinea Island.

The second part of the festival opening ceremony began with a business conference opened by Vyacheslav Kalganov, the Deputy Chairman of the Committee for External Relations. At the conference, N.N. Miklouho-Maclay, a top specialist at the Center for Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Science, the founder and Director of the Miklouho-Maclay Foundation reported on "The history of bilateral relations between Russia and Papua New Guinea", and D. Kumanovsky, the Head of the Analytical Office of the "LMS Investment Company", CJSC, reported on the "Prospects for development of economic relations between Russia and Papua New Guinea"***.***

Premiere of the documentary "Maclay Returns" was the finishing act of the festival opening ceremony. The documentary shows the adventures the expedition of a descendant of the great scientist and traveler experienced 150 years after the first expedition of N.N. Miklouho-Maclay.

**https://mikluho-maclay.ru/dni-papua-novoj-gvinei-v-sankt-peterburge/**