



Agenda item 20: Border Agencies at the Frontline

Proposed Recommendations

The PIDC Regular Annual Meeting is invited to:

- (a) **note** the strengths and challenges of sharing immigration border roles with customs and police;
 - (b) **note** how PIDC can support Members in improving their shared border responsibilities; and
 - (c) **task** the Secretariat to document lessons on how to best manage the primary line and the important relationships.
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Purpose

The purpose of this session is to explore how Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICT) immigration agencies can best manage the primary line and remain vigilant while working with Police, Customs and Aviation Security partner agencies.

Background

2. Immigration agencies¹ in the Pacific share the responsibility of regulating national borders with a number of enforcement agencies such as customs, police, health and bio-security. Each agency has its own operational function supported by legal provisions to determine if incoming passengers and cargo satisfy the legal requirements for entry. Efforts are undertaken to enhance coordination between agencies and reduce duplication to target high risk passengers and consignments while facilitating legitimate travel and trade.

3. In terms of immigration responsibilities, a key role is managing border management systems to capture and record traveller information. Where these systems are automated, immigration can significantly strengthen support to all border agencies by screening arriving passengers at the primary inspection line² for persons of interest already identified and recorded.

4. In a significant number of Members, the primary inspection line is managed by Customs and in these cases the relationships and effectiveness of collaboration vary. Feedback obtained from several PIDC Members indicate a number of operational challenges that impact on effective collaboration including:

- (a) customs officers having limited access to Immigration Border Management Systems which at times may lead to unnecessary referrals;

¹ PIDC Members in several jurisdictions are made up of border police operating at the Ports of Entry.

² Where arriving international travellers are first reviewed to determine admission.

- (b) immigration officers having limited access to Immigration Border Management Systems that are operated by Customs;
- (c) differing shift hours and lack of secondary inspection border facilities;
- (d) customs officers uncertain of their functions as frontline document examiners;
- (e) customs officers not document examination trained;
- (f) customs officers granting entry to visitors without consulting supervisors on cases of interest; and
- (g) primary line officers not willing to adopt recommended changes to how they assess travellers.

5. This panel session will discuss operational challenges to managing the primary inspection line and look to identify possible solutions and best practices to ensure activities are coordinated effectively.

Policy Impacts

6. The discussion outcomes for this session is expected to support and guide the organisations work in Key Activity Area 1.2 of the PIDC Strategic Plan 2019-2021 to enhance national enforcement and investigations capacity.

Resource Implications

7. There are no specific financial implications identified at this stage.