

PACIFIC ISLANDS TAX ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION

7th Annual PITAA Heads Meeting

27 – 29 October, 2010

Majuro, Marshall Islands

The Republic of the Marshall Islands Ministry of Finance Division of Customs Treasury, Revenue and Taxation hosted the 7th Annual PITAA Heads Meeting of the Pacific Islands Tax Administrators Association (PITAA) from 27th to 29th October 2010 in Majuro, Marshall Islands. Mr. Bruce Bilimon, Assistant Secretary of Revenue and Taxation chaired the meeting. The theme of the PITAA Heads Meeting was “Setting Regional Priorities”.

This PITAA Heads Meeting was attended by 13 of the 15 PITAA member countries. There were delegates from the Cook Islands, The Republic of the Fiji Islands, Kiribati, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Also, in attendance were Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre’s (PFTAC) Revenue Advisor and consultants, and observers from the New Zealand Inland Revenue (NZIR), Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) and Data Torque.

The Honourable Jack J. Ading, Minister of Finance formally opened the PITAA Heads Meeting. The Minister welcomed the delegates and observers to the 7th Annual PITAA Heads Meeting of PITAA. The Minister said that the global financial crisis has highlighted the need to improve tax collection methods and operations. He wished delegates well in their discussions.

After the adoption of the Agenda, the Meeting began.

PITAA Strategic Direction: 2009 – 2010

Ms Margaret Cotton, PFTAC Revenue Advisor, presented to the PITAA Heads Meeting the “PITAA Strategic Plan: 2009-2010”, which highlighted the implementation of the decisions taken at the 6th Annual Conference in Tonga in 2009.

It was noted that the Australian Tax Office (ATO) had declined to be a member of PITAA. PITAA resolved to contact the ATO directly when specific requests for assistance are identified.

PITAA noted that no response has been received to its request to NZIR. The representative from NZIR undertook to discuss the request with the Commissioner.

The format of this meeting reflected a tactical change from an annual conference of PITAA members to an annual meeting of PITAA Heads of Administration to discuss common regional issues and set regional priorities and determine how to proceed.

Regional IT Support Strategy

It was agreed that the paper presented be reviewed and further developed, with recommendations to be made at PITAA 2011 by a committee comprising of Fiji, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and the OCO.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee are to review the current report, make changes as considered necessary, and make recommendations to the PITAA Heads Meeting in 2011.

Training

The members agreed to the sub-regional training continuing for the Polynesian and Melanesian countries. The Training Committee will work with PFTAC's revenue advisor to develop this further.

The PNG Internal Revenue Commission Manager Development Programme was described, and is available for the development of middle-level managers and supervisors from PITAA member countries who can fund their attendance. This is a 2 week programme.

PITAA Funding Model

It was agreed that:

1. Self-funding of PITAA Heads meeting attendance is to continue for those that can afford it. PFTAC funds are to be used for the remaining countries attendance; and
2. The Funding Committee (Marshall Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu), with support from the OCO and PFTAC Revenue Advisor, will produce a paper to look at funding options for a Secretariat, including changes to the Memorandum of Understanding, and travel funding.

Model Tax Office

The PITAA Model Tax Office Framework was tabled. The PFTAC Revenue Advisor explained the model and its components. PITAA approved the continuation of PFTAC's work in this area, including adding information technology audit and revenue forecasting.

Open Forum

It was agreed that Timor Leste be invited to participate at PITAA Heads Meeting in 2011 as an observer.

Closing

The 2011 PITAA Heads Meeting will be hosted by Kiribati in August 2011.

The PITAA Heads accepted the offer of the Republic of Fiji Islands to host the 2012 PITAA Heads Meeting.

Delegates expressed their gratitude to the Marshall Islands for chairing the Meeting and to the staff of the Marshall Islands Division of Revenue and Taxation and Ms. Elenoa Bogiwalu (PFTAC) for the preparation and the organisation of this successful 7th Annual Meeting.

This communiqué will be posted under the PITAA section on the PFTAC website, www.pftac.org.

Mr. Bruce Bilimon
Chair
Majuro, 28 October, 2010

