After almost a decade long journey that began in 2005 when Members agreed to pursue legal processes to establish the organisation as a legal entity status, the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC) achieved a historical milestone in the signing of the PIDC Memorandum of Understanding by Members at the 17th Pacific Immigration Directors’ Conference that was recently hosted by the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority (PNGICSA).

Fifteen countries including Australia, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Zealand, New Caledonia, Niue, Norfolk Islands, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Wallis and Futuna signed the PIDC Memorandum of Understanding agreeing to PIDC establishing its legal entity status under a Headquarters Arrangement with the Fijian Government. As a result, this will formally establish the PIDC Secretariat in Fiji and in effect, the historic MoU marks the birth of a legally recognized regional organisation for immigration agencies in the Pacific – the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference.

The shift to legal entity status is seen by Members as the next logical step in the organisation’s evolution as it will no doubt strengthen and advance its operational effectiveness. In addition it will create a myriad of opportunities for future growth that may not otherwise have been available in the organisation’s previous existing status. Other Pacific Island countries and territories are expected to finalise signing to the MoU once approval from Heads of Authority are obtained through their respective national vetting processes.

Since its establishment in 1996, PIDC has continued to develop and progress in its field of work with Members across a raft of important issues affecting Immigration agencies in the Pacific region. It remains one of the very few regional immigration forums internationally that assembles 23 island states and territories to discuss issues of mutual interest as well as foster multilateral co-operation and mutual assistance aimed at strengthening Members’ territorial borders including the integrity of their entry systems.

No doubt the formalization of the organisation’s legal entity status celebrates a new chapter in the organisation’s short history and a step towards realising its vision of being the pre-eminent immigration organisation in the region facilitating capacity development, regional cooperation in managing and securing Pacific gateways and contributing to regional security, economic growth, sustainable development and good governance.
Papua New Guinea Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority successfully hosted this year’s Annual Conference from 29 April – 1 May 2014. The three day Annual Conference held at the Gazelle International Hotel in Kokopo was a resounding success with 40 delegates comprising of both Members and international Observers in attendance. The much anticipated annual event is the only regional forum that draws together heads of immigration agencies from around the Pacific to discuss immigration related issues and challenges that are being addressed in the region.

The Conference was opened by the Honourable Mr Rimbink Pato, OBE, LLB, MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Immigration who extended a warm welcome to delegates and official observers.

Minister Pato spoke to the 2014 conference theme “Economic Growth and national development through skilled entry programmes”. He described how the conference drew together heads and representatives of immigration agencies and partners across the Pacific to advance the PIDC’s objectives of supporting the development of effective and efficient border management agencies, facilitating bona fide travel, addressing irregular migration and combating people smuggling and human trafficking in the region.

He noted with pleasure the theme of skilled migration marking it as an important broadening of focus for the PIDC. He spoke about how Pacific countries could best position migration to achieve government objectives to support national development and economic growth, and highlighted as a key feature the development of the right legislative and policy mechanisms for foreign skilled entry. He highlighted PNG’s work in this area, particularly the undertaking of a comprehensive review of PNG’s Migration Act and Regulations.

He noted that a highlight of this year’s Annual Conference is the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding by PIDC Members introducing a new Constitution, marking a historic moment for PIDC that has taken years of careful discussion and deliberation. The Memorandum is an important step towards PIDC attaining legal entity status and will lead to the signing of the Headquarters Arrangement between PIDC and the Government of Fiji which will formally establish the PIDC Secretariat in Fiji.

At the conclusion of the Conference, a ceremonial spear called a “Butur” symbolizing power and authority in Tolai society was presented to the PIDC from the East New Britain Government and kept in trust by PNG for 2014 and it will be carried by the PNG Delegation across the Pacific to the next Annual Conference in Samoa in 2015. The PIDC Chair will symbolically hand the Butur to the incoming Chair who will become its custodian for the following year. As with other regional organisations that observe a similar ceremony, this will now be observed by the PIDC as it signifies the status of the PIDC Chair and the responsibility the Chair has in leading the organisation.
New Management Board Elected

The Annual Conference recently elected Board members for another term. The Management Board is an important decision making body that acts on behalf of the PIDC to provide governance oversight of the day-to-day operational activity of the PIDC Secretariat and other PIDC sub-committees and responsibilities. The Management Board comprises the Chairperson and the Vice-chairperson as well as one representative from each of the Principal Donor countries, and one representative from each of Melanesia, Micronesia, Polynesia and the Small Islands States. The new Management Board elected for the 2014/15 year comprised - Australia (Donor), Papua New Guinea as Chair, Samoa (Vice Chair), Republic of the Marshall Islands (Micronesia), Solomon Islands (Melanesia), Kiribati (Small Island States), Tuvalu (Polynesia) and New Zealand (Donor).

