



PACER Plus

Labour Mobility Working Group

Eighth Meeting of the PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group (PPLMWG.08)

Thursday, 23 March 2023, 1:00-3:10PM (Samoan Local Time)

CHAIR: Ms Jenny Barile, Deputy Director of External Trade, Solomon Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs and External Trade

OUTCOMES SUMMARY

1. The eighth meeting of the PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group (PPLMWG.08) was held virtually on Thursday, 23 March 2023 (Samoan local time) and was attended by the following Arrangement on Labour Mobility Participants: Australia, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu. Apologies were received by Cook Islands, Vanuatu and Observer State Nauru.
2. The Chair called the meeting the order and welcomed PACER Plus Labour Mobility Group (PPLMWG) members. The meeting was opened with the prayer by Mr Alipate Tavo, Trade and Investment Adviser of the PACER Plus Implementation Unit (PPIU).
3. The meeting agenda was adopted as presented. The meeting further noted that the PPIU would produce a summary of meeting discussions to be circulated to the Committee for adoption. A group photo was then facilitated online by the PPIU.

Agenda Item 1: Update on FY2022-2023 Labour Mobility Annual Plan

4. The representative of the PPIU presented the meeting paper providing a six-monthly progress update on the implementation of the current FY2022-2023 Labour Mobility Annual Plan. It was noted that the PPLMWG endorsed the programme of activities at its sixth meeting in May 2022 and subsequently approved by the Joint Committee in June 2022 under the FY22-23 Annual Plan.
5. The Chair invited Australia and New Zealand to provide an update on their respective labour mobility schemes implemented in PPLMWG member countries.
6. Australia advised that the PALM Scheme is managed by both the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); the former is currently working on an update to the Employer Deed and Guidelines for the PALM Scheme and some policy changes. They plan to release a copy of the revised draft of the Deed in early

April. An invitation has been sent out to countries to participate in a discussion in Brisbane towards the end of April about the changes. DFAT is currently seeking to extend its existing support for the PALM for another 6-12 months from June 30, 2023. New phase of support will be tendered out from June 2024. Australia is also looking at addressing concerns raised at PLMAM 2022 including superannuation, and a skills development strategy to respond to the brain drain issue and skills deficit. Australia acknowledged the work PPIU is doing on development of individual country strategies and reintegration and welcome the opportunity to work with countries, the PPIU and regional actors in the Labour Mobility space.

7. New Zealand provided an update on the RSE Policy Review advising that a Policy Options Paper has been circulated and will be discussed in Auckland the following week. The review is currently Options only and encourage genuine feedback from stakeholders on the options. Further notes on the Review are provided hereunder:

Review is made up of three parts:

1. Administrative system (cap-setting process, allocation, labour-market test, compliance mechanism, flexibility – visa-setting scheme).
2. RSE Worker wellbeing (quality of accommodation, level of deductions, healthcare, overall benefits – wages, training opportunities, rights and risks of exploitation, pastoral care).
3. Outcomes for the Pacific – ensure strategic view across policy review to identify opportunities to enhance positive impacts of the scheme and mitigate any negative impacts on pacific labour markets.

Overall objectives of the Review:

1. Ensure a sustainable long-term administrative system that works effectively for the government and for employers.
2. Scheme that respects RSE workers and upholds their rights and dignity through approved policies and guidelines backed by consistent and ethical employment practice.

The consultation process is supported by MFAT – labourmobility@mfat.govt.nz for which countries can provide feedback.

8. The PPLMWG Members acknowledged support by Australia and New Zealand under their respective schemes.
9. Samoa noted that there is a hold on a key Labour Mobility activity in Samoa however information is classified at this time.
10. Tonga advised that its Supply Management Strategy has been completed and ready for submission to Cabinet the next day. They further advised that a study on remittances is being done and there will be participation at the Auckland meeting from Tonga. Tonga conveyed its support for the recommendations provided in the paper.
11. Solomon Islands advised the meeting that the reintegration strategy was in progress with national consultations to be completed by May/June 2023.

Action Items/Resolutions:

12. The PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group:
 1. **Noted the Six-month Progress Update on the FY2022-2023 Labour Mobility Annual Plan.**
 2. **Agreed to declassify this meeting paper and Annexes for public release.**

