

Foreign Affairs & Trade Bulletin



Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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GOVERNMENT OF SAMOA

PACPs Convene in Apia to Revamp Strategy for EPA Negotiations

Trade Ministers of the Pacific African-Caribbean-Pacific states (PACP) recently met in Apia to deliberate on-going EPA negotiations between the PACPS and the European Commission (EC).

The meeting was convened at Aggie Grey's hotel in Apia, Samoa from 3rd-4th February 2011. Present at the meeting were representatives from the 14 PACPs as well as the PACP Ambassadors to the European Union (EU) from Brussels and United Kingdom, High Commissioners, and representatives from the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO), Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS).

The objective of the meeting that was convened by the SPC was to consider recent developments in the PACP-EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiations, and other regional trade-related issues with a view to developing a way forward to enable the conclusion of the negotiations by the end of 2011.

Negotiations for EPA between the EC and the Pacific have been on-going since 2004 and were expected to conclude by the end of 2007. However, due to disagreement on a number of issues, now referred to as **contentious issues**, the anticipated deadline of 2007 was not achievable. Furthermore, because of a significant threat to their trade with the EU, Fiji and PNG were compelled to initial an interim Economic Part-

nership Agreement with the EC contrary to a regional position to negotiate as a group, so as to secure preferential access to the EU market for their products. Samoa is currently eligible for preferential market access to the EU through the Everything But Arms (EBA) preferential arrangement granted to Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

Under the EPA, Samoa hopes to improve her trade and co-operative arrangements with the EU through negotiation of a strategic development focused EPA. Samoa, amongst fellow PACPs, is encouraged by statements from

markets indefinitely. Secondly, LDCs will get more from the EU than they do now under EBA. Not just better access to EU markets – for example, more generous rules on the origin of products. But also a host of measures to help their economies grow – by becoming more competitive and less reliant on a narrow range of exports, and by trading more with their neighbours. Thirdly, the EPA process is unique. It will produce the first trade deals with developing countries which take into account explicitly their development needs. They include provisions on sustainable development, regional integration, development cooperation, and aid for trade. With an EPA, ACP countries have to cut duties on imports from the EU.



Prior to this Pacific Trade Ministers Meeting (PACTMM) in Apia, the Pacific Senior Trade Officials Meeting (PACTOM) convened from the 31st February-2nd March 2011. The latter

high level representatives of the EC in facilitating further trade development for LDCs through EPAs. For instance, in 2009, the Deputy Director-General for Trade at the European Commission, João Aguiar Machado stated; *'The EU's current regime for trade with LDCs is known as 'Everything But Arms' (EBA). It offers 100 per cent duty- and quota-free access to EU markets to LDCs – but only while these countries officially qualify as LDCs. Once they grow, and are no longer LDCs, they lose this special treatment. But if an LDC signs an EPA, it'll enjoy unlimited access to EU*

was chaired by Samoa's Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aiono Mose Pouvi Sua. During the opening session, Mr John Stanley, Attache and Head of the Technical Office of the Delegation of the EU for the Pacific in Samoa, reminded the participants of the importance of progressing the PACP-EU EPA negotiations highlighting the progress made by the interim EPA which was approved by the EU Parliament on 19 January 2011. He reiterated that the EC remained fully committed to conclude negotiations of a compre-

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hensive trade and development EPA with the Pacific region as a whole. He acknowledged the challenges faced by the region and stated that, should the comprehensive EPA prove too ambitious for the Pacific region as a whole, the EC would be open to considering other formats such as the interim EPA. He said that the interim EPA provided an excellent starting point for deepening trade and development relations between the EU and the Pacific region, although it was never meant to be the final solution.

It was acknowledged in the Trade Officials Meeting that

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EPA negotiations had stalled due mainly to unresolved contentious issues between the EU and PACPs. Examples of contentious issues cited were the EC proposals on provisions on export taxes; most favored nation; substantially-all-trade; non-execution, which are likely to have economic and political consequences for PACP economies.

