



PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE

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COMMUNIQUÉ

EIGHTH PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS CONFERENCE

Republic of Palau, 8-10 September 2004

The eighth Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) was convened in the Republic of Palau, from the 8th to the 10th September 2004. There were thirty-eight participants from seventeen countries at the Conference. Delegates from American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, The Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu attended the Conference along with observers from Australian Federal Police (AFP), Inter-Governmental Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC Secretariat), Canadian Immigration, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Translational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC), International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (SPCPC), and The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Official Opening

Following the opening prayer by Pastor Sherwin Nobou, the Honourable Vice President of Palau, Sandra Pierantozzi officially opened the Conference. In her address, she recognised the heightened security awareness within the region, she also reflected on the need for immigration to remain respectful, facilitative and responsive to the needs of the genuine traveller. The Vice President went on to praise the efforts of immigration agencies in the region and urged the delegates to work towards greater cooperation between member states and regional organisations alike.

The Honourable Minister of Justice for the Republic of Palau, Mr Michael Rosenthal, delivered the Keynote address. The Minister noted that while Palau was a peaceful country it was not immune from the threat of terrorism and translational crimes and urged cooperation to ensure regional and international security. The Minister stated that the PIDC can make an important contribution towards improving the border security and economic development of all the Nations in the region.

The Honourable Minister of Justice was elected Chairperson and Mr. Emori Tudia, Acting Director of Immigration for Fiji, was elected Vice-Chair.

Issues Considered by the Conference Included:

Delegates to the conference tabled and later discussed immigration related developments in their jurisdiction. There was focused discussion on the desirability for PIDC members to implement Advance Passenger Information (API) systems supported by a common alert database. New Zealand presented its experience of introducing its own Advance Passenger Screening (APS) system and its potential application in the Pacific.

The delegation from Samoa presented a model for reform that attracted the close interest of the members. The reform of Samoa's immigration service followed a detailed planning and rebuilding process. The lessons learnt from the Institutional Strengthening programme implemented in Samoa and the five pillars of capability building were also discussed at the meeting.

Delegates discussed a range of immigration, citizenship and passport integrity issues. There was recognition of the high priority need to be alert to, and combat all forms of fraud, in particular attempts to benefit through the use of identity, relationship and document fraud.

There was wide support for ideas based on group training for frontline immigration officers across a range of activity areas. The success of the recently delivered "train the trainer" operational training in the Federated States of Micronesia was acknowledged.

The issue of information exchange was discussed and recognised as being critical in combating all forms of organised transnational crime and the activities of terrorists. Immigration agencies in the Pacific are well placed to gather and share information and to utilise intelligence product in undertaking their border protection and border management responsibilities.

Delegates' engaged in thoughtful discussions prompted by a varied range of presentations from law enforcement agencies. Discussions included money laundering, plans for an identity fraud register and technical cooperation.

Observers from the Forum Secretariat, the OCO, the SPCPC, the PTCCC, the APC, the IOM, Canada Immigration and the UNHCR all gave presentations during the conference.

Discussions resulting in action by the conference included:

Advance Passenger Information

The Conference commended the work of both the Secretariat and the Working Group and requested further study towards implementing API/APP in the Pacific.

Illegal Migration in the Pacific Region

In a presentation delivered to the Conference, the PIDC Secretariat highlighted the ongoing concerns of illegal migration in the region and noted with particular emphasis

the arrival of illegal migrants by sea. The conference tasked the Secretariat to undertake further research into the issues and to work with other law enforcement agencies and regional organizations and report back to the 2005 PIDC Conference.

PIDC name change

Members agreed that the name of the PIDC will be changed to reflect that the organization is active throughout the year and decided to refer the matter to the Advisory Committee for further action.

Advisory Committee

The conference voted to establish an Advisory Committee to oversee a wide-ranging review of the PIDC, to develop a strategic plan and make appropriate recommendations.

Closing

Delegates expressed their gratitude to the government of Palau, the President, the Vice President, and the Honourable Minister of Justice with a special note of thanks to Acting Director of Immigration, Joe Giramur and Immigration Officers Vera Matul and Lolyna Ngiatrang, the Rapporteur, Lolita Gibbons for making the 8th PIDC a most successful and enjoyable Conference. Delegates also acknowledged the valuable contribution of the Secretariat and observers towards the success of the Conference.

The Delegates congratulated Fiji for confirming Fiji's offer to host the 9th PIDC Conference in 2005. The Conference also accepted the offer made by New Zealand to host the 10th PIDC in 2006.

Palau

10th September 2004