



Pacific Immigration Development Community

Board Meeting 3/ 2024-25: 16 June, 2025

Nukualofa, Tonga

Agenda Item 6: Secretariat Activity Update

Proposed Recommendations

The Board is invited to consider recommendations proposed under each of the agenda sub-items discussed below.

Purpose

This paper seeks to provide the Board with an update regarding key activities undertaken by the Secretariat during the reporting period in the implementation of activities in Strategic Focus Areas 1, 2 and 3 since its last meeting in March 2025. This will be discussed in detail the following sub sections:

- a) Strategic Focus Area 1: Partnership and Coordination
- b) Strategic Focus Area 2: National Immigration Strengthening
- c) Strategic Focus Area 3: Border Enforcement and Traveller Facilitation

(a) Strategic Focus Area 1: Partnership and Coordination

2. This item serves to inform and update the Board of the progress to date of activities implemented under SFA 1 in relation to Partnership and Coordination with national, regional and international partners since the last Board meeting in March 2025.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY UPDATE

(a) PIFS High-Level Political Talanoa on Deepened Regionalism and the Regional Architecture to Support the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy

3. The Secretariat participated in a regional consultation being undertaken by a PIFS led high Level political Group (HLPG) that had been appointed by the Pacific Islands Forum Troika to guide high-level Political Talanoa (HLPT) on Deepening Regionalism and the Regional Architecture.

4. The HLPT is a regionally mandated process aimed at reflecting on the evolution of Pacific regionalism and reimagining how our collective architecture can better serve the needs and ambitions of the Blue Pacific Continent. As part of this, the HLPG was tasked with engaging Member States and regional agencies and advising Forum Leaders on how the regional system might be strengthened to more effectively deliver on the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

5. This work is part of Phase 3 of the Review of the Regional Architecture (RRA), which identified the need for more coherent, coordinated, and fit-for-purpose institutional arrangements to respond to current and emerging challenges. The HLPT provides a unique opportunity to reflect on how our regional institutions—across and beyond the CROP system—can better align to support political leadership, implementation of collective priorities, and delivery of regional public goods.

(b) Pacific Security College – Pacific Regional and National Security Conference

6. The Pacific Security College will be hosting a Pacific Regional and National Security Conference in Suva from July 14-16, 2025 at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The PSC sees this conference as an exciting opportunity for the Pacific security community to gather, with political, immigration, customs, legal, law enforcement, national security, foreign affairs, fisheries, environmental, human security and academic representatives all coming together to share their wisdom and perspectives. This conference supported by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat has been scheduled on the same week the PIFS will be hosting its FRSC Meeting in Suva.

7. PIDC Members last attended this conference in 2023 when it hosted the inaugural meeting in Fiji. PIDC was not able to attend last year's conference as it had been hosted on the same week PIDC had hosted its annual conference in Honiara.

8. There is limited funding available for PIDC Member participation at this year's conference and in this regards the Secretariat had recommended to the Pacific Security College the following Board members as the four appropriate representatives of the PIDC family including:

- (i) Tonga – As the incoming PIDC Chair by July 2025
- (ii) Solomon Islands – Melanesian rep and outgoing PIDC Chair (noting that Fiji will be attending as the meeting will be hosted in Suva and won't be needing funding support)
- (iii) Samoa – Polynesian Representative
- (iv) RMI – Micronesian Representative

9. Other members that can self-fund are invited to advise the Secretariat of their interest to attend as self-funded participants.

(c) Pacific Fusion Centre Conference

10. The Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC) will be hosting the National Security Coordinators Roundtable meeting in Port Vila. The Round Table will be followed by a Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Pacific Security College facilitated validation workshop on the Ocean of Peace Declaration and Boe Declaration review.

11. PIDC will be participating in both forums as the roundtable will provide an opportunity for National Security Coordinators to have frank and open discussions on security trends and avenues to strengthen national security coordination, capacity and capability across the region and PIDC with our regional law enforcement secretariats under the partnership agreement will have the opportunity to provide insights from our different sectors in law enforcement to not only add value to these conversations but highlight more importantly the immigration perspective at this regional security discussions.

(d) World Border Security Congress

12. PIDC participated for only the second time at the World Border Security Congress through funding support from UNODC in Spain. The global forum brought together law enforcement agencies from across the world.

13. The global forum provided PIDC an opportunity to raise its global profile as the preeminent regional body on immigration in addition to networking at a global level with other law enforcement agencies. The unprecedented nature of criminal activities facing the PIDC membership across the Pacific against a backdrop of limited resources requires a collective effort of working collaboratively not only in the Pacific but more so with border agencies across the Caribbean, Asia, Americas, Middle East, Africa and Europe in information sharing and intelligence dialogues.

14. The global forum conversations provided PIDC access to latest global trend discussions on advanced and sophisticated nature of illegal activities and transnational crimes across international borders across the globe. The risk posed by technological innovation that is being accessed also by criminals is taking the fight against transnational organised crime to whole new level. For the Pacific region, investing in these new innovative resources will be impossible without funding support. Developing therefore a system that is fit for purpose and strictly tailored towards our individual borders may be considered. However, building the capacities of Immigration agencies on what is available and in utilising their natural abilities will continue to serve the region well.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **note** the engagements PIDC has with partner organisations both regionally and internationally; and
- (ii) **encourage** the Secretariat to continue networking with these partners in regional and global border security events as PIDC continues to also raise its profile as the preeminent Pacific immigration body.

(e) Asian Network for Document Examination Conference

15. PIDC together with Fiji, PNG and the Solomon Islands participated as Observers at the 9th Asian Network for Document Examination (ANDEX) Conference. The ANDEX forum originally created by six Asian immigration agencies is a closed immigration specialised organisations that has restricted membership to agencies across the Asian region. Established in 2013, ANDEX is a state-led, non-binding forum coordinated by IOM's Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. It brings together travel document examination experts across Asia to exchange information, identify trends, and strengthen technical capacity to combat irregular migration and identity fraud. With a broadened mandate and growing membership, ANDEX remains a vital platform for collective action and shared learning.

16. This year's meeting reaffirmed the indispensable leadership of national immigration authorities in driving regional cooperation, enhancing information-sharing frameworks, and leveraging platforms like the Data Exchange Solution for Counter-smuggling (DESC). DESC was designed to provide the data needed for coordinated, route-based responses to disrupt migrant smuggling networks.

17. The two-day event aimed at advancing collective action against transnational organized crime, with a particular focus on migrant smuggling through travel document fraud and irregular migration.

18. Among the key outcomes was the formal endorsement of ANDEX to also consider the inclusion of PIDC Members from the Pacific to be members of the ANDEX community and the consideration of the ANDEX name to be called the Asia Pacific Network for Document Examination, reflecting the network's growing inclusivity to include the Pacific in this highly specialized community of immigration document examiners and experts.

19. PIDC Members were able to advocate the work we do in monitoring the movement of people especially those originating from the Asian region consequently being recognized for PIDC's contributions to information sharing and commitment to collaborative border governance.

20. PIDC remains dedicated to promoting information exchange and capacity-building to protect our borders and people and networking with source countries from Asia further solidifies our collective capability to monitor and manage the irregular movement of people.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **note** the participation of PIDC and the Pacific islands at the most recent Asia Network for Document Examination forum;
- (ii) **welcomed** the recognition provided to PIDC Member immigration agencies and the acceptance of the ANDEX network to open membership to the Pacific; and
- (iii) **encouraged** members to explore the benefits of joining this immigration specific document examination network.

(f) 2025 Joint Heads of Pacific Security Meeting 2025

21. The PNG Government hosted this year's JHOPS conference in Port Moresby from 18-20 March in Port Moresby's Stanley Hotel and Suites. Members noted that a key outcome from JHoPS 2025 was the endorsement of drafting instructions for a Regional Operations Deployment Framework. These drafting instructions could pave the way for a future regional governance mechanism for civilian, military and police deployments.

22. Building on the strategic guidance provided by the 2000 *Biketawa Declaration* and the 2018 *Boe Declaration on Regional Security*, the Framework, should it eventuate, potentially close a gap in the existing regional security architecture by providing a common mechanism to support Pacific-led responses to Pacific security challenges. At JHoPS 2025, PNG's CDF, Rear Admiral Polewara noted that a Framework would respond to the needs of our region by streamlining bilateral and regional deployments in response to crises.

23. Consequently, at the March JHoPS meeting, members noted that ultimately, the negotiation of any Framework would need to be directed by Pacific Leaders. To this end, JHoPS members agreed to brief relevant domestic agencies (including foreign ministries, legal departments and national security agencies) on the utility of such a Framework with a view to seeking political-level endorsement for a future negotiation.

24. Recognising that these discussions take time, JHoPS members at JHoPS 2025 agreed to report back at JHoPS 2026 on the outcomes of these discussions. JHoPS members tasked the Secretariat to work through the IWG to develop a register of issues and concerns and to progress this work. It was agreed that IWG meetings could be used to share updates on domestic consultations, build understanding about the Framework and consider what types of documents the JHoPS Secretariat could develop to assist members to brief relevant domestic agencies.

25. Further details on the JHoPS 2025 meeting can be found in the Joint Communiqué of the Seventh Annual Joint Heads of Pacific Security attached as Annex 2.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **note** the recommendations of the JHOPS 2025 Annual Conference in PNG; and
- (ii) **encourage** members to review the draft JHOPS Governance framework with a view to consider having a collective regional PIDC Member recommendation leading to the 2026 JHOPS meeting.

(b) Strategic Focus Area 2: National Immigration Strengthening

26. This item seeks to provide an update on the progress of PIDC activities under its National Immigration Strengthening work programmes and to discuss a way forward for each item including:

- (i) PIDC Strategic Plan Review Workshop; and
- (ii) PIDC National Immigration Strengthening Programme Update.

(i) PIDC Strategic Plan Review Workshop

** Please refer to separate standalone strategic plan discussion paper.*

(ii) PIDC National Immigration Strengthening Programme Update.

Background

27. The PIDC plays a lead role in coordinating the delivery of immigration and border control national immigration strengthening programmes in the Pacific and works closely with Donors and partner agencies to deliver this strategic focus area across the membership. As such, Strategic Focus Area 2 continues to be a core part of the Secretariat's work plan, including coordinating regional training programmes and seeking new training opportunities for Members.

28. During this reporting period from March 2025, the Secretariat has supported members in its ongoing coordination efforts to support members legislation review programmes, support on website development, support the enrolment and provision of Masters in Border Security Course scholarships with USP, coordinating sharing of information efforts including the circulation of alerts and intelligence bulletins and the coordination of a number of major regional training programmes for the membership with partner organisations.

■ PIDC Legislation Review Programme

29. Table 1 below provides a summary of the legislation review programme in quarter 4 of this financial period. Niue, Marshall Islands and Samoa are currently supported in this 2024/25 financial period. While technical support for Samoa and the Marshall Islands has been progressed and Niue finally determining their agreed approach to the development of drafting instructions for their new immigration bill.

Table 1: Summary of 2024-25 Legislative Review Modernisation project – Phase One: Policy and Legislation Support

Country		Legislation Review Project Update
Niue (Phase One)	Immigration Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Niue government has approved drafting instructions development recommendation and requested PIDC to begin developing drafting instructions- Drafting Instructions currently being finalised

■ USP Masters Programme Update

30. The PIDC-USP initiated Masters in Border Security Programme had been launched in January 2025 with enrolments opened from semester of this academic year. While it was earmarked for semester II, the course had been pulled forward to semester I of the 2025 academic year with PIDC inviting members to enroll and apply for PIDC scholarships through the approval of their directors. To date following the scholarship application process, PIDC has already offered 12 immigration officers' scholarship from across the

membership with the remaining scholarship quota expected to be filled at the end of the enrollment period in semester II. Additionally, the Secretariat has been providing ongoing guidance to immigration officers across the region on the scholarship application process.

▪ **PIDC Members Website Development Programme Update**

31. The Solomon Islands website development project has been completed with the website developer finalising a few minor details to the new site and is on target to be launched in July 2025 to coincide with the launching of Solomon Islands new border management system and visa system to be launched consecutively with the new website.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) note and welcome the ongoing implementation of the PIDC Immigration Strengthen Programme; and
- (ii) encourage the Secretariat to continue working with members in addition to identifying ongoing member needs

(c) Strategic Focus Area 3: Border Enforcement and Traveller Facilitation

Background

32. An important strategic focus area of the PIDC Strategic Plan 2022-25 is the focus on strengthening national immigration border processes to support international security and domestic social and economic development. Consequently, the ISWG plays a key role in influencing the strategic direction the organisation intends to adopt to meet this key strategic focus goal of the organisation in the next 3 years. The following discussion items are key regional initiatives that have direct impact on information exchange amongst law enforcement agencies in the region with PIDC considering how to align its work programme and initiatives to these regional initiatives and possibly identify areas of collaboration and partnership.

▪ **PIDC NCP/RISP Regional Workshop and RISP Update**

33. PIDC in partnership and funding support from both IOM and UNODC successfully hosted a PIDC Migration Data Collection, Analysis and Management in the Pacific Workshop in Brisbane in May. The training on Migration Data Collection, Analysis, and Management in the Pacific brought together Reporting and Information Sharing Platform (RISP) focal points and National Contact Points from across the PIDC membership to draw on their experiences and strengthen regional efforts in collecting and sharing targeted information.

34. This training aimed to enhance individual country capacity to collect and analyse immigration data for the purpose of analysis and risk assessment, align country data collection methodologies, better understand the capability of the Reporting and Information Sharing Platform (RISP), and strengthen understanding of the value of immigration data. It offers the possibility of improving and strengthening information exchange in the region, including the potential development of a 'standard data collection template' acceptable by administrations in the region.

35. The training also provided the possibility of developing significant data collection models by identifying models of functionality that can be replicated across small Pacific administrations. This offers the opportunity to begin working towards raising the standards of information collection, analysis, and distribution in the region.

36. Consequently, the purpose of this training was to:

- a) Enhance data collection and analytical capabilities on migration mobility trends and strengthen information-sharing practices among Pacific countries;
- b) Enable participants to use RISP for data analysis and familiarize themselves with the RISP Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) on data collection, analysis, and sharing; and
- c) Discuss and develop plans and recommendations for the region's migration data management efforts and the way forward.

37. The workshop was deemed as a success and attached as Annex One is the outcomes of the workshop which provides guidance for future works for PIDC.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **welcome** the successful delivery of NCP and RISP regional workshop; and
- (ii) **note** the progress made on the development of the RISP platform and the products that the online RISP platform could provide to support member immigration agencies in their operations and policy development processes.

▪ **PIDC Biometric & E-passport Conference**

38. The Papua New Guinea (PNG) Immigration and Citizenship Services Authority (ICSA), in partnership with the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC), Australian Department of Home Affairs (Home Affairs), Australian Passport Office (APO), Biometrics Institute, and the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) International Capacity Building Working Group (ICBWG) is pleased to confirm that the Pacific Biometrics and Passport event which has been designed specifically for the Pacific will be hosted in Port Moresby. The multi-day event will be held in PNG and is now confirmed to be scheduled to occur between **19-21 August 2025**.

39. With PIDC members actively participating in a variety of international forums on border management, biometrics and passports; a need has been identified for key information from these forums to be tailored to the Pacific context. In addition to tailored information, there is a need for support from industry experts to also be tailored for the Pacific. With this in mind, the key purpose of this event is to:

1. Provide PIDC members with contextual information about biometrics and passports.
2. Connect PIDC members to industry experts who are prepared to work with and support PIDC members on their biometrics and passport journeys.

40. PIDC in consultations with PNG have begun preparations for this inaugural event with hotels meeting venue and accommodations already booked and the Secretariat finalising invitations for members invited to this inaugural event.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) Acknowledge PNGICA's leadership and commitment to hosting the PIDC Biometric and E-Passport regional workshop;
- (ii) Note and welcome the preparations undertaken by PNGICA to deliver a successful Biometric and E-passport Conference; and
- (iii) Encourage the Secretariat to continue working with PNGICA to ensure that all logistics and meeting arrangements are finalised by end of July 2025.

▪ **PIDC-IOM Joint Regional Research Project Update**

41. The joint PIDC-IOM regional research funded by IOM core funding is a joint project that focuses on identifying how immigration and border management policies and practices facilitate and/or limit access to labour mobility pathways. Adopting a case study methodology approach, the research will be undertaking in country national consultations from three sub-regionally selected countries including Samoa for the Polynesia group, Palau for Micronesia and Solomon Islands for the Melanesian islands.

42. To date, following an intensive selection process, Mr. Peter Speldewinde was selected to undertake this regional research. The first phase of national consultations has been completed for the Solomon Islands from 19th to 23rd May 2025. The Research in consultation with PIDC and IOM are currently reviewing findings from these first consultations with follow-up consultations currently scheduled for later in the coming month in addition to national consultations for Palau to be scheduled in July 2025 and consecutively in Samoa in either late July or early August. A draft report of findings will be available for discussions by November 2025, before the next Board meeting.

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **note** the progress made to the first country national consultations for the PIDC-IOM joint research; and
- (ii) **encourage** the Secretariat to continue working closely with host immigration agencies during the course of the national consultation programme.

▪ **PIDC Northern Pacific Advanced Intelligence Course**

43. PIDC will be undertaking a Northern Pacific advanced immigration intelligence course that is specifically geared to supporting the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Palau to build their information sharing network expertise and capacity in addition to establishing domestic mechanisms of collective responsibility to enable information sharing. In order for the PIDC Information Sharing regional mechanism to work effectively across its membership, to support each of these PIDC member to have a functional national information sharing mechanism owned and driven by local experts which can consequently connect to the PIDC regional information sharing regional mechanism.

44. At the heart of this emerging issue is the lack of expertise in the northern Pacific based immigration agencies to address the increasing sophistication to identity crime with the advancement in technology and Artificial Intelligence. Consequently, PIDC had identified the lack of specialised immigration specific training opportunities for the northern Pacific and in particular in the specialised area of immigration intelligence. The northern Pacific regional intelligence training has been recognised as a training opportunity to address identity crime and enable them to participate and contribute effectively to regional the PIDC Information Sharing Network. This offers the opportunity to begin working towards raising the standards of information collection, analysis and distribution across immigration agencies in the three selected immigration agencies from the Pacific.

45. While PIDC has established its Information Sharing Network and regional structures through its National Contact Points and Profiling Group Contact Points, it has identified that the effectiveness of this regional information sharing mechanism is dependent on immigration agencies across the Pacific having strong domestic intelligence capacities and expertise.

46. Supporting the Northern Pacific intelligence training programme that will be tailored to and delivered in the northern pacific will build up RMI, FSM and Palau intelligence capability

Proposed Recommendations

Board Members are invited to:

- (i) **welcome** the funding support secured through UNODC to support the PIDC northern pacific intelligence training course;
- (ii) **encourage** the Secretariat to work closely with all participants and trainings to deliver a really successful course.

ANNEX ONE: OUTCOMES OF THE NCP AND RISP REGIONAL WORKSHOP



PIDC MIGRATION DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS AND MANAGEMENT IN THE PACIFIC WORKSHOP/TRAINING OUTCOMES

Objectives

The training on Migration Data Collection, Analysis, and Management in the Pacific brought together Reporting and Information Sharing Platform (RISP) focal points and National Contact Points from across the PIDC membership to draw on their experiences and strengthen regional efforts in collecting and sharing targeted information.

This training aimed to enhance individual country capacity to collect and analyze immigration data for the purpose of analysis and risk assessment, align country data collection methodologies, better understand the capability of the Reporting and Information Sharing Platform (RISP), and strengthen understanding of the value of immigration data. It offers the possibility of improving and strengthening information exchange in the region, including the potential development of a 'standard data collection template' acceptable by administrations in the region.

The training also provided the possibility of developing significant data collection models by identifying models of functionality that can be replicated across small Pacific administrations. This offers the opportunity to begin working towards raising the standards of information collection, analysis, and distribution in the region.

Consequently, the purpose of this training is to:

- d) Enhance data collection and analytical capabilities on migration mobility trends and strengthen information-sharing practices among Pacific countries;
- e) Enable participants to use RISP for data analysis and familiarize themselves with the RISP Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) on data collection, analysis, and sharing; and
- f) Discuss and develop plans and recommendations for the region's migration data management efforts and the way forward.

It is envisaged that this training will encourage members to collect reliable data for informed decision-making that is evidence-based and foster regional cooperation, ultimately improving preparedness for migration-related challenges.

Training Outcomes

Activities through the PIDC typically arise from ideas generated at workshops/trainings, which are presented in the form of an Outcomes Summary – a document formulated by workshop/training participants and agreed upon for consideration by the Board, Members, and the PIDC Membership heads of immigration.

The Outcomes Summary represents a tentative plan for future action (e.g. further workshops/trainings and other collaborative projects) and in-principle agreement to the high-level concepts discussed throughout a workshop/training.

All plans for future action, such as workshops/trainings, projects, and other activities, must be endorsed by the PIDC Board. Although the Outcomes Summary does not represent a firm commitment to future action, it does represent in-principle agreement to progress the ideas contained in the Outcomes Summary.

Outcomes as agreed upon by PIDC Member Participants:

The PIDC training participants:

- **Thanked** IOM, UNODC, and PIDC for supporting and coordinating this capacity development initiative on Migration Data Collection, Analysis, and Management in the Pacific.
- **Recognised** the value of RISP on national and regional people movement trend analysis and the importance of correct data collection at ports of entry for definitive and accurate trend analysis.
- **Acknowledged** the value of migration data collection and analysis and, in particular, the role and responsibilities of immigration agencies to accurately monitor regular and better understand risks of irregular migration in terms of data and information collection and exchange as well as sharing of experiences.
- **Agreed** that data plays a central role in driving the sharing of information throughout the PIDC network to address irregular migration issues and guide evidence-based policymaking.
- **Encouraged** PIDC Members to strengthen national data collection processes and harmonize systems across the region to better identify and anticipate possible national and regional regular migration movement trends.
- The training **acknowledged** the increasing complexity of technology and AI in monitoring and analyzing people movement into the region as a key challenge for PIDC Members and **recognized** the shared responsibilities between countries in streamlining data collection and analysis to protect our shared borders against irregular travellers.
- **Encouraged** participants at this training to take back recommendations from this training to their countries to progress and strengthen data collection, analysis, and

information-sharing processes and systems for addressing regular and irregular migration.

Key Findings

The key findings of the training are as follows:

1. Recognizing that the PIDC member countries are pioneering the RISP that PIDC is uniquely placed to be a global leader to monitor regular people movement trends and enhance country and regional trend analysis and risk assessment.
2. The training agreed on the need for PIDC Members to collaborate at the national level to address data collection challenges across the region.
3. Uniformity of data collection standards throughout the region would be a strong and effective approach to accurately analysing movement trends at the regional level.
4. The PIDC Regular Annual Meeting was identified as the appropriate forum to begin Regional Consultative Processes (RCPs) for data collection harmonization and standardization in the Pacific
5. The training recognized the value of RISP in data collection, analysis, management, and information exchange, and reaffirmed the need to strengthen accurate data collection and standardization at the national level to better understand regional migration trends for operational measures and policy development.
6. Additionally, the training acknowledged the increasing complexity of technology and AI in irregular people movement and recognized the opportunity RISP provides to keep abreast of technology and AI development through RCPs
7. PIDC member countries noted the importance of regular migration data as a baseline to better understand irregular migration movements in a comprehensive manner.

Future Work

1. IOM will share the final template that incorporates suggestions and feedback received during the training by 6 May 2025.
2. Any new countries who want to join the RISP will write to PIDC.
3. IOM will further improve the platform (both regional and country pages) based on the agreed suggestions by 16 May 2025, followed by individual country consultations for reviewing the dashboards on RISP for accuracy.
4. Based on the finalized dashboards, IOM will provide country and regional analysis during the RAM.
5. The PIDC, IOM and development partners will seek to pursue options to further develop, strengthen and sustain the RISP into the second phase of the initiative.

END.

ANNEX TWO: JHOPS JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Joint Communiqué of the Seventh Annual Joint Heads of Pacific Security

21 March 2025

Defence, police, customs and immigration leaders, as well as national security directors and advisers, from across the Pacific met in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea for the seventh annual Joint Heads of Pacific Security (JHoPS) meeting from 18-20 March 2025. They were joined by observers from Japan and the United States, as well as representatives from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), the Pacific Fusion Centre (PFC), the Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC), the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police Secretariat (PICPS), the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Pacific Security College (PSC). Representatives from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) attended as special guests. Delegates were welcomed to Papua New Guinea by the Honourable John Rosso MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Lands and Physical Planning, Urbanisation, Immigration and Border Security. The meeting was opened by Mr Elias Wohengu, Foreign Affairs Secretary, and co-chaired by Commissioner David Manning MBE, OSt.J, DPS, QPM, Commissioner of Police, Royal Papua New Guinea Constabulary and Rear Admiral Philip Polewara DMS CBE, Chief of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force. Governor Powes Parkop, National Capital District, delivered remarks to delegates to Port Moresby.

This year's theme focused on 'aligning and collaborating to advance our collective security'. Discussions focused on the need to enable rapid operational responses in an increasingly disaster prone region. Maritime security also remained a key focus, with issues like transnational crime, human trafficking and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing being pressing concerns. Mr Esala Nayasi, Deputy Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Mr Viliame Bovoro, acting Director of the Pacific Fusion Centre, briefed the JHoPS community on strategic priorities set by the Pacific Islands Forum and security challenges and trends facing the region, both highlighting Pacific Leaders' call for a 'flexible and responsive regional security mechanism'.

A panel of eminent delegates exchanged assessments on regional security challenges and reiterated the vital importance of collective action and cooperation in response to these challenges. Interoperability and coordination with regional architecture were also discussed, as JHoPS delegates agreed on the need to work closely with regional partners to develop and advance Pacific-led solutions to Pacific security challenges. Members thanked the delegation of New Caledonia (France) for its presentation on 'Success stories in combating tobacco smuggling and drug trafficking through interagency and regional cooperation.'

For the first time, there was a separate program for JHoPS principals and advisers for part of the meeting. Principals had an opportunity to visit Basilisk Naval Base, the National Surveillance and Coordination Centre – where Papua New Guinea officials were supporting the FFA-led Operation RAI BALANG – and tour the Guardian Class Patrol Boat HMPNGS Ted Diro. They also visited the Container Examination Facility at Motukea Wharf. Meanwhile, advisers had the opportunity to consider operational responses to security challenges by participating in facilitated small group tabletop exercises covering a Humanitarian

Assistance and Disaster Relief incident from the perspective of both an affected state and a neighbouring state, and a suspected maritime movement of contraband. Advisers from each exercise presented a summary, analysis and recommendations to principals.

Interoperability and Regional Security Responses

On the final day of the meeting, drawing on a body of work by JHoPS members since JHoPS 2022 in Denarau, Fiji, delegates endorsed 'drafting instructions' for a Regional Operations Deployment Framework. These drafting instructions could pave the way for a regional governance mechanism for civilian, military and police deployments. Building on the strategic guidance set by the 2000 Biketawa Declaration and the 2018 Boe Declaration on Regional Security, the Framework would close a gap in existing regional architecture by providing a common mechanism to support Pacific-led responses to Pacific security challenges, including by the Pacific Police Support Group and Pacific Response Group. Rear Admiral Polewara noted that a framework would respond to the needs of our region by streamlining bilateral and regional deployments in response to crises. Such an initiative demonstrates the strength of the JHoPS community in translating strategic guidance set by Pacific Leaders into operational effects. JHoPS members noted that ultimately, the negotiation of any framework would need to be directed by Pacific Leaders. JHoPS members agreed to brief relevant domestic agencies (including foreign ministries, legal departments and national security agencies) on the utility of such a framework with a view to seeking political-level endorsement for a future negotiation. JHoPS members tasked the Secretariat to work through the IWG to develop a register of issues and concerns (including any legal concerns) and enable updates to be provided. Members agreed to report back at JHoPS 2026 on the outcomes of these discussions.

Finally, Members considered and endorsed the JHoPS Governance Framework, including Terms of Reference to provide clarity on the role, purpose and mission of JHoPS. Members warmly thanked Papua New Guinea for its generous hosting of JHoPS 2025 and agreed that Australia would host JHoPS 2026. Cook Islands offered to host JHoPS 2027.

Formed in 2019, JHoPS brings together senior operational practitioners from the region, providing an unparalleled opportunity to deliver operational security outcomes and drive practical cooperation between and among Pacific agencies and security forces in support of Pacific-led responses to regional security challenges. The JHoPS meeting demonstrates a shared commitment to an open, inclusive and rules-based Pacific. The meeting provided an opportunity to harness security expertise, and to share resources and knowledge between Pacific partners.