Agenda Item 2: ALM Review and ALM Advisory Group

13. The representative of the PPIU presented the paper outlining the proposed plan for the review of the Arrangement on Labour Mobility (ALM) as mandated in the Arrangement and proposed Terms of Reference for the ALM Advisory Group who would provide strategic leadership to the monitoring and evaluation of the ALM.
14. Kiribati and Solomon Islands sought clarity on the composition of the Advisory Group and breakdown on 30K costing. The PPIU advised that the regional organisations identified to be part of the panel are currently key stakeholders delivering labour mobility initiatives in the region and were invited to PLMAM 2022. The PPIU welcomes feedback from Members on the composition of the panel. The funding is to cover one in-person meeting to be held once a year. The PPIU further noted that the panel is to support the independent review of the Arrangement; a process to be done independent from the membership.
15. Niue confirmed its support for all recommendations in the paper and for the review ensuring it is in line with the General Review of the PACER Plus taking into account the work done in the last two years and improve the way forward. Niue noted many suggestions for changes to the Labour Mobility schemes at the last PLMAM and wanted to note for the meeting that too many changes could be a disruption for workers.
16. Australia welcomed the technical panel being independent and inclusion of the wide range of regional organisations in the process to avoid duplication of work in the labour mobility space. Australia asked about the interplay between the broader monitoring and evaluation work on the Agreement and the work being done by the panel.
17. New Zealand sought clarity on whether the work of the advisory group would be enduring (ALM implementation) and if there was budget to continue this work. New Zealand further asked about the timing of the meeting and how it would work alongside the broader PACER Plus review. New Zealand confirmed their offer of support on the MELA framework when required.
18. The PPIU advised that the results framework was approved at the PLMAM 2022 but the actual monitoring and evaluation framework was to be subject to the wider MELA framework currently being developed with the assistance of the DFAT Trade Panel and is yet to be finalised. This framework will then outline the labour mobility short-, medium- and long-term outcomes and key indicators to measure performance of the outcomes. The role of the advisory group will be to support the annual monitoring and evaluation process which will be reported to PLMAM each year under the standing item agreed to be included on the agenda of the PLMAM. The report of the review will be submitted to the PLMAM 2023 held in Vanuatu this year for adoption, meaning the ALM review will be completed prior to this and will be run separately from the General Review of the PACER Plus. The PPIU confirmed that the Advisory Group would not have a role under the MELA Framework per se but rather support the PPIU and PPLMWG to implement MELA goals through the work of the Short-Term Advisors and oversight of the whole review process. Once the Advisory Group is convened, the PPIU will be able to determine the budget and will be submitted to the PPLMWG out of session for approval.

Action Items/Resolutions:

19. The PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group:

1. **Approved the Terms of Reference for the ALM Advisory Group.**
2. **Approved the proposed plan for the independent review of the ALM.**
3. **Approved to hold an LMWG intersessional meeting in June to consider the TOR and procedures for the independent ALM review.**
4. **Agreed for the ALM Review Report to be circulated intersessionally to the LWMG in October.**
5. **Approved to have this meeting paper and Annexes declassified for public release.**

Agenda Item 3: Regional Technical Workshop on Sustainable Reintegration

20. The PPIU presented the paper outlining the concept note for the regional technical workshop on sustainable reintegration to develop the framework for Pacific labour mobility economic reintegration, as approved at the PLMAM 2022.
21. The PPIU further noted that the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), the World Bank and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are willing to support the funding and facilitation of the workshop. Once the programme for the workshop is developed the PPIU will circulate to the PPLMWG for consideration at its next meeting scheduled for June.
22. The meeting considered the Concept Note and all Members conveyed their support for the recommendations in the paper.

Action Items/Resolutions:

23. The PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group:

1. **Approved to hold the regional technical workshop on sustainable reintegration in the margins of the 2023 PLMAM in Port Vila, Vanuatu.**
2. **Approved the Concept Note for the regional technical workshop on sustainable reintegration.**
3. **Approved for the PPIU to continue to engage with relevant stakeholders to plan and facilitate the regional technical workshop on sustainable reintegration.**
4. **Approved for the regional technical workshop on sustainable reintegration to be integrated into the PLMAM 2023 programme**
5. **Approved for the meeting paper and Annexes to be declassified for public release.**

Agenda Item 4: Labour Mobility Annual Plan for FY2023-2024

24. The PPIU presented the paper outlining the proposed Labour Mobility Activity Plan for FY23-24 which consisted of 13 proposed activities for Members consideration and endorsement.
25. Australia and New Zealand acknowledged it was an ambitious and full work programme which captured issues raised at PLMAM 2022 and are pleased to be able to continue to support the work outlined in the Plan.

26. Australia noted that the budget is not included with the work plan and would be helpful to have to confirm the budget is in line with what is available for implementation of activities. The PPIU advised that the budget will be approved by the Budget Committee given their oversight on the DEC Work Programme funding. Australia will be developing a Skills development strategy to sit alongside PALM and thus timing of the last activity will work well.
27. New Zealand noted that the work programme has significant resonance between a number of the works streams with the work that New Zealand is doing on their RSE Policy Review and development support redesign. In time, New Zealand will be interested to gain a better understanding of what is needed from New Zealand under activity 13 mapping worker education needs. Will the legal working group be funded in an enduring sense.
28. Samoa asked whether new proposals could be accepted to which the PPIU confirmed that the submission of proposals period has closed. Samoa requested the PPIU to submit the TORs and composition of the legal working group to the membership.
29. On the legal working group, the budget is an estimate for the capacity building programme. Their work will not be ongoing as it will be to build capacity of participant countries to lead and conduct their own reviews.
30. The meeting supported the recommendations proposed in the paper.

Action Items/Resolutions:

The PACER Plus Labour Mobility Working Group:

- 1 Approved the proposed Labour Mobility Activity Plan for FY2023/24**
- 2 Approved the proposed timeline for implementation of activities under FY23-24 period, in consultation with the PPIU.**
- 3 Agreed to submit the approved activity proposals to the Budget Committee and Joint Committee under the draft FY23-24 Annual Plan.**
- 4 Agreed to declassify this meeting paper for public release once the Joint Committee approves the FY2023-2024 Annual Plan.**

Any Other Matters

31. The Chair noted that there may be a meeting of the PPLMWG to be held in June 2023 to discuss the PLMAM 2023 held in Vanuatu.
32. The Chair asked the Secretariat to display the approved recommendations on the screen and confirmed decisions made by the Committee. The approved recommendations would be reflected in the Outcomes Summary of the meeting to be prepared by the PPIU.
33. The Chair further advised that the agreed recommendations would be compiled together with other subsidiary body approved activities for submission to the Budget Committee to consider at its next meeting on 4 April 2023.
34. The meeting was closed with a prayer by Ms Ida-Tifitifi Fuimaono of the PPIU.