



SIXTH (VIRTUAL) MEETING OF THE PACER PLUS LABOUR MOBILITY WORKING GROUP (PPLMWG.06)

WEDNESDAY, 11TH MAY, 2022, 1.00-3.00PM SAMOA TIME

**CHAIR: MRS LORRAINE KAUHENGA, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, MINISTRY OF TRADE AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

OUTCOMES SUMMARY

1. The sixth meeting of the PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group took place virtually on 11 May 2022 (WST) and was attended by the following Participants¹: Australia, Cook Islands, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Nauru was absent from the meeting.
2. The meeting was chaired by Mrs Lorraine Kauhenga, Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Tongan Ministry of Trade and Economic Development.

Opening formalities and Procedures

3. The Chair called the meeting to order and invited the representative of Tonga to open the meeting with a prayer.
4. The Agenda was adopted as presented. The meeting noted that the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (IU) would produce the summary of meeting discussions.

Agenda Item 1: Update on Action Items from PPLMWG.05 Meeting

5. The representative of the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (IU) provided an update to the PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group (LMWG) on the status of action items from the fifth LMWG meeting held on 19 January 2022 (PPLMWG.05). The meeting considered the Outcomes Document of the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) 2021 held in November 2021 in Apia, which the Group approved and circulated to Members on 18 February 2022. The LMWG agreed to Preferences for Signatories to the Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) and resourcing options for the IU as Secretariat to implement work on Labour Mobility

Action Items/Resolutions:

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

1. **Noted the approved Outcomes Summary of the Fifth Labour Mobility Working Group meeting held on 19 January 2022.**
2. **Noted the status of action items from the Fifth Labour Mobility Working Group meeting.**

Agenda Item 2: PACER Plus Implementation Unit Labour Mobility Secretariat Function

6. The IU presented paper PPLMWG.06/D.1 which proposed the design of the Labour Mobility Secretariat function of the IU for approval by the LMWG. The paper proposed key duties of the Secretariat, its role and a Labour Mobility work programme to be included as a component supported by the Development and Economic Cooperation Work Programme for PACER Plus.

¹ Participants of the Arrangement on Labour Mobility.

7. The LMWG supported all recommendations in the paper with some minor amendments.
8. Australia noted the Commonwealth Caretake convention currently in force which limited their capacity to comment on matters of policy during the meeting. Australia noted their support for the gap analysis undertaken of current labour mobility programmes in the Pacific. Australia further acknowledged that their focus has been operational during the COVID-19 period however going forward, there will be more of a focus on institutional strengthening and policy development. In this regard, Australia proposed a minor amendment to the paper to reflect the anticipation of the Australian Government to provide support going forward. This amendment was included in the final paper.
9. New Zealand advised that an evaluation of their Labour Mobility support (MBIE) is currently being undertaken so the IU Labour Mobility Work Programme is timely to ensure there is no overlap or duplication of work. New Zealand noted their interest in the inter-regional Labour Mobility space and the challenges faced by some Parties like the Cook Islands around labour and recruitment. An amendment to the paper was proposed to acknowledge the IU's role to support the uptake of labour mobility opportunities. The IU clarified that the activity was focused on existing and new labour mobility opportunities, noting that Australia has launched the PALM scheme which looks at sectors outside of horticulture sector and multiple visa opportunities to explore pathways for low and semi-skilled workers to Australia and other labour receiving countries. Language was maintained in the paper to reflect potential expansions under the Australian PALM and multiple visa programmes, as well as potential intra-pacific labour mobility pathways to Pacific labour receiving countries like Cook Islands and Niue.
10. Samoa noted with interest the work captured under the gap analysis and look forward to future work and support around Labour Mobility schemes. Samoa advised the IU to maintain consistency of the Labour Mobility Specialist title throughout the document.

Action Items/Resolutions:

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 3. Approved the proposed IU Labour Mobility Work Programme.**
- 4. Agreed that the niche role of the IU is to contribute to the creation of an enabling regional labour mobility environment through the provision of targeted strategic policy support.**
- 5. Agreed that the IU Labour Mobility Work Programme is an exhaustive framework for the implementation of the PACER Plus Arrangement on Labour Mobility and is to be included as a component of the IU Work Programme.**
- 6. Agreed that the annual activities of the LMS will be subject to PLMAM outcomes and individual signatory country priorities, and are to be provided in an Annual Labour Mobility Work Plan for the endorsement of the LMWG prior to the beginning of every financial year.**
- 7. Agreed that the Labour Mobility Specialist will lead the implementation of the Annual Labour Mobility Work Plan, under the supervision of the Head of the IU and the LMWG.**
- 8. Agreed that the Labour Mobility Specialist will submit 6-monthly and annual progress reports on LMS activities to the LMWG.**
- 9. Agreed to recommend the above decisions for approval of the Joint Committee**

10. Agreed to declassify this meeting paper for public release

Agenda Item 3: Resourcing of Labour Mobility Activities within the IU

i. PPLMWG.06/D.2 – IU Labour Mobility Resourcing Options paper

11. The IU presented paper PPLMWG.06/D.2 providing IU Labour Mobility Resourcing options for the Group's consideration and approval.
12. Australia, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu confirmed their support for Option 3 in the paper. New Zealand confirmed funding support for this year's PLMAM and in subsequent years in addition to the DEC Work Programme support.
13. Kiribati, Niue and Solomon Islands requested some time consider the Options and consult internally. The Chair instructed Members to submit their preferred option for funding to the IU by Friday, 13 May 2022.

Action Items/Resolutions:

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 11. Noted the proposed Resource Plan for labour mobility activities within the IU.**
- 12. Agreed to submit their preferred funding option to the IU and finalise decision on recommendations by Friday, 13 May 2022.**
- 13. Agreed to seek endorsement from the Budget Committee and Joint Committee for the preferred resourcing option of IU Labour Mobility Work Programme .**
- 14. Noted the resourcing of the IU Labour Mobility Work Programme provides part of the preferential arrangement for PACER Plus Signatory countries.**
- 15. Agreed to declassify the meeting paper for public release once endorsed by the Joint Committee.**

ii. PPLMWG.06/D.3 - Proposed Labour Mobility Activity Proposals for 2022-2023 Annual Plan

14. The IU presented paper PPLMWG.06/D.3 submitting labour mobility activity proposals for the FY2022-2023 Annual Plan for LMWG endorsement and submission to the Budget Committee and Joint Committee for approval. The activities focus on four areas of work as follows:
 1. Development/Review of national labour mobility policies/strategies
 2. Development of reintegration strategies to promote entrepreneurship and business investments
 3. Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM)
 4. Research activities on remittances data collection and superannuation
15. All Members supported recommendations in the paper and proposed activities.
16. Australia noted that work activities 1 and 2 resonate with what Australia is hoping to achieve with their labour mobility schemes and will work closely with the IU and bilateral countries on support. Australia is working with countries on Program Manager positions. In terms of the research work proposed, Australia advised that they fund research work with the World Bank and Australian National University and offered to provide data resources to the IU as required. World Bank has done work on remittances in the past and would be a useful partner to the IU. The IU would welcome the opportunity to engage with Program Managers. The IU will be meeting with the World Bank, ILO and ADB in the coming days.
17. New Zealand suggested to include non-budgetary activities in the Work Programme.

18. Niue advised that they would be interested in being part of development activities under Activity 1.
19. Samoa advised that their Government has indicated a possible reopening of borders in August/September 2022 and requested to be included in Activity 4 and work on skills development initiative and TVET pathways.
20. Solomon Islands advised that there has been discussions on a national study with their Central Bank and Labour Mobility Unit to be conducted on research activities on remittances data collection and superannuation. Solomon Islands would welcome support to complement this study.
21. The IU confirmed that the only non-budgetary activities of the work programme is the development of the concept note for MSME development approach and the stock take of LM pathways to Pacific Labour receiving countries such as Cook Islands and Niue. The IU will update the Work Programme to reflect these. The IU further noted the offer of Samoa and Solomon Islands to be included in the case studies.