Mr Mataio Rabura takes up PIDC Chairman Role

Mr Mataio Rabura the PNGICSA Chief Migration Officer took the PIDC leadership role from the outgoing Chair, Mrs Vasie Poila. Mr Rabura has a distinguished career as a PNG Public Servant and is one of the remaining founding members of PIDC. In Mrs Vasie Poila’s closing remarks she stated that as one of the founding members of PIDC, it was certainly fitting that as we begin our new journey under a legal entity status it was timely and that this leadership role was now being taken up by one of our very experienced leaders in the region. The PIDC family is certainly in good wise, strong and steady hands.

The Chair, Mr Mataio Rabura, extended his sincere appreciation and thanks to the outgoing Chair from the Cook Islands for her leadership of the PIDC, including the progress made towards legal entity status, since the last Annual Conference in Rarotonga in November 2012. Mr Rabura expressed how honoured he was to be Chair of the PIDC at this time in the organisation’s history. He predicted that 2014 will be remembered as a landmark moment for the PIDC family because of its establishment as a legal entity and through this achieves a greater degree of independence. As Chair, Mr Rabura saw his role as ensuring that the new organisational arrangements and structures are implemented and consolidated. He spoke about his commitment to positioning the Secretariat and the Management Board to be supportive and responsive to the needs of all member countries. He spoke about the key role immigration agencies played in national development and economic growth through managing the entry of foreign workers to the Pacific. He saw PIDC as the pre-eminent regional forum for immigration agencies, critical to effective cooperation and best practice exchange and support as Pacific countries look to improve the effectiveness of their agencies.

Mr Rabura set out his aim as Chair of PIDC over the coming year was to ensure the PIDC is an organisation which adds value to and supports all Pacific members.

2013 Annual Report

The 2013 Annual Report, PIDCs’ fourth report since its first publication is now available. The report provides a glimpse of the work that the Secretariat under the Management Boards guidance undertook in 2013. This year’s Annual Report is about reporting back to our Members on the work that we have undertaken in 2013. Immigration departments are central to PIDC and its work in the region and its only appropriate that the organisation reports back to its members. The organisation has an obligation to update members on what’s happening in the organisation, what activities have been undertaken and what programmes they can anticipate to be rolled out in the future amongst other important regional immigration issues. Members interested in receiving a copy of the 2013 Annual report can contact the Secretariat through the following email: info@pidcsec.org
Kiribati Launches New Machine Readable Passports System

Kiribati achieved a groundbreaking milestone and was profoundly rewarded for their hard work when they proudly launched their new Machine Readable Passports System on 27th January 2014.

The President and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Immigration, His Excellency Anote Tong, launched the new machine-readable passports system and the printing of the President's passport was also administered at the launch.

Furthermore, in attendance to witness this tremendous achievement was the Australian High Commissioner, His Excellency George Fraser, Mr. Pinto Katia from PINTECH, Secretary to the Cabinet, some Secretaries, Senior Officers of the Kiribati Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration and the Media.

Ms Tessie Lambourne, the Secretary Kiribati Immigration, acknowledged Australia’s Department of Immigration and Border Protection for the generous support it extended to Kiribati Immigration that has enabled them to commence issuance of machine-readable passports in compliance with ICAO requirements.

Ms Lambourne also paid tribute to PIDC for their support on this milestone which stemmed from discussions with Australia’s Department of Immigration and Border Protection five years ago culminating in this project.

PIDC was fortunate enough to be part of the first group that carried out the first scoping mission on this project five years ago in 2009 and to see the completion of this project has indeed brought about great satisfaction.

The Kiribati Immigration Department is currently in the process of advising all countries in the region and abroad on the new passports together with specific security features and other relevant information.

It must be noted that the non-machine readable passports will continue to be used until 23 November 2015 and PIDC will be assisting the Kiribati Immigration in circulating this information to all PIDC Members.

Ms Lambourne said the new Machine Readable Passports System will go a long way in facilitating travel of Kiribati’s people.

TARDIS are responsible for the training and installation of the system for the next three years.

FIJI LAUNCHES IBMS SERVERS FOR BORDER SECURITY

Fiji Immigration has boosted its border control monitoring system with the procurement of two new Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) servers at Nadi International Airport. The two new servers will enable a more fast and efficient processing time of passengers travelling documents thereby enhancing the turnaround time of primary line officers checking passengers through. In addition, the servers will also enhance the captured data to be saved and distributed effectively in a timelier manner therefore strengthening Fiji’s border control capabilities.

According to Director Immigration, Major Nemani Vuniwaqa, following the installment of the Integrated Border Management System (IBMS) in 2013, there were further developments where new software’s were created and aligned to ensure that the system was communicating well and retrieving data for analytical purposes to support operational and strategic decision making processes.

The launching of the two Integrated Border Management System severs at Nadi Airport will improve border security and this investment by Fiji Immigration is a reflection of Fiji’s commitment towards raising security standards that align with international best practises. As one of the leading immigration agencies in the Pacific monitoring one of the busiest airports in the region, this investment is timely and is expected to improve the department’s border protection systems.

In launching the new servers, the Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration Mr Joketani Cokanasiga, said the servers would provide Fiji with international capabilities and more efficient ways of collating data for analysis by respective stakeholders at the national, regional and international level.

The need to improve border security, and to protect our borders against irregular migration while in the same instance facilitating the movement of people are national objectives which every sovereign country shares and Fiji is no exception. The establishment of these IBMS servers however reflects the Fijian government’s commitment to security in Fiji and the region.
The Voluntary Reporting System on Migrant Smuggling and Related Conduct (VRS-MSRC)

Developed in support of the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime, the VRS-MSRC is an Internet-based, secure system to collect, share, and facilitate the analysis of migrant smuggling and irregular migration data at inter-regional, regional, and national levels. The VRS-MSRC seeks to establish non-nominal quantitative and qualitative data on migrant smuggling and irregular migration through the regular collection of data from national authorities that have agreed to the principle of mutual information sharing. Currently, there are 19 States and Territories participating in the VRS-MSRC: Australia, Cambodia, France, Hong Kong (SAR), Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Maldives, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Norfolk Island, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands, Thailand, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. Sharing migrant smuggling and irregular migration data through the VRS-MSRC will create mutually beneficial relationships between states and increase trust among state authorities. It is the goal of UNODC to increase the number of states actively contributing to the VRS-MSRC, resulting in an increased collaborative effort in the fight against migrant smuggling. The VRS-MSRC has the potential to bring greater visibility to the issue of migrant smuggling.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

The central mission of UNODC is to contribute to the achievement of security and justice for all by making the world safe from crime, drugs, corruption, and terrorism. In line with this mission, the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (Trafficking in Persons Protocol), and the Protocol against Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea, and Air (Smuggling of Migrants Protocol), provide the legal and conceptual frameworks for UNODC activities in preventing and combating trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC), the protocols provide the first internationally accepted definitions of human trafficking and migrant smuggling.

They are also the primary international legal instruments addressing the criminal activities of human trafficking and migrant smuggling. As the guardian of these two protocols, UNODC’s primary goal is to promote global adherence to the protocols and assist states in their effective implementation. In particular, UNODC focuses its work on assisting states in bringing their domestic legislation in line with the protocols and developing effective criminal justice responses to human trafficking and migrant smuggling. In this respect, an important part of UNODC’s work is to increase evidence-based knowledge on the crime challenges, with the objective of informing the development of policies and operational counter-measures.
Forum Regional Security Committee Meeting

The Forum Regional Security Committee (FRSC) is an important regional forum that supports the work performed by the Forum Secretariat’s Law Enforcement Unit through the coordination of the Political Governance and Security Programme. This year’s Annual FRSC meeting was recently hosted at the Forum Secretariat Headquarters in Fiji from 4-5 June drawing together representatives from Pacific Islands Forum Member Countries, representatives of all the Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats such as the Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), Pacific Islands Legal Officers Network (PILON), and the Pacific Islands Chief of Police (PICP), international organisations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) including representatives of other CROP agencies such as SPREP, SPC and FFA.

The annual meeting of the FRSC is the principal regional forum on political security and governance issues and allows Members and stakeholders to discuss reports compiled by the Forum Secretariat and Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats on regional security issues such as civil unrest, transnational crimes and terrorist related activities, identify and discuss both internal and external security threats that affect either the security or sustainable economic development of the region, promote cooperation between Members and the Regional Law Enforcement Secretariats to encourage coordinated responses to the identified threats, identify key priority areas to enhance the capacity of Members and their National Law Enforcement Agencies to respond to National security threats and Coordinate regional responses to the identified threats and concerns.

