



Pacific Immigration Directors' Conference
Brisbane, Australia: 16-18 September 2008

COMMUNIQUÉ

The 12th Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) meeting was convened in Brisbane, Australia on 16-18 September. Forty delegates from Samoa (Chair), Australia (hosts), Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Guam, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and representatives from the Oceania Customs Organisation, Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Canadian Border Services and United States Customs and Border Protection attended the three day meeting.

OPENING

The 12th PIDC meeting was formally welcomed by Ms Malissa Dryden, the Acting Assistant Secretary for the International Cooperation Branch of the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). She welcomed all members and Observers to the meeting highlighting Australia's commitment to PIDC and expressed their willingness to support and work with PIDC member countries. She reaffirmed the need to strengthen inter-government and interagency cooperation. She noted the theme of the conference – People on the Move – referring to increased people movements, the strengthening of immigration agencies in the region and the benefits of well-managed migration. She referred to the Port Moresby Declaration and the Australian Government's commitment to working with Pacific Island nations on the basis of partnership mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

The outgoing PIDC Chair and CEO for Samoa's Ministry of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Auseugaefa Poloma Komiti, accepted another term as the PIDC Chairman. The Chair then expressed the PIDC memberships' appreciation for Australia hosting this 12th PIDC meeting at short notice, reflecting the cooperative values of the PIDC family.

The Chair referenced the challenges for PIDC including the appointment of a new head of secretariat and the development of a new strategic plan. He also reflected on the growing status and capability of the PIDC and the work undertaken in the preceding year.

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE 12TH PACIFIC IMMIGRATION DIRECTORS CONFERENCE

ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

PIDC members thanked Australia for hosting the 2008 conference and endorsed the nomination of Samoa to continue as Chair and New Zealand as Vice Chair for 2008/09.

MEMBER COUNTRY REPORTS

Written country reports were submitted and presented by Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshal Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

These reports will be analysed by the Secretariat to identify training and capacity building needs, which might be addressed through PIDC cooperation. Members also noted the importance of coming together to share knowledge and experiences with counterparts and other agencies from the Pacific and beyond.

PIDC STRATEGIC PLAN 2009-12 AND PIDC SECRETARIAT WORK PLAN 2008/09

The review of the Strategic Plan undertaken by the PIDC management board sought to consolidate the work undertaken by PIDC and to set the future direction for members. PIDC Members noted the survey of the Strategic Plan 2005-08 and the assessment of the PIDC Strategic Plan 2005-08. Members also noted the process and outcome of the Strategic Plan Review Working Group meeting. The resulting Strategic Plan encapsulates a vision of:

“Strong government immigration authorities mutually working together to manage the Pacific gateways and contributing to the regional objectives of security, economic growth, sustainable development and good governance”

and contains the following strategic objectives:

- To improve the management of international people movement
- To strengthen border management and security; and
- To work together to build capacity to deliver immigration services

PIDC members endorsed the PIDC Strategic Plan 2009 -12.

PIDC members also endorsed the related Secretariat Annual Work Plan 2008/09 which includes tasks and milestones to allow members the management board and the secretariat to measure progress towards completing key activities and achieving the objectives of the strategic plan.

2008/09 RESEARCH PLAN

PIDC members endorsed the Research Plan for 2008 -09, and in particular noted the core aim and objectives of the proposed research topics which include ongoing work on people smuggling human trafficking and illegal migration (noting the 2008 report was the most comprehensive published since its inception in 2003), comparative analysis of PIDC member related legislation and core skills and knowledge for immigration officers. New work being undertaken includes research in to the costs of illegally resident population and a short paper relating to intra regional migration within the Pacific.

PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES TRADE AGREEMENT

PIDC members noted the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat presentation on the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA) which invited comments from

members and suggested the PIDC may wish to work with other regional partners on developing facilitation options for the movement of skilled and semi skilled workers within PICTA countries.

ADVOCACY, LIASION AND REPRESENTATION

PIDC Members noted the series of meetings between the PIDC Head of Secretariat and various foreign missions to promote the work that PIDC undertakes in the region. These missions acknowledged the importance of PIDC in the region and have asked for continuing dialogue. Members also noted the update on the implementation of the Communication Strategy Plan and thanked those members representing the PIDC in national, regional and international forums.

COMPARATIVE LEGISLATION

PIDC acknowledges that some jurisdictions have outdated policies and legislation and that there are difficulties and challenges in bringing policies and legislations into the 21st century. A panel discussion took place which focused on the comparison of immigration and related legislation in the pacific which focused on topics:

- Human trafficking and people smuggling and refugee status determination
- Deportation, removal and carrier responsibility
- Citizenship

The management board will now consider the issues that were discussed and recommend ways forward.

TRAINING

PIDC welcomed the news that an Australian Youth Ambassador (AYAD) would be working at the Secretariat for one year commencing in October 2008. It is intended that the AYAD will focus primarily on the project on core skills and knowledge for immigration officers in the region.

PIDC endorsed the selection criteria guidelines and procedures for the operational secondment programme. This will see secondments of PIDC members to busy airports and other operational environments.

Members thanked Australia for the provision of Document Examination Principles and Applications training and acknowledged the support of New Zealand and the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat for funding participants.

PACIFIC REGIONAL IMMIGRATION IDENTITY PROJECT

New Zealand gave a joint presentation on the PRIIP with case study input from Palau, Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Fiji. PIDC members were impressed with the case studies from the different islands which highlighted the range of issues around identity crimes and the need to encourage interagency cooperation and leadership at a national and regional level.

PIDC thanked New Zealand for funding this project and encouraged the PRIIP team to continue with this work. PIDC acknowledged the support from OCO and PICP secretariats.

OBSERVERS

Presentations were provided by representatives from the Oceania Customs Organisation, Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, the International Organization for Migration, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Canadian Border Services and United States Customs and Border Protection.

The IOM provided an overview of the Australian funded Pacific Assisted Voluntary Returns Project which aims to assist PIDC members manage the complicated returns of third country nationals who have irregular status out of the region.

UNHCR briefed the meeting on its programme to assist PIDC members to enhance their understanding of refugee and asylum issues and capacity to address individual cases. The programme implementation period is for 24 months with funding provided by Australia.

Canada Border Services advised that they have received funding under counter terrorism capacity building project in the Pacific for 2008/09 utilising PIDC and OCO.

United States Customs and Border Protection gave a presentation on their programme related to airline support.

CLOSING

The Conference expressed their gratitude to the Government of Australia, the staff of the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Secretariat for hosting a very successful PIDC. Thanks were extended to the Chair, Auseugaefa Poloma Komiti, and Ms Malissa Dryden, for guiding the discussions and contributing greatly to the overall success of the meeting.

The Conference expressed appreciation to New Caledonia for volunteering to host the 13th PIDC. The members elected the management board for the 2008/09 year consisting of Australia, Cook Islands, Guam, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Samoa and the Solomon Islands.

The high level of representation, diverse and active participation and positive steps taken to progress the objectives of PIDC at this Conference was further evidence that the organisation is indeed the pre-eminent immigration organisation in the Pacific region. The 2007/08 year saw a consolidation of core work and an expansion in the area of research making this year's Conference highly successful.

Brisbane, Australia
18 SEPTEMBER 2008