Action Items/Resolutions:

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 16. Endorsed the Labour Mobility Activity Proposals for FY2022-2023.**
- 17. Noted the activity proposals are subject to the approval of the Budget Committee and Joint Committee.**
- 18. Agreed that this meeting paper be declassified for public release once approved by the Joint Committee.**

Agenda Item 4: Improving the effectiveness of PLMAM

22. The IU presented paper PPLMWG.06/D.4 which proposed a redesign of the procedures for the Pacific Labour Mobility Annual Meeting (PLMAM) for Members consideration and approval.
23. Australia recommended that consideration be given to the structure around responses provided during the PLMAM. The IU confirmed that it will be looking at how best to turn around information from the Pacific caucus to the dialogue during PLMAM. This could be provided a day before the Dialogue.
24. New Zealand advised that New Zealand RSE Industry has an employer conference scheduled for end of July 2022. In this regard, New Zealand will look at how to involve employers in the PLMAM. New Zealand advised that they would like to hear further views on the role of non-Signatories of the ALM in the dialogue. The IU noted that it would welcome feedback from Parties on how best to engage employers at the PLMAM. With reference to non-Signatories role at the PLMAM, the IU confirmed that the procedures propose they are invited as Observers. New Zealand noted its support for an intersessional meeting of Signatories mid-late August 2022.
25. Samoa and New Zealand sought clarity on whether the adopted procedures at the 2019 PLMAM was incorporated in the current PLMAM proposal. The IU confirmed this was not reflected in the procedures document, however it can be incorporated once the IU receives a copy of the adopted procedures document. Samoa further noted whether holding an intersessional in August would be too late if PLMAM is held in October and requested that the Group consider whether more time is needed to plan. New Zealand confirmed it will convey the procedures document to the IU for incorporation into the proposed procedures.
26. Solomon Islands supported the recommendations and holding the intersessional meeting in August.
27. Tonga sought clarity on participants of the Pacific Caucus and recommended that the procedures document be updated to reflect who will present the Outcomes Document to the Dialogue on Day 4 of the Agenda. Tonga suggested for the Chair of the Caucus or a Pacific Labour Sending Country to assume

this role. The IU confirmed that it would be recommend that the Labour Mobility Working Group consider a programme, agenda and budget for PLMAM three months prior which would include development of the Caucus agenda as well.

28. New Zealand further noted the PACER Plus Ministers meeting is scheduled for the end of July and for the Group to consider any agreed outcomes or proposals for PLMAM that may need to be lodged with Ministers at this time.
29. Given the comments provided by Members, the Chair instructed the IU to incorporate amendments to the paper and circulate to the Group by Friday, 13 May 2022.

Action Items/Resolutions

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 19. The IU was instructed to incorporate amendments provided by the Group to the Procedures document and circulate the revised meeting papers to the Labour Mobility Working Group by Friday, 13 May 2022.**

Agenda Item 5: LMWG Annual Chair Rotation Schedule

30. The IU presented paper PPLMWG.06/D.5 proposing an annual rotational schedule for the chairing of Labour Mobility Working Group's meetings as required under the terms of reference for the Group. There were no comments or objections to the recommendations in the paper and were adopted by the Group.

Action Items/Resolutions

The Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 20. Noted the requirement for the Labour Mobility Working Group to determine a rotational schedule for the chairing of the Group.**
- 21. Approved the annual rotational schedule proposed by the IU for chairing of Labour Mobility Working Group meetings**
- 22. Agreed to update the Joint Committee on the approved rotational schedule for noting at its next meeting.**
- 23. Agreed that this meeting paper be declassified for public release.**

Agenda Item 6: Any Other Matters

31. The Chair opened the floor to Members for any other matters they may wish to raise.
32. Samoa sought clarity on whether the preferential arrangement for FIC Signatories was to be discussed at this meeting or in another intersessional meeting. The IU confirmed that this was covered as part of the resourcing paper under Agenda Item 2, and it was proposed for the resourcing in the paper to be part of the preferential arrangement for FIC Signatory countries further explored at the PLMAM.

Agenda Item 7: Clearance of Outcomes Summary, Closing Prayer (Closing Session)

33. The Chair noted that the IU will prepare an Outcomes Summary of the meeting and to circulate the amended papers by Friday, 13 May 2022.
34. The Chair thanked Labour Mobility Working Group members for their active participation in the meeting and conveyed appreciation to the IU for the support provided to the Group.

35. The representative of Tonga closed the meeting with a prayer.

*PACER Plus Implementation Unit, Apia, Samoa
16 June 2022*