Agenda Item 8:   **PIDC-IOM Project: Online Reporting & Information Sharing Platform**

Recommendations

The PIDC Regular Annual Meeting is invited to **note** and **welcome** the development of a regional immigration information reporting platform

Purpose

This session provides an opportunity for Members to consider the proposed reporting platform/system that is being developed in partnership between PIDC & IOM and its benefits and potential impacts on border management for the PIDC membership. The platform provides an opportunity to managing mobility data and timely information sharing, crucial for evidence-based decision-making and effective crisis response.

Background

2.   The importance of timely and disaggregated immigration data has never been clearer than during the COVID-19 pandemic. Such data are critical in understanding mobility dynamics and characteristics and identifying priority responses and interventions, including traveller tracing. The Pandemic had also revealed how the increasing inter-connectedness and inter-dependence of countries has made the world vulnerable to global threats and highlighted the importance of information sharing and international collaboration to tackle common problems across borders especially transnational organised crimes.

3.   One of the major challenges the Pacific region is highly prone to is our capacity to manage mobility data and timely information sharing to contribute to the regions' capacity to effectively respond to crisis and make evidence-based decisions.

4.   Over the years, the Pacific region has experienced an increasing rate of cross border movement of people and goods as a result of steadily expanding trade and investment, education opportunities, labour mobility and tourism. The region has also encountered numerous challenges relating to irregular migration and immigration of repatriated residents and diaspora. Improved understanding of regional migration trends will greatly contribute to facilitating access to regular pathways such as labour migration, return and family reunification, via well informed visa and admission policies, systems and practices.

5.   While cross border movements create new opportunities, the region has seen an increase in irregular migration and transnational crime, which poses a threat to development, security, and regional governance.

6.   While increased cross-border movement offers economic and social benefits, it has also led to a rise in irregular migration and transnational crime, posing threats to development, security, and regional governance. Currently, PIDC's intelligence network, including the NCP/Profiling Group and Maritime Group, relies on monthly email reports with PIDC members constantly facing capacity challenges in the consistent and timely provision of monthly reports, hindering real-time responses.

Consequently, PIDC had identified that a regional online reporting platform to share data and create targeted information is key to effectively building a trend picture of irregular migration in the Pacific.

PIDC Enforcement Data Collection Tool (PEDCT)

7.   As members are aware, PIDC had ventured into developing an excel spread sheet-based platform for members to strengthen their data collection and reporting capacity to the PIDC membership around 2017. While two member countries had adopted these excel based spreadsheet system in 2017, PIDC was unable to continue the programme for a number of underlying reasons including expertise to manage the database and NZ Bureau of Statistics' inability to continue supporting the programme.

PIDC's Response

8.   In recognizing the importance of evidence-based policy making for border control and law enforcement interventions, the PIDC has placed improved data collection and analysis and information sharing as one of the major areas of focus over the years. Some notable achievements include:

(a) Establishment of the Information Sharing Working Group (ISWG), to strengthen information sharing among member states;
(b) Signing of the Memorandum of Arrangement for Information Sharing which provides a framework to formalise processes and legalise information sharing between PIDC Members and the establishment of National Contact Points, Profiling Group Contact Points and Maritime Group Contact Points;
(c)   Development and dissemination of intelligence bulletins, alerts and reports that provide members with information on trends of irregular movement throughout the Pacific, as well as PIDC Migration Trend Analysis in the Pacific Islands Region;
(d) Development of a PIDC Border Enforcement Data Collection Tool to support national data collection and analysis of key immigration data fields;
(e) Introduction of the APAN (All Partners Access Network System) system for document and information sharing; and
(f) Capacity building in the areas of data collection, data storage, data analysis, and information sharing.

9.   In order to support further strengthening of information sharing and reinforcing cross border collaboration, as part of the *Project for Strengthening Capacity of Border Control for Responding to Infectious Diseases in Pacific Island Countries*, IOM proposes to develop a web-based information reporting and sharing platform where information on regular and irregular migration flows are periodically shared and accessible to all participating countries under PIDC's coordination.

10.   Such platform, which would be based on voluntary collaboration of streamlined non sensitive migration data, would also offer visual data and analytical tools to support understanding and reporting of the dynamic and complex cross-border movements, and implementing targeted and timely border control measures.

11.   The initiative would be based on existing platforms such as the aforementioned tools developed by PIDC as well as the Document Examination Support Center (DESC), which have already developed an information sharing platform to exchange non sensitive data, on document and identity fraud detected in Asia and parts of the Pacific.

12.   A reporting and information sharing platform is crucial for addressing various challenges in migration management. By leveraging regular migration data, policymakers can make informed decisions across different policy domains, including tourism, business, and talent attraction.

Additionally, establishing an evidence-based visualization of migration patterns enables stakeholders to gain deeper insights into migration dynamics, facilitating strategic planning and resource allocation.

13.   In the absence of a robust Border Management Information Systems (BMIS) in many countries in the Pacific, a centralized platform for data sharing is essential for obtaining a comprehensive picture of entry and exit migration flows and statistics.

14.   The proposed initiative will contribute to the strategic framework approaches of the PIDC's strategic Plan (2022-2025) towards strengthening border enforcement and information sharing and strengthening data collection and analysis. It also aligns with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent as well as the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security.

Objective
In this regard, the online reporting and information sharing platform intends to:
   (a) Enhance information sharing and regional collaborations for regional border and health security;
   (b) Enhance evidence-based decision making and strengthening targeted border control operational responses;
   (c) Improve shared understanding of cross-border regional mobility and regional trends;
   (d) Inform evidence - based policy advises and formalise recommendations for national and regional border security efforts; and
   (e) Use for developing contextualised capacity building initiatives by PIDC and other Development Partners and informing policy development.