

27/11/17

Cook Islands Speech – Kairangi Samuela

Kia orana and warm Pacific greetings to you all.

The Cook Islands is honoured and privileged to be considered as a member of the IOM at this Council meeting.

Migration is an important issue for the Cook Islands and cuts across a number of our National Sustainable Development Goals and security issues relating to border management and control, which include:

- Expand economic opportunities, improve economic resilience and productive employment to ensure decent work for all;
- ensure a sustainable population promoting development by Cook Islands for Cook Islanders”; and
- “promote a peaceful and just society for all and build effective, accountable institutions at all levels”.

The objectives of our Immigration Policies are to:

- **Identify and effectively manage** the movement of persons who will make a positive contribution to the economic development of the Cook Islands;
- **Establish and promote** the renewed legislative mandate to better strengthen & protect the territorial borders of the Cook Islands by facilitating the movement of persons into, residence in and departure from the Cook Islands;
- **Establish and maintain** beneficial network relations both domestically and internationally that provide the opportunity and potential for drawing support for effectively implementing government legislation and policies.

We are a small nation with a population of 16,000 people living on 15 small islands and atolls across 2.2million sq miles of Ocean. Whilst our isolation protects us to some extent from external pressures it also exacerbates our vulnerability and ability to control all border entries especially by sea.

In addition, the emergence of border security risks associated with organised, transitional crime including terrorism are also new threats to border systems as international connections become increasingly more sophisticated.

In this regard we welcome the opportunity to work with IOM in our areas of interest including:

- Cooperation with other Member States to design targeted programmes and policies that facilitate safe labour migration for unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled migrants
- recognition of the increasing demand for migrant workers in the Cook Islands and the provision of access to key resources on maximizing such programmes while protecting the rights of citizens and,
- providing technical advice in developing or revising migration legislation and other related legal instruments
- development of effective migration information systems to ensure we deliver accurate data for policy decision making across Government machineries

Access to technical assistance and resources for improving our migration policies enhances our ability to become an effective player in our mobile world and recognising that despite our geographic distance, smallness in size and population we are an arrival and departure point for members of the global community.

I thank you for your attention and look forward to working with IOM into the future.