



21st PITAA Annual Heads Meeting

MEETING COMMUNIQUE

16th – 18th September 2024

Warwick Le Lagon Resort, Port Vila, Vanuatu

THEME: “Navigating Challenging Seas: Charting the Course of Modern Taxation in the Pacific”

1. The 21st PITAA Annual Heads Meeting was hosted by the Department of Customs and Inland Revenue, Port Vila, Vanuatu from 16th to 18th September 2024. High level workshop was held on the 19th of September 2024 for members only.
2. The Meeting was attended by delegates from fourteen (14) 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) Palau, (7) Papua New Guinea, (8) Solomon Islands, (9) Samoa, (10) Tonga, (11) Tuvalu, (12) Republic of Marshall Islands, and (13) Vanuatu. Niue (14) joined the meeting in Day 3. Apologies were received from Timor-Leste and Tokelau.
3. Regional and international partners, stakeholder and observer representatives in attendance were: (1) Asian Development Bank (ADB), (2) Australian Taxation Office (ATO), (3) Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (4) BLYCE, (5) Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA), (6) Data Tech International (DTI), (7) Data Torque, (8) Governful Insight, (9) International Monetary Fund (IMF), (10) Oceania Customs Organization (OCO), (11) Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (11) Pacific Island Investment Forum, (12) Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Center (PFTAC) and (13) World Bank Group.
4. The Chief Guest, the Minister for Finance and Economic Management Hon. Johnny Koanapo Rasou, of Vanuatu delivered the keynote address and officially opened the meeting. In his official remarks, Hon. Johnny Koanapo Rasou highlighted the importance of navigating the challenging seas of modern taxation in the Pacific. He emphasized on the need to explore innovative solutions tailored to the unique circumstances of our island countries, ensure that tax systems are agile, secure, forward looking, and capable of responding to the rapid pace of technological changes. In addition, he reiterated the importance of leadership in ensuring that tax administrations are led by visionaries. The Honorable Minister officially opened the 21st PITAA Annual Heads meeting. The outgoing Chairman, PNG Mr. Sam Koim, OBE – Commissioner General of the PNGIRC acknowledged the support rendered during his tenure for the past year and wished the incoming Chairman his best wishes. He

emphasized the importance of partnership in not only following the examples of advanced tax systems, but also creating individual success stories, tailored to unique Pacific context. In closing, he encouraged PITAA members to be wise navigators, making the adjustments to keep moving forward in this complex world of taxation.

5. Vanuatu was endorsed to be Chairman of the 2024 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting and the PITAA Executive Committee (PEC) of 2024 to 2025. PNG will be Vice Chairman for the same period.

The new PEC membership are as follows:

- Chairman – Vanuatu.
- Vice Chairman– Papua New Guinea.
- Tier 1 Representative – Fiji.
- Tier 2 Representative – Tonga.
- Tier 3 Representative – Palau.

6. Since the last PITAA Heads meeting in 2023, four (4) new Heads of Tax Administrations joined the PITAA family, and they are from:

- Cook Islands – Director, Ms. Rachel Goodwin
- Fiji – Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Udit Bhan Singh.
- Nauru – Deputy Secretary Revenue, Mr. Colin Hutchins.
- Vanuatu – Acting Director, Mr. Collins Gesa.

7. The PITAA Secretariat presented its reports for the year. Members:

- a. noted the PITAA Executive Committee update.
- b. endorsed in principle for PITAA to be the POSS Administrator, noting that additional exploratory work and risk analysis to PITAA will be provided to PEC and the next PITAA Heads Meeting for final endorsement.
- c. endorsed the 2025 PITAA Workplan.
- d. endorsed PEC approval to engage a temporary or attaché Finance Officer as recruitment is being finalized.
- e. noted the planned relocation for the PITAA Secretariat office in 2025 and acknowledged Fiji's continued commitment to provide the office space as in-kind contribution due to PITAA's financial limitation.
- f. noted the capacity building initiatives coordinated by the PITAA Secretariat.
- g. noted the PITAA Financial paper and endorsed the 2025 PITAA budget.
- h. endorsed Palau's interest to increase its membership subscription to AUD 5,000.00.
- i. endorsed PEC recommendation for PITAA to explore additional investment opportunities with detailed analysis for further consideration.
- j. noted the Kingdom of Tonga's confirmation of hosting the 2025 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting.
- k. endorsed Palau's interest to host the 2026 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting.
- l. agreed for the PITAA Secretariat to review the terms for Head of Secretariat fixed at two terms (one term consist of three years) while other positions within the PITAA Secretariat have open terms. PITAA to explore Head of Secretariat terms of employment similar to OCO and other related NGOs in Fiji and the region.

8. Members noted and acknowledged the continuous partnership and technical assistance of the PFTAC to the region and the PITAA Secretariat.
9. There were presentations relating to the three sub themes of the meeting from representatives of IMF, the PIIF, the ATO, BLYCE, Data Torque, Governful, OECD, and update from ADB on its work in tax hub, Pacific initiative, and the Digital Roadmap project.
10. Members acknowledged the participation of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Timor-Leste for the first time in the OECD Revenue Statistics publications for the 2024 edition. It encouraged remaining PITAA members to participate in the publication.
11. Members emphasized the need to develop a regional pool of expert database and this needs to be updated and posted on the new PITAA website.
12. Members launched the Pacific Women in Tax Network initiative. The 2024 Meeting Chairman, Mr. Collins Gesa together with representatives from Samoa – Mrs. Fonoti Lia Taefu, Tuvalu – Mrs. Sania Teisini, Cook Islands – Mrs. Tepu Kea, and Fiji – Mrs. Kelerayani Dawai, signed the launch document to signify commitment to the initiative.
13. Members noted and appreciated the bilateral meetings on Day 3 which facilitated discussions and networking to strengthen partnership and collaboration.
14. Members acknowledged the current challenging tax landscape and the need to continue modernizing, innovate, and enhance its capacity and capabilities. Furthermore, it recognized the role of partners to achieve the PITAA vision of “*Leading Pacific Tax Administrations towards good practices in a new digital world.*” and reiterated its strong support for PITAA Secretariat to continue engagement and collaboration efforts regionally and internationally.
15. Members acknowledged and appreciated the host administration’s effort in organizing and delivering a successful 2024 PITAA Annual Heads Meeting.



Mr. Collins Gesa
PITAA Chairman 2024

Acting Director – VANUATU Department of Customs and Inland Revenue

18th September 2024

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