In identifying solutions, participants recommended that consideration be given to exploring mechanisms to more effectively identify solutions for refugees and vulnerable migrants within mixed flows, such as:

a) Increase public awareness and positive media reporting about the realities of mixed migration flows and States international obligations to those in need of protection.

b) Promoting partnerships and networks with NGOs (particularly church groups) and relevant government departments who can assist with providing assistance, integration and promoting positive community attitudes.

The aim of the meeting was to promote protection-sensitive and solution-oriented approaches to mixed migration management in the Pacific. Although States in the Pacific region have invested in improving their border and immigration management systems at the national as well as at the national levels, there are challenges in creating comprehensive frameworks to manage mixed migration movements in the Pacific region, which is characterized by island countries with small populations, in remote locations, with particular vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters and, mostly, with limited resources.

The meeting provided the opportunity for participants to review current practices and to identify challenges that exist in responding to mixed migration movements; to identify specific challenges faced by Pacific Island Countries in responding to situations involving migrants in mixed migratory movements, including asylum-seekers, refugees, stateless persons and victims of trafficking; exchange good practices and lessons learned related to identification and referral mechanisms at entry points for the different categories of migrants; and consider ways in which States, supported by relevant regional bodies and international organizations, might cooperate and collaborate more effectively in the Pacific region to address protection issues.

UNHCR-IOM Canberra Workshop

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) co-hosted the Pacific Regional Meeting on Protection in the Context of Mixed Migration: Promoting Cooperation and Identification of Good Practices in Canberra from 20-22 May 2014 in close coordination with the Pacific Immigration Directors’ Conference (PIDC). In attendance were Immigration representatives from the following Pacific Island countries: Cook Islands; Fiji; Kiribati; Nauru; Palau; Papua New Guinea; Tonga; Samoa; Solomon Islands; and Vanuatu. Australia and New Zealand Immigration entities were also represented in an observer capacity.

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Discussions at the FRSC considered recent trends of illegal activities impacting our borders in the Pacific at the national and regional level. Transnational crime was highlighted as a continuing security threat that was challenging law enforcement agencies throughout the region. The forum agreed that Law enforcement agencies needed to collectively work together at the national and regional level to address complex issues that were generated from these transnational criminal activities. A continuing threat to the region is the increasing involvement of local Pacific Islanders in transnational criminal activities which continues to challenge law enforcement agencies.

There was also general concern on cyber crimes in the Pacific. The Pacific Islands are extremely vulnerable to cyber crimes. With increasing development and access to information technology and communications spreading across the region comes an additional challenge and worry to our Member countries in the form of cyber crime. The biggest threat of cyber crime is its evolving nature as new opportunities to commit old crimes in new undetected methods continue to be used by criminal elements to exploit our border control systems and processes.
Challenging and Changing Times for PICP

The Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) is a non-profit organisation made up of police services in the Pacific. The PICP works to enhance and improve policing and communication in the Pacific by promoting and providing a voice on law enforcement issues and raising awareness of such issues with our stakeholders and provide a forum to share information and intelligence to counter transnational crime in the region.

The PICP originally started out as a South Pacific Chiefs of Police Conference (SPCCP) which had its first meeting in 1970 when representatives of seven Pacific Island countries met in Fiji to exchange ideas and discuss issues that were impacting on them. Over time the quantity of Chiefs/Commissioners attending grew and the organisation changed its name to Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP) in 2005 to reflect that the PICP was more than just the hosting and arrangement of the conference and had a wider pacific regional representation.

Since 2005, more resources in the form of an increase in staff and funding were consigned to the PICP Secretariat to enhance its overall capability to work on projects that held the foremost importance to the Chiefs of Police. Today PICP represents 20 Countries from the Pacific Region.

Structure

The Secretariat comprises of four full time positions:
- Executive Director
- Two Programme Managers (1 from Australian Federal Police)
- Performance, Planning and Finance Officer
- Executive Support Officer

In addition, PICP also hosts two Seconded Pacific Officers each year for approximately five months each.

New PICP Strategic Plan

The PICP Strategic Plan 2015+ is a major piece of work being carried out at the Secretariat with huge input from our Chair, Commissioner Maara Tetava. We are at the stage of consulting the draft plan with the Chiefs and this will mean the Chair contacting the Chiefs to discuss the draft and to ensure that it is truly a Chiefs plan. The Strategic Plan has an emphasis on the PICP membership and greater ownership by the Chiefs of the PICP and the regional issues faced by enforcement in the Pacific. It will mean a quick change of mindset for some and it may mean a little more responsibility for others. However with the support of the Secretariat and the willingness of Members to become involved in regional policing issues – it is anticipated that it will be a smooth transition.

With the moving on of the PICP-S Executive Director Don Allan (now the NZ Police Liaison Officer in the Pacific) and the other staff movements over the next 12 months it is a changing time for the PICP. Certainly the Secretariat will be prepared for the challenges those changes will bring once the Strategic Plan is finalised and a new Executive Director is appointed.

Notable Changes

A key personnel change is the Executive Director Don Allan being posted to Samoa as the NZ Police Liaison Officer. His successor is Mr Waata Shepherd.

The AFP position will also change in January 2015. So the Secretariat is going to be going through changes.

Pacific Region Immigration Identity Programme (PRIIP) Welcomes New Manager

Immigration New Zealand (INZ), in conjunction with NZ Police and NZ Customs is delighted to introduce Patricia (Trisha) Welch, Programme Manager for the Pacific Region Immigration Identity and Intelligence programme to PICP member. Ms Welch replaces the late Shaun ‘Shamus’ Evans, in the role.

The purpose of the programme, known as PRIIP/INTEL, is to build regional capacity with Customs, Immigration and Police agencies in detecting, measuring, investigating, prosecuting and preventing the use of identity crime in their jurisdictions, to reduce identity crime in the Pacific region. It also aims to help jurisdictions disrupt the activities of national and transnational criminal groups engaging in using identity crime to further criminal activities. The programme began in 2007/2008; Intelligence training (Intell) was later added to build intelligence capability to detect identity crime and to collect and share information and intelligence. Ten Pacific Island countries have participated in PRIIP: Cook Islands, FSM, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu.

Trisha has an extensive background in NZ Customs (NZCS), joining as a Customs cadet in 1974. Her NZCS career covered all aspects of border operations diversifying into developing and delivering training. Her training role included all aspects of technical Customs training including Airport, Immigration, and legislation.

Trisha then moved to an Intelligence analyst’s role where she worked as a tactical and operational analyst supporting border and investigations staff. This role lead to Supervising Customs Officer’s analysis position in the National Drug Intelligence Bureau (a joint Police, Customs and Health group.).

Returning to a NZCS training role Trisha was part of a project team developing Intelligence training curriculum for NZCS. In this role Trisha was responsible for managing, delivering and assessing the NZ qualification- National Diploma and Certificate Intelligence Analysis. She managed the NZCS Intelligence training curriculum, including facilitating and delivering all Intelligence training courses. These included - Intelligence Induction Package, Basic Intelligence Technical Skills (BITS); Intelligence Analysis (IA); Course Advanced Analytical Thinking (AAT) Course. These courses were attended by both NZCS and other Government agencies.

Trisha also assisted in the delivery of other technical and non technical skills – for example: JTI (Jung Type Indicator) personality results, Personal Values, Belbin team role results to leadership courses, report writing, Problem Solving and Risk Management, Decision making courses, Senior Customs Officer assessments.

While in this fulltime role Trisha completed and was awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Adult Education and Performance at Victoria University.

Trisha moved to NZ Police in 2009 working at the Royal NZ Police College as a training advisor in the Intelligence practise. As a team member of the Intelligence practise Trisha assisted in planning, developing and implementing effective training programmes and packages at regional and district level in line with the Professional Development in Intelligence Programme (PDP) for Intelligence staff. This involved the delivery of a wide range of Intelligence analysis courses from a Trainee to Senior analysts level and to plan, develop and implement effective training programmes and packages at regional and district level in line with the Professional Development in Intelligence Programme (PDP) for Intelligence staff.

Trisha has been fortunate to be able to combine her two passions – Intelligence analysis and adult education in her career.

She is currently working on developing a training and delivery programme which meets the outcome of the PRIIP/INTEL programme – To improve security in the Pacific region by increasing the capability of Pacific Island counties to detect and manage identity and immigration crime.

She is looking forward to working in the Pacific region with our Pacific Island Immigration, Customs and Police colleagues.