While noting the importance of fisheries products to the Pacific and the generous concessions granted so far by the EU (improved Rules of Origin for processed fish under 1604 and 1605), it was felt that

Small Island States and LDCs stood to benefit more if the rules were to be expanded to cover fresh, frozen fish under HS 0304 and 0305.

It was agreed further that the development chapter of the EPA Agreement needed to be drafted in a manner that demonstrated a clear distinction of funding allocation for development of trade in the Pacific and for the implementation of obligations that will accrue out of conclusion of an EPA. A strategy paper to guide EPA negotiations was adopted by the Ministers at the meeting. It

is anticipated that the EPA negotiations will conclude at the end of 2011.

Samoa continues to negotiate with the EC for an EPA and is one of seven countries in the advanced stages of presenting a draft market access offer to the EC which is the negotiating arm of the EU.

Quantifying the Fiscal Implications of a Reciprocal Free Trade Arrangement with Australia and New Zealand

From Samoa's national consultations on PACER and PACER Plus, members of the private sector, government ministries and Civil Society have expressed concerns on the possible implications of a PACER Plus arrangement between Samoa and Australia and New Zealand. Previous regional reports have suggested that Samoa may lose up to 14% of its Government Revenue from such an arrangement. In order to specify and address these concerns, the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) agreed to fund a National Study on the Fiscal Implications to Samoa.

In early 2011, Mr. Sacha Silva and Mr. Andreas Lendle were awarded the contract by ComSec. Both consultants have previously worked with the Samoa tariff and

trade data and have trained Forum Island Countries in the use of technical tools for trade negotiations under the EU-Economic Partnership Agreement.

The principal outcome of the Study is to allow trade stakeholders in Samoa (public sector, private sector and civil society) to assess the potential economic impact of a "PACER Plus" trade agreement in goods with Australia and New Zealand, particularly with respect to government revenue, balance of payments and government service provisions. In addition, it aims to provide Samoa policymakers with guidance on measures to mitigate potentially negative impacts from the agreement on the Samoan economy. Further to this, the Study will provide concrete recommendations to Sa-

moan negotiators on product liberalization/exclusion positions that are consistent with Samoa's development objectives

Throughout the final week of February, the consultant was in-country to liaise with national stakeholders including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Revenue, Ministry for Women, Community and Social Development, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Central Bank of Samoa, Samoa Chamber of Commerce, Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters and the Samoa Farmers Association. The report is expected to be finalized by the end of April 2011.

Businesses and Government Officials attend a National Workshop on Rules of Origin in Trade Agreements

Mr. Viliame Rova and Ms. Semester Faasii of the Oceania Customs Organization (OCO) were the trainers at a National Rules of Origin (ROO) Workshop from the 21st to 23rd February. The trainees were a mix of representatives from the Samoa Association of Manufacturers and Exporters, Samoa Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Samoa Umbrella for Non-Government Organizations and Trade & Customs officials.

ROOs are defined as specific provisions, developed from principles established by national legislation or international agreements ("origin criteria") applied by a country to determine the origin of goods. Understanding ROOs is important when exporting or importing under trade agreements such as the PICTA, in order to benefit from preferential duty rates. For instance, the ROO for PICTA is a *value-added criterion*



Participants from Government, NGOs and the Private Sector at the ROOs workshop held at SBEC, Sanalele Complex

whereby:

- ◆ The good must be wholly produced or obtained in Samoa; or
- ◆ The final process of manufacture must take place in Samoa, and total expenditure on *Originating* materials, labour and overhead costs, is **not less than 40%** of the total expenditure.

The objective of the training was to familiarize and build capacity and awareness in ROOs for key stakeholders in order to strengthen their understanding of markets that Samoa gains access to via trade agreements.

The guest speaker at the workshop was Dr. Chris Noonan, the Chief Trade Adviser for the Forum Island Countries assisting FICS including Samoa in their preparations for the PACER Plus agreement.

3rd Forum Trade Officials Meeting on