



9th PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS' CONFERENCE

Republic of Fiji, 30 August - 01 September 2005

COMMUNIQUÉ

The 9th Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference (PIDC) was convened in Nadi, the Republic of Fiji, at the Tanoa International Hotel from the 30th August to the 01st September 2005. Thirty-five participants from 18 countries attended the Conference including: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji Islands, French Polynesia, Kiribati, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Norfolk Island, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, The Kingdom of Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Participating Observers included: Australian Federal Police (AFP), Inter-Governmental Asia Pacific Consultations on Refugees, Displaced Persons and Migrants (APC Secretariat), New Zealand Police, Canada Border Services, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Transnational Crime Coordination Centre (PTCCC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO), and The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

OFFICIAL OPENING

Delegates were welcomed to the 9th PIDC by the Chief Executive Officer for Home Affairs and Immigration, Dr. Lesi Korovavala. In his address, Dr. Korovavala noted the growing interest in the Pacific region towards harmonising legislation and border security. Calling on the membership to trust in each other's neighbours, he emphasised forging meaningful relationships in the coming years. He hailed the collective approach of the PIDC as absolutely necessary in the new global environment. Dr. Korovavala's inspirational speech renewed the sense of responsibility and commitment for all PIDC members.

Mr. Greg Urwin, Secretary General for the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, delivered the keynote address. Mr. Urwin praised the dedication to regional cooperation of the member nations as evidenced by the large delegation at the 2005 conference. He stressed the importance of tracking people movement through regional borders while acknowledging that this cannot deter from legitimate support for tourism, trade and investment activity. Like Dr. Korovavala, he tasked the PIDC with forging deeper links with member nations and industry partners in an effort to ensure effective regional cooperation and consistent border management systems. Finally, Mr. Urwin hailed this year's Conference, which considered and approved its future direction as an important step towards strengthening the role of the PIDC as the pre-eminent immigration organisation in the Pacific.

Following the official opening, Dr. Lesi Korovavala for Fiji was elected Chair and Mr. Api Fiso, Group Manager of Border Security for Immigration New Zealand, was elected Vice-Chair.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE CONFERENCE

PIDC Future Direction

The 2005 PIDC marked the culmination of a year's worth of hard work by both the Secretariat and the PIDC Advisory Committee. The members approved the organisation's future vision, strategic and work plans. Developed by the Advisory Committee in Brisbane and Nadi, the strategy sets forth a realistic means of advancing the PIDC towards becoming the focal point for Pacific immigration issues.

People Smuggling and Human Trafficking

Australia's Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA), discussed the growth of people smuggling and human trafficking, which continues to target countries and transit routes into and through the Pacific.

People Movement by Sea

A joint presentation by Fiji Immigration, Navy and Customs examined the issues surrounding people movement by sea. The presentation focused on the movement of yachts and small craft in the region and the threats they pose in terms of border security. It was noted that some small member states have to secure a vast ocean area despite the obvious shortfalls in maritime surveillance capability. As enforcement of immigration and customs laws focus on meeting ICAO and IMO standards, criminals are increasingly turning to alternative forms of travel like yachts and other small crafts to continue their illegal activities. It was felt that tracking these yachts and small crafts, and sharing information in real time about them should be a realistic goal of the PIDC in the near future.

Developing Chinese Tourism

The South Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) hosted a discussion on the emergence of Chinese tourism in the South Pacific. It was noted that the 20 million outbound Chinese travellers in 2003 was proof of its significant growth and regional tourist importance. By the year 2020, the World Tourism Organisation predicts China will produce 100 million tourists, making China the largest source of tourists in the world. However, if this opportunity is to be realised a number of challenges must be addressed particularly in terms of addressing matters of immigration.

Border Management

A presentation on border management in the Pacific was provided by New Zealand. In the fiscal year 2004-2005, over 2 million persons arrived in New Zealand, including nationals, residents, foreign businesspersons, students and visitors. As trade and travelling increase in the Pacific, Advance Passenger Screening (APS) systems are vital to successful border control efforts, as is research and analysis to support the decision-making. The real threat of pandemics, such as bird flu, and the need for an all of Government effort in terms of preparedness and planning was also emphasised.

Regional Counter Terrorism Exercises

American Samoa presented the results of a recent WMD Full-Scale Exercise held in there earlier in the year. In that exercise, an individual acting as a terrorist travelled a designated route through the Pacific and fictitiously detonated an improvised explosive device on American Samoa soil. Part of the exercise tasked American Samoan immigration with a trace back component of the terrorist's route back to point of first

embarkation. The exercise was a great success in demonstrating the need for intergovernmental cooperation and to continue conducting annual regional exercises to validate PIDC focus areas, and to identify regional funding priorities, training, standardisation of terms and definitions, and plans and policies.

Common Immigration Issues

In open discussions, a number of countries cited concerns common to the region, including the need for increased funding, development and implementation of Advance Passenger Systems (API), ongoing training of immigration personnel and technical assistance and the need for donor countries to coordinate their resources for training. Also discussed was the problem and importance of detecting and breaking up smuggling routes. It was noted that countries with direct flights to the United States, New Zealand and Australia should be on guard against all forms of immigration related transnational organised crime.

DISCUSSIONS RESULTING IN ACTION BY THE PIDC

The 2005 PIDC was widely held as a tremendously successful conference, resulting in a number of resolutions and decisions, including: Commitment of funding by each PIDC member to the operational costs of the PIDC; Adoption of the PIDC Vision, Strategic Plan and Work Plan; Establishment of the PIDC Management Board to oversee implementation of the Strategic Plan; PIDC Secretariat to work with donors and other regional organisations to facilitate the delivery of training; PIDC Secretariat to continue to facilitate discussions on Advance Passenger Information (API); and PIDC Secretariat to work with members to harmonise immigration policy and legislation.

CLOSING

The Minister for Home Affairs and Immigration, Honourable Josefa Vosanibola, officially closed the conference. In his speech, the Minister noted that the Pacific is increasingly recognised as an important region in the world. A clean, unspoiled image as well as vast sea resources, attract increasing levels of both tourism and business investment.

The Minister said that tourism and business investment are vital to the development of Pacific Island economies. Given this, the region's border management agencies have come under pressure to balance the need for facilitation while at the same time prevent entry to those intent on exploiting the region for their own criminal benefit. The Minister said that the emphasis on global terrorism adds further pressures to remain vigilant.

In closing the Minister congratulated members on the steps taken to strengthen the PIDC and the renewed commitment undertaken at the conference to ensure that the organisation is at the forefront of immigration issues in the region. Finally the Minister urged PIDC members to work cooperatively with each other and with other regional organisations for the stability, security and growth of the region under the Pacific Plan.

Delegates expressed their gratitude to the government of Fiji and the Secretariat for hosting a very successful PIDC, with a special note of thanks to the Chair, Dr. Korovavala for guiding the discussions and contributing greatly to the overall success of the meeting.

The Delegates congratulated New Zealand for confirming their offer to host the 10th PIDC in 2006. The Conference also accepted nominations for hosting the 2007 PIDC.

The large turnout and positive steps taken at the 2005 PIDC established it as the pre-eminent immigration organisation in the Pacific region and made this year's conference the most successful in the history of the PIDC.

Republic of Fiji Islands
September 2005