

## 2<sup>ND</sup> PACIFIC LABOUR MOBILITY ANNUAL MEETING 2018

9-11 October, Honiara, Solomon Islands

### OUTCOMES DOCUMENT

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) was held at the Heritage Park Hotel in Honiara, Solomon Islands from 9-11 October 2018. The Officials responsible for Labour Mobility from the PLMAM member countries were in attendance. Also present at the meeting were representatives of employers from Australia and New Zealand. A full list of participants is attached as **Annex 1**.

2. In the welcome remarks, delivered by Hon. George Milner Tozaka reminded participants to engage in open and constructive discussions over the two days of meeting. The 2<sup>nd</sup> PLMAM was opened with a keynote address by Hon. Rick Houenipwela, Prime Minister of Solomon Islands. Copy of the Key Note Address is attached as **Annex 2**.

3. The main meeting sessions were Chaired and facilitated by H.E Mr Collin Beck, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade of Solomon Islands.

#### 4. OUTCOMES

Participating Delegates agreed to the following outcomes for PLMAM 2018;

- i. Recognized the importance of the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting as a key regional forum in which all stakeholders including the sending and receiving countries, workers, employers, and other relevant agencies discussed challenges and issues that are of great importance related to labour mobility in the Pacific.
- ii. Welcomed the increase in the number of Pacific Island workers in the labour mobility schemes as a win-win solution for workers and employers, noting the significant opportunities for increased employment and an increase in foreign exchange.

- iii. Pacific Island Countries called on Australia and New Zealand to continue to give preference to workers from the Pacific.
- iv. Agreed that issues pertaining to superannuation need to be further discussed to identify solutions to the challenges faced by concerned workers from the Pacific, particularly in relation to access, process, and cost to receive superannuation funds by employees under the labour mobility schemes.
- v. Agreed to address the issue of remittances as a matter of priority.
- vi. Emphasized the importance of employment contracts taking into account improved conditions and safety at work, including support and pastoral care for workers. It was also agreed that this is a shared responsibility between labour sending units, sending country governments, workers, employers, including the involvement of Pacific community of Diasporas.
- vii. Agreed on the need to share information on which sectors demand for labour is still needed, noting the information shared by Solomon Islands on a Solomon Islands initiative establishing a Block Chain platform to address youth issues as they relate to labour mobility.
- viii. Recalling the decision of the first PLMAM to include intra-regional labour mobility between Pacific Island countries as part of PLMAM in 2018, discussions on intra-regional labour mobility opportunities should continue with the view to introducing mechanisms that can bring these ideas to fruition. The PLMAM, the Pacific Islands Forum Framework for Regionalism and the Smaller Island States (SIS) Regional Strategy 2016-2020 could be used as platforms to launch this initiative.
- ix. Emphasized the need to increase the participation of women in labour mobility schemes, noting the important contributions women have to the economic growth and empowerment of women.
- x. Considered the establishment of a regional Secretariat for labour mobility initiatives with clear mandates and responsibilities.
- xi. Noted the offers by Solomon Islands, Tonga, Samoa, and Vanuatu to host the proposed Regional Labour Mobility Secretariat and the PACER Plus Implementation Unit.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

- Committed to using the PLMAM as a platform to engage on ways to develop and improve access to labour mobility opportunities, recognizing there exists the need to institutionalise the work it intends to serve.
- Agreed to discuss further at the PACER Plus signatories meeting the establishment of the regional labour mobility secretariat.
- Recognised that more engagement and awareness needs to be facilitated between Australia and New Zealand and Pacific Islands' Labour Mobility units to clarify and make more efficient processes for acquisition of visas by those participating in the labour mobility schemes.
- Build on the good work to make it possible for employers to make contributions and/or transfers to superannuation funds of the worker's choice, whether in the receiving or in the sending countries.
- Urge that work be done on developing contracts that would ensure predictability of conditions of employment and safety for workers participating in the labour mobility schemes.
- Where possible, establish more information sharing and connectivity between sending and receiving countries on skills gaps and excess skills to ensure focussed and identification of participants for the labour mobility schemes.

The meeting agreed that all the action points raised above be further addressed in a meeting to be convened before the next PLMAM meeting.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The delegates thanked Solomon Islands for hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> PLMAM in Honiara. The next PLMAM will be held in 2019.