



PIDC
ANNUAL CONFERENCE
NIUE, 17-19 September 2002

Chairman: Sisilia Talagi, Secretary of Government, Niue
Vice Chairman: Edwin Pittman, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Immigration, Cook Islands

SIXTH PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS CONFERENCE
Niue, 17 – 19 September 2002

Communiqué

The Sixth Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) was convened in Niue, from 17-19 September 2002. There were twenty-seven participants at the Conference. Delegates from American Samoa, Australia, Fiji Islands, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Kingdom of Tonga (Tonga), Tuvalu and Vanuatu attended the Conference along with observers from Canadian Immigration, East Timor, New Zealand Police, Niue Customs, Niue Police, Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (SPCPC), Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Official Opening

Following the opening prayer by Reverend Falkland Liuvaie, the Hon. Fisa Pihigia, Minister for Police and Immigration and John Tohovaka, Niue's Chief of Police and Principal Immigration Officer, officially opened the Conference.

In his address, the Hon. Fisa Pihigia spoke of the issues facing the Pacific Region today. He highlighted the special significance that the events of 11 September 2001 held for the region and the work required to ensure there is a coordinated response to address the problem of terrorism. He also highlighted the need for Immigration Services to work closely with other agencies to safeguard security and combat transnational organised crime in the region.

The Chief of Police and Principal Immigration Officer, John Tohovaka mirrored these sentiments in his opening address to the delegates. He highlighted the importance of the conference as an opportunity to consider the challenges facing immigration in the region today. He emphasised that the security of our region and our people is a paramount responsibility that cannot be taken for granted.

Sisilia Talagi, Secretary of Government, Niue was elected to chair the Conference. Consistent with PIDC convention Mr Edwin Pittman, Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Immigration, Cook Islands was elected Vice-Chair.

Issues considered by the Conference included:

- A Strategic Plan for PIDC;
- PIDC operational resources;

- Combined Law Agency Groups (CLAGs);
- Information exchange and communication tools;
- Organisational integrity;
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UNHCR;
- Secretariat structure and support arrangements;
- People smuggling and illegal activities within the region;
- Asylum seekers and refugees, and related contingency planning;
- Repatriation of illegal immigrants;
- Migration legislation;
- Communicating with the community and business on migration and entry programs;
- The UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime (TNOC) and UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1373 on Terrorism; and
- Training.

Reports were presented and tabled by:

- All delegates on immigration related developments in their own countries;
- PIDC working group on development of a strategic plan, repatriation of illegal immigrants, regional legislative framework to assist members and strategies and action with UNSCR 1373 and TNOC;
- NZIS on contingency planning for mass arrivals and the ICAO Convention;
- Secretariat on the Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) outcomes and regional people smuggling;
- AFP on people smuggling to Australia;
- SPCPC on regional people smuggling and resolutions from their last conference;
- East Timor on the establishment of an immigration service;
- NZ Police on Asian crime and the operation of CLAGs;
- OCO on their recent activities, their integrity program and CAPERS communication system;
- Samoa on their Immigration Institutional Strengthening Project;
- Canada on PRC nationals attempting to gain entry into Canada and counterfeit Swaziland passports; and
- UNHCR on its activities and role in the Pacific region.

Issues resulting in decisions on future action by PIDC included:

PIDC Advisory Committee

An Advisory committee was established to progress issues between conferences and to provide direction and guidance to the Secretariat on behalf of the PIDC membership. The committee comprises Australia, Cook Islands (to be confirmed), Niue, PNG, Tonga and Fiji.

The Advisory Committee (and any Working Group it establishes) has been tasked with progressing the following issues:

- MOU with UNHCR
- Developing an Integrity Program for PIDC
- Developing a contingency planning framework for mass arrivals
- Further develop the legislation framework in the area of asylum seekers and refugees

Secure Immigration Communication System

The OCO observer presented on the CAPERS secure communications system. The conference noted the value of this system as a means to promote real time, secure exchange of information. The PIDC Secretariat advised the Conference that the 2001-2002 Chair of PIDC has recently written to the Chair of the CAPERS steering committee on the possibility of PIDC establishing an immigration child site on the existing CAPERS system.

The AFP/SPCPC observer updated the Conference on the recently implemented SPLEXNet secure communications system. He advised this system is set up in the majority of SPCPC Police Commissioners offices in the region. He invited conference participants to use this established network, through their respective Police Forces, for secure information exchange and suggested that conference participants explore this option in their home countries.

MOU with UNHCR

The conference considered the draft MOU by UNHCR. It was determined that the PIDC Secretariat would redraft some of the clauses to better identify the parameters of the relationship established in the MOU between PIDC and UNHCR. The revised MOU will be referred to the Advisory Committee for final approval before seeking to conclude the MOU with UNHCR.

PIDC Integrity Program

The OCO representative presented the OCO Integrity Program to the conference and indicated the possibility for a representative of PIDC to attend a facilitator's workshop to be held in Auckland in November 2002. PIDC members thanked OCO for the presentation and invitation and noted the value of PIDC developing a similar Integrity Program.

The conference assigned the task of developing a PIDC Integrity Program to the Advisory Committee, with the conference endorsing the inclusion of OCO, SPCPC and UNHCR in this Working Group as necessary. The development of a PIDC Integrity Program was reflected in the PIDC Strategic Plan and the Advisory Committee was given the task of reporting back to the next Annual Conference.

Contingency Plan to deal with Mass Arrivals

New Zealand and Australia presented items on preparing contingency plans to deal with mass arrivals and made offers to share information with other members on the development of plans.

The Conference noted the Forum Leaders communiqué, which endorsed members developing contingency plans for dealing with Mass arrivals. The Conference tasked the Advisory Committee with the development of a contingency planning framework for mass arrivals. The Conference concluded that this was a multi agency issue and directed the Secretariat to enter discussion with the Forum Secretariat, IOM, OCO, SPCPC and UNHCR and with a view to a multi-agency working group addressing this issue.

PIDC framework for the Review of Immigration Legislation

The conference endorsed the framework for the review of immigration legislation that was developed by the Working Group and many of the members commented that they were already using the framework to assess their current legislation. The membership noted that the framework did not detail the requirements for legislation dealing with asylum seekers and refugees and asked that this part of the framework be further developed. The conference assigned this task to the Advisory Committee, with the Advisory Committee setting the parameters for this further development. The Advisory Committee is to report back on the progress of this issue at next years PIDC Annual Conference.

PIDC Strategic Plan

The Conference adopted the draft Strategic Plan for PIDC for 2002-2003 following some minor amendments and with inclusion of a PIDC Integrity program endorsed by the Conference.

Amendments to the PIDC Charter

The Conference accepted the proposal from the Working Group that IOM be included in the PIDC Charter under regional and international organisations with which PIDC seeks to cooperate and collaborate. The Charter will be amended and noted as being adopted by members at the 6th PIDC held in Niue 17-19 September 2002.

Closing

The Conference accepted the offer by Tonga to host the 7th PIDC in September 2003.

Delegates expressed their gratitude to the Government of Niue, the Hon. Minister for Police and Immigration, and to the Chair, who had been instrumental in making this a most successful and enjoyable Conference.

Delegates also acknowledged the valuable contribution the observers made towards the success of the Conference.

Niue

19 September 2002