



Pacific Immigration Development Community
2024 Regular Annual Meeting
25 - 27 June, Honiara, Solomon Islands

Agenda Item 13: Panel Discussion – Countering Serious Organised Crime: People Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Drugs

Recommendations

Members are invited to discuss the complexities of organised transnational crime and identify collective regional efforts and joint activities that immigration agencies and partner law enforcement agencies can consider to address emerging issues of people smuggling, human trafficking and drugs.

Facilitator: Kevin Kneebone

Panellist: Australia, Tonga, Solomon Islands, Fiji, Vanuatu, PNG, UNODC, PTCCC & OCO

Objective

This session provides an opportunity for Members to:

- (a) discuss the latest trends and modus operandi of organised crime in the Pacific; and
- (b) identify effective strategies and joint activities that immigration and partner law enforcement agencies can collaborate with to combat people smuggling, human trafficking and drug trafficking.

Overview

Serious organized crime in the Pacific is a growing concern, influenced by several factors that make the region vulnerable to various illicit activities.

1. *Transshipment Point:* The Pacific Islands have increasingly become both a transshipment points and a production site for illicit drugs. There has been a significant rise in methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin trafficking, driven by syndicates from China, Mexico, South America, and local groups. For instance, methamphetamine cases in Fiji increased from two in 2009 to 113 in 2019, reflecting a broader trend across the region
2. *Convergence of Business and Crime:* Legal businesses in sectors such as logging, mining, and fishing often provide cover for illegal activities, including tax evasion, human trafficking, people smuggling and environmental crimes. Malaysian and Chinese companies dominate the logging industry in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands, often engaging in illegal practices under the guise of legitimate operations.
3. *Money Laundering and Financial Crimes:* Low-tax jurisdictions in some Pacific Islands are vulnerable to money laundering and other financial crimes due to weak regulatory frameworks. These areas are being exploited by criminals to hide assets and evade sanctions, as seen with the misuse of maritime registries and investment in "golden passport" schemes.
4. *Human Trafficking and people smuggling:* Human trafficking and people smuggling are other critical issue, particularly in sectors like tourism, fishing, agriculture and logging where laborers

are exploited. Where women and children are also trafficked for sexual exploitation within logging camps and other industries.

5. *Regulatory and Enforcement Challenges:* Many Pacific Island nations struggle with limited monitoring and enforcement capabilities, inadequate technical skills, and public service corruption. These challenges are compounded by legislative gaps and insufficient resources to effectively combat transnational crime.

Countering serious organised crime requires a multi-faceted approach involving law enforcement agencies, regional approaches, international cooperation's, community engagements, legislative measures and technology solutions. Criminal activities, including those undertaken by transnational organized crime groups, are increasing throughout the Pacific region. The prevalence of this activity is exacerbated by the increasing connectivity with other countries and regions. There are numerous indications that different crime types are influenced by organised crimes are affecting individuals, families, communities and countries across the Pacific region to varying degrees, in addition to impacting sustainable economic development and regional safety and security.