

**17th Annual Conference of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO)
KOROR, REPUBLIC OF PALAU 22nd – 24th June, 2015**

“Coordinated Border Management – An inclusive approach for connecting stakeholders”

Communiqué

1. The 17th Annual Conference of the Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) was hosted by the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Palau in Koror from the 22nd – 24th of June, 2015 at the Ngarachemayong Cultural Centre;
2. Delegates of Member Administrations from Australia, Cook Islands, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Guam, New Zealand, Niue, Republic of Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Fiji, Republic of Kiribati, Republic of Nauru, Republic of Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu attended;
3. Apologies were received from American Samoa, French Polynesia, New Caledonia, Norfolk Island, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste and Wallis and Futuna;
4. Invited representatives from the European Union, Pacific Financial and Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC), Japan Customs, Office of the Chief Trade Adviser (OCTA), Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police (PICP), Pacific Immigration Directors Conference (PIDC), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Pacific Regional Immigration Identity Program (PRIIP), WCO Regional Office for Capacity Building for Asia Pacific (ROCBAP), United Nations Conference for Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Ministers and the Heads of the Government Ministries of the Government of Palau, and the Palau Private Sector also attended;
5. The Conference was opened by His Excellency Tommy E. Remengesau Jr., President of the Republic of Palau;
6. The Conference adopted the Annual Conference Agenda following incorporation of proposed amendments;
7. Ms. Arieta Dimuri delivered the statement of the outgoing Chair on behalf of Mr. Jitoko Tikolevu. The Members acknowledged the significant leadership and direction provided by the outgoing Chair;
8. Mr. Rhinehart Silas, Director of the Bureau of Revenue, Customs and Taxation, Ministry of Finance, Republic of Palau was confirmed as Chair of the 17th OCO Conference. Fiji was confirmed as the 1st Vice Chair with Tuvalu as the 2nd Vice Chair (subject to the approval of their National Government);
9. The Conference adopted the OCO Steering Committee Charter, and acknowledged the important role the Committee plays in providing oversight to the work of the organisation and particularly the Secretariat. The Charter will guide the Steering

Committee in implementing the various reforms including reforms to the Strategic direction the organisation is headed;

10. Following adoption of the Steering Committee Charter, Members elected the new OCO Steering Committee, which included Palau (Chair and representing Micronesia), Fiji (Vice Chair and representing Melanesia), New Zealand (Permanent Member), Australia (Permanent Member) and Samoa (representing Polynesia) with the 6th vacancy to be held by the incoming Vice Chair Tuvalu (subject to obtaining approval of National Government);
11. Members adopted the 3 year Strategic Plan 2015-2017 which sets out the strategic direction of the OCO and helps Member administrations align with customs international standards and best practice, leading to greater economic prosperity and increased border security;
12. Along with the OCO Strategic Plan, the Revised Organisational Structure and Capabilities Plan was also adopted. This Plan is intended to bring about significant improvements in people skills, leadership, governance, corporate policies and systems and stakeholder engagement;
13. The HoS made a comprehensive presentation on the transformational change of the OCO and highlighted challenges that were faced in bringing in the new organisational structure. The Conference expressed its sincere appreciation to the HoS and his team for their skill and dedication in accomplishing this difficult mission;
14. The Conference adopted the Charter and Constitution of the OCO that clearly defined the organization's purposes and powers, its membership, voting procedures, its governance and functions;
15. The Conference endorsed the recruitment process and appointment of the new Head of Secretariat, Mr. Seve Paeniu who will lead the OCO Secretariat for the next three years;
16. The Conference endorsed and adopted the Revised 2013 Annual Report and 2014 Annual Report of the OCO Secretariat, taking note of the various developments that took place in 2014;
17. The Conference endorsed and adopted the 2014 Audit Report which provided Members with a summary of findings of an independent external audit of the organisation's 2014 Financial Statements;
18. The Conference endorsed and adopted the 2015 work plan and the OCO 2015-2016 budget;
19. The Conference formally endorsed the Interim Narrative Report for 2013 and 2014 and the outcomes of the TFCC Audits (2012 & 2013);
20. The Head of Secretariat proposed changes to the OCO Administrative Policy 2010. It was agreed that Member Countries would send their comments on the document to the Secretariat within one month;

21. The Conference endorsed actions underway in regards to alleged misappropriation of TFCC funds and property of OCO by the former HoS;
22. The Conference noted the presentations made by the following:
 - a. Mr. Yoshihiro Kosaka of Japan Customs presented on Japan Customs Cooperation with OCO on Capacity Building;
 - b. Mr. Michael Odgers of Australia presented on the topic of Integrity and Customs Culture;
 - c. Ms. Cordula Plassmann of New Zealand presented on Combating Crime with Information;
 - d. Mr. Tevita Tupou of Fiji presented on the Transformation Journey Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority;
 - e. Mr. John Tarkong Jr. presented on the Coordinated Border Management – An inclusive approach for connecting stakeholders in Palau;
23. The Conference endorsed the membership of Cook Islands from its current Tier 3 to Tier 4;
24. Tuvalu indicated its willingness to host the 18th Conference in 2016 subject to the Tuvalu Government approval;
25. Guam indicated its willingness to host the 19th Conference in 2017 subject to the Guam Government approval;
26. The Members acknowledged the outstanding efforts of the outgoing Head of Secretariat Mr. Allwyn Netto during his time at the OCO.
27. The Conference was officially closed by the Honourable Elbuchel Sadang, Minister for Finance of the Republic of Palau.