



20th Annual PITAA Heads Meeting

MEETING COMMUNIQUE

THEME: Unleashing Innovation and Collaboration for a Sustainable Future

25th – 27th September 2023

Sir Mara Haus, Mt Hagen, Western Highlands, Papua New Guinea

1. The 20th PITAA Annual Heads Meeting was hosted by the Papua New Guinea Internal Revenue Commission (PNGIRC) in Mount Hagen, Western Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea from 25th to 27th September, 2023.
2. The Meeting was attended by delegates from thirteen (13) of the sixteen (16) PITAA member countries. The members present were (1) Cook Islands, (2) Federated States of Micronesia, (3) Fiji, (4) Kiribati, (5) Nauru, (6) Niue, (7) Palau, (8) Papua New Guinea, (9) Solomon Islands, (10) Vanuatu, (11) Timor-Leste, (12) Tonga and (13) Tuvalu. Apologies were received from Samoa, Tokelau, and Republic of Marshall Islands.
3. Regional and international partners, stakeholder and observer representatives in attendance were: Asian Development Bank (ADB), Australian Taxation Office (ATO), Bearing Point Caribbean, Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA), Data Tech International (DTI), Data Torque, Governful LLC, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Oceania Customs Organization (OCO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC).
4. The Chief Guest, the Minister for State Enterprise and Acting Prime Minister Hon. William Duma of Papua New Guinea delivered the keynote address and officially opened the meeting. In his remarks, Hon. William Duma highlighted the importance of tax administrators embracing strategies that collect taxes fairly while nurturing businesses that generate revenue. The outgoing Chair, Fiji, represented by proxy to Chief Executive Officer of Fiji Revenue and Customs Services, Ms. Kelerayani Dawai emphasized the need for Pacific Island Countries (PICs) to reform and enhance their tax systems, and the importance of incorporating innovative approaches and collaborating with local, regional and international partners. The meeting also had opening remarks from Mr. Sam Koim, OBE – Commissioner General of the PNGIRC who gave an overview of the meeting and introduced the PITAA members and partners.
5. PNG was endorsed to Chair the 2023 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting and the PITAA Executive Committee (PEC) of 2023 to 2024. Fiji was endorsed as Vice Chair.

The new PEC membership is as follows:

- Chair – Papua New Guinea
- Vice Chair and Tier 1 Representative – Fiji
- Tier 2 Representative - Tonga;
- Tier 3 Representative - Palau;

Tier 1 to 3 representatives will serve from 2023 – 2025.

6. Since the last PITAA Heads meeting in 2022, four (4) new Heads of Tax Administrations joined the PITAA family and they were from:
 - Fiji – Acting Capacity – Mr. Malakai Naiyaga
 - Nauru – Mr. Geoffrey Smith
 - Tonga – Mr. Michael Cokanasiga
 - Vanuatu – Mr. Harold Tarosa.

7. The PITAA Secretariat presented its reports for the year. Members:
 - a. noted the PITAA Executive Committee update;
 - b. noted the PITAA Secretariat Administration update.
 - c. endorsed the 2021 PITAA Annual Report and the Communications and Stakeholders Strategy;
 - d. noted the PITAA Secretariat Financials update, endorsed the PITAA 2024 Work Plan and Budget and endorsed the purchase ceiling and disposal process of the PITAA Secretariat official vehicle;
 - e. noted the PITAA Secretariat Capacity Building update;
 - f. noted the Working Group update and endorsed the recommendations of the working group;
 - g. noted the PITAA Secretariat Salary Band submission paper presented and reached two resolutions:
 - i. approved the salary band submission; and
 - ii. recommended the review and amendment of the PITAA Constitution to retain high-performing employees;
 - h. confirmed Vanuatu to host the 2024 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting, and Tonga to host the 2025 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting.

8. Members noted and acknowledged the continuous partnership and technical assistance of the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC) to the region and the PITAA Secretariat.

9. Members noted the PNGIRC presentation, its reforms initiatives, organizational changes and achievements to date.

10. Members acknowledged the Panel discussion on Law Reforms and Human Resources Challenges from PITAA members present and noted national efforts to improve tax administrations.

11. There were presentations relating to the theme of the meeting from representatives of Fiji Revenue and Customs Services (FRCS), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Organization for Economic Cooperation Revenue Statistics and Tax Inspectors Without Borders, the Australian Taxation Office and Asian Development Bank.

12. Members acknowledged new opportunities for collaboration and support offered by the OECD through the work of the TIWB, the Pacific Initiative (ADB/OECD/World Bank/ATO) and the ATO POSS Project.
13. Members appreciated the bilateral meetings which facilitated cooperation and strengthened networks between and amongst the member countries and partners.
14. Members noted the critical role of taxation in driving sustainable development in the Pacific and the need for innovative approaches and collaborative efforts to reform and enhance tax systems where possible and needed. Innovative strategies that promote sustainable taxation practices and contribute to social and economic goals nationally and regionally need to be a key focus. Members will continue to work towards modern revenue administrations and a sustainable future for the Pacific.
15. Members acknowledged and appreciated the host administration, PNGIRC and the host province Western Highlands, for hosting the 20th PITAA Annual Heads Meeting and noting that this is the first ever regional and international event to be held in Mount Hagen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Koim', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

Mr. Sam Koim OBE

Commissioner General PNGIRC

PITAA Chair