

## Pacific Immigration Directors Converge in Nukualofa for 2025 Regular Annual Meeting

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*The Crown Prince of Tonga/Minister of Foreign Affairs with PIDC Members*

The 27<sup>th</sup> Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) Regular Annual Meeting (RAM) hosted by the Kingdom of Tonga's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration in Nukualofa, Tonga on 17 – 20 June 2025 bringing together heads of immigration agencies and senior officials from across the Pacific region to deliberate on key issues shaping immigration and border management, strengthening regional cooperation, and reaffirming the PIDC Memberships shared commitments to sustainable and secure mobility.

The theme of this year's RAM was *"Understanding the complexity of Migration Today: Protecting our Blue Pacific Continent and People"*. 20 Member states and territories attended including: Tonga (Chair), Republic of Fiji, (Incoming Vice Chair) Solomon Islands (Outgoing Vice -Chair), Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tokelau, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Wallis and Futuna. The conference also welcomed representatives of Observer organisations from the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO), Pacific Islands Fusion Centre (PFC), the Pacific Transnational Crimes Coordination Centre (PTCCC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU).

The Regular Annual Meeting was opened by His Excellency, His Royal Highness, The Crown Prince Tupoutou' 'Ulukalala Minister of Foreign Affairs who welcomed delegates and official observers to the 27<sup>th</sup> Pacific Immigration Development Community RAM. HRH The Crown Prince Tupoutou' 'Ulukalala in his opening remarks, welcomed delegates and highlighted the increasing complexity of migration across the region. He called for strengthened collaboration, smarter systems, and collective resilience to address emerging mobility pressures while ensuring the protection and empowerment of Pacific peoples. His address reaffirmed the Government of Tonga's commitment to the principles of regional unity, mutual support, and responsible border governance.

The conference theme, “Understanding the Complexity of Migration Today: Protecting Our Blue Pacific Continent and People,” provided a timely opportunity for members to reflect on the dynamics of an evolving global and regional migration landscape against a backdrop of limited resources and capacity across the Pacific. Discussions underscored the shared responsibility of immigration agencies to ensure that the Pacific’s borders remain secure, its people protected, and its values preserved, even amidst an increasingly interconnected and fast-changing global migration landscape.

The Chair, and Tonga Immigration Director Ms Telesia Fakava-Kaitapu thanked the outgoing Chair Mr Chris Akosawa, Director Immigration Solomon Islands for his leadership during his tenure as the PIDC Chair for the 2024/25 Financial period. She stated that PIDC’s objectives for the year ahead, included the development of PIDC’s new strategic plan to be reflective of member needs and the changing operating landscape, the successful completion of PIDC’s new workplan, with mitigation against the revolving border threats as a central focal point of PIDC’s strategic objectives in ensuring a safe and prosperous Pacific region and in particular addressing the immigration aspects of transnational organised crime and the collective efforts of members to protect our shared borders.

Members acknowledged the ongoing shifts in the region’s border environment, noting growing pressures on immigration and border control systems to manage legal movement effectively. RAM discussions reinforced the need for adaptable, well-resourced national systems and strong regional coordination. Participants expressed concern over the rise of complex border threats, including transnational crime and irregular migration. There was strong consensus on the need for joint intelligence sharing efforts, capacity-building, and coordinated responses to emerging risks. Members discussed challenges in managing the return and reintegration of deportees across Pacific states. The meeting called for greater collaboration in building structured and coordinated reintegration strategies that respect both security needs and social impacts. Additionally, members recognized the need to share information to effectively monitor increasing complexities to evolving regional border threats.

The 2025 PIDC Regular Annual Meeting concluded with members affirming the relevance and urgency of this year’s conference theme. Delegates agreed that achieving effective migration governance in the Pacific requires collective action, sustained partnerships, evidence-based policymaking, and a steadfast commitment to the PIDC Membership values and priorities.

Participants expressed appreciation for the open and solutions-focused discussions and acknowledged the Kingdom of Tonga’s warm hospitality and leadership in hosting the meeting. Members reaffirmed PIDC’s central role as a trusted regional immigration forum for open dialogue, capacity-building and regional strategy.

The Chair and Tongan Immigration Director Ms Kaitapu expressed sincere gratitude to all participants for their engagement, cooperation, and contributions. The meeting concluded with a strong sense of solidarity and a renewed commitment to advancing Pacific-led solutions to the challenges and opportunities of migration today.



## Regional Workshop for National Contact Points and PIDC Regional Information Sharing Platform Focal Points



The Pacific Immigration Development Community (PIDC) in collaboration with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) hosted a 5 – days' workshop in Brisbane Australia from 28th April to 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2025.

Thirty-four Immigration officials from twenty PIDC Member countries were upskilled in data literacy, visualization, risk assessment and policy making. Participants also discussed cybercrimes in the Pacific and open source information gathering and analysing.

In addition, the training also featured discussions on the PIDC Reporting and Information Sharing Platform (RISP), the pioneering online tool developed by PIDC and IOM. RISP facilitates the sharing of regular migration data among Pacific countries, offering data visualization tools to better understand and monitor regional cross-border movements. Participants were informed of the process of data collection, analysing and sharing from their respective data. Ten countries have volunteered the sharing of their data for the RISP platform. All these countries were able to assess and discuss the progress so far with the RISP platform.

Source: <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/pacific-nations-enhance-migration-data-skills-address-regional-challenges>

## The 59<sup>th</sup> PIDC Board Meeting Held in Nuku'alofa, Tonga



The PIDC Board held its third scheduled meeting of the 2024/25 Financial Year in Nuku'alofa on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2025. This third meeting was committed to discussing the PIDC's performance in the last 11 months, endorsing the Workplan for 2025/26 as well as the Budget and finalise preparation for the 2025 RAM.

The Board meeting was chaired by the outgoing chair, Solomon Islands' Director of Immigration, Mr. Christopher Akosawa.

## Artificial Intelligence to Speed up Visa Processing



Papua New Guinea has recently incorporated an AI-driven system into its e-Visa platform that dramatically accelerates the processing of short-term, low-risk visa applications. Developed locally by the PNG Immigration and Citizenship Service Authority (PNGICSA), this 'MyICSA Analysis Engine' analyses documents for compliance, flags issue of concern. The system also provides real-time feedback. As a result, over 40,000 applications have been processed, with approval times dropping from weeks to under two minutes for more than 95% of cases.

This innovation not only frees immigration officers to concentrate on complex or flagged cases but also enhances border security and supports seamless travel planning. Plans are now underway to extend AI capabilities to work permits, passports and broader border control systems, positioning PNG as a digital transformation leader in the Pacific region.

*Source: [postcourier.com.pg](https://postcourier.com.pg)*

## UN Supports Vanuatu to Upgrade its Passenger Data Exchange Systems



On 30 April 2025 in Port Vila, Vanuatu became the third Pacific nation to complete the national consultation under the UN Countering Terrorist Travel (CT Travel) Program. Over a three-day workshop, more than 60 officials across immigration, customs, police, justice, transport and digital transformation sectors met to discuss the introduction of Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) systems. These were delivered alongside upgrades to the existing MIDAS system, bolstering national capabilities to identify and interdict any foreign terrorist or serious criminal.

Funding for this project were channeled through the Japan-funded IOM border-control project, facilitated by UNOCT and IOM. The consultation concluded with a formal Letter of Agreement, and the development of a roadmap for implementing integrated border management systems encompassing legal, operational, industry engagement, and technical assistance, including deployment of the UN's "goTravel" software. These developments amplified and augmented enriching security and smarter migration governance in Vanuatu.

*Source: <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/un-supports-vanuatu-upgrade-its-passenger-data-exchange-system>*

### More Than One Third of the People of Tuvalu Applied for Australia's Climate Visas



Over one-third of Tuvalu's population has applied for Australia's new climate visa, under the Falepili Union. The Falepili Union is a bilateral treaty enabling 280 Tuvaluans annually to migrate, live, work, and study in Australia. With 1,124 individual applications and a total of 4,052 people including family members, the high interest reflects growing concern over Tuvalu's future as rising sea levels threaten to submerge much of the low-lying nation.

Officials stress the need to manage migration carefully to prevent brain drain, while remittances from migrants are expected to support those remaining. With projections indicating that most of Tuvalu could be underwater by 2050, the visa offers a critical lifeline for its citizens.

Source: <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/cop/over-third-people-sinking-tuvalu-seek-australias-climate-visas-2025-06-29>

### PIDC Participated at the 9<sup>th</sup> Asian Network for Document Examination Annual Meeting in Malaysia

The 9<sup>th</sup> ANDEX Annual Meeting was held on May 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The ANDEX at this meeting agreed to include PIDC Members in the Regional Network for Document Experts (Asia & Pacific) and reasserted its commitment to the DESC data-sharing platform. Delegates shared technical insights including presentations from INTERPOL, EU partners, and ICE and visited Kuala Lumpur International Airport for a practical study tour. ANDEX Chair Ayub Bin Abd. Rahman emphasized turning ideas into action. This was PIDC's first attendance in person, while Kazakhstan and Mongolia were welcomed as new members.

The Head of PIDC Secretariat was invited to present on the PIDC regional information-sharing platform and intelligence network. Fiji Immigration and PNG Immigration also attended the ANDEX meeting in Kuala Lumpur.

Source: <https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/advancing-border-security-and-data-sharing-collaboration-across-asia-pacific-9th-andex-annual-meeting>



## Solomon Islands National Consultations for PIDC-IOM Research Completed



PIDC and IOM with funding from the IOM Development Fund have launched the joint Research initiative seeking to contribute to Regular Labour Pathways in Target Pacific Island Countries, through Enhanced Immigration and Border Management Practices.

The study examines how immigration and border policies affect safe, orderly labour migration across Pacific nations. National consultations began in Solomon Islands on May 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Adopting a case study approach, the research will look at the Solomon Islands from Melanesian group, Palau from Micronesia and Samoa from the Polynesian group.

The research is expected to be completed by December 2025.

## PIDC Welcomed Tonga Immigration Officers Under its Secondment Programme

PIDC recently welcomed two Immigration officers from Tonga Immigration. Senior Immigration Officers Lovina Ula and Peti Taulangovaka spent a week in Samoa as part of PIDC's secondment Program in preparation for the Regular Annual Meeting.

During their secondment in Apia, the Tongan officers worked closely with PIDC in preparing logistics for the meeting in Tonga. Further, the officers were able to observe and receive relevant information and understanding of the Secretariat's operations and the dynamics of its responsibilities to the PIDC members and regional partners.

Moreover, the officers spent time with Samoa Immigration discussing Border Management Systems (BMS) and best practices for intelligence and information sharing. Lovina and Peti, upon returning to Tonga, continued to collaborate with PIDC leading up to the 27th RAM in Nuku'alofa.



## New Zealand Easing Travel for Pacific Island Visitors



New Zealand is easing travel for Pacific Islanders by introducing more flexible visa options, as announced by Foreign Minister Winston Peters and Immigration Minister Erica Stanford. From July 2025, applicants from Pacific Islands Forum countries may qualify for a multi-entry visitor visa valid for 24 months, doubling the current allowance. Starting in November, Pacific passport holders traveling from Australia with valid Australian visas will be able to enter New Zealand for up to three months, using only an NZeTA, hence bypassing the need for a separate New Zealand visa. These changes aim to strengthen Pacific ties by reducing travel costs and processing times, while maintaining immigration integrity through a 12-month trial period for the visa waiver.

Source: <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/improving-immigration-settings-pacific-visitors>

## Fiji Strengthens Refugee Protection with Inaugural Refugee Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue

On 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025, Fiji's Ministry of Immigration (MOI), in collaboration with UNHCR's Multi-Country Office in Canberra, hosted the Inaugural Refugee-Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue in Suva, Fiji. The event highlighted the Fiji Government's exemplary asylum system and promoted collective regional action to improve the protection landscape in the Pacific, in line with international standards. The event brought together roughly 80 participants including asylum seekers, refugees, Fijian and Pacific government officials, the PIDC Deputy Head of Secretariat, senior representatives from France, Canada, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, civil society actors and many more. In delivering his keynote remarks, the Honourable Viliame Naupoto, Minister for Immigration, reaffirmed Fiji's enduring commitment to refugees and the values of inclusion, dignity and opportunity.

"We see our own families, our own hopes reflected in their eyes," said Minister Naupoto.

The Minister also highlighted recent advancements including the fact that Cabinet has now fully endorsed the establishment of the taskforce that will be responsible for advancing drafting of the first-time Fiji Refugee Policy. These developments are indicative of the fact that Fiji continues to lead the Pacific region in refugee protection through its advancing national asylum framework and thriving community support.

Another major milestone during the Dialogue was the signing of the Joint MOI-UNHCR Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that reflects the Fiji Government's commitment to progressively assume greater responsibility for RSD and ultimately, support consistent and procedurally fair procedures for refugees.

The success of the Dialogue underscored the critical importance of building strong and sustainable asylum systems across the Pacific, rooted in regional cooperation and shared responsibility. As countries in the region continue to face evolving challenges, fostering collaboration at both state and political levels is essential in ensuring consistent, rights-based responses. At the heart of these efforts lies the Pacific's enduring values of hospitality, compassion, and communal care. These cultural foundations not only enrich the region's response to displacement but also offer a powerful model of inclusion and solidarity for the global community



Source: UNHCR Canberra

## UNHCR Held a Workshop on Building State Asylum Systems in the Pacific during 2025 PIDC RAM

Held at the Tanoa Hotel in Tonga on the 16th of June 2025, participants were trained and updated by the UNHCR on asylum systems and refugee processes. The Workshop was well received by all participants and raised several important issues to ensure that the Pacific Island countries are well equipped and informed of international responsibilities to asylum seekers and refugees. These included the urgent need for more workshops and trainings of this nature on the responsibilities of states when an asylum-seeker arrives in its territory (whether the country is a signatory or non-signatory of the UN Convention of the Rights of Asylum seekers and refugees). Knowledge and information will enable countries to develop and/or strengthen their own asylum systems and processes to uphold international refugee and human rights law. The localization of the UNHCR's regional office to represent the Pacific region out of Canberra is an important decision in enabling the Pacific to effectively and efficiently implement its responsibilities when asylum and refugees arrive in one's country.



Source: UNHCR Canberra

Snapshots of RAM 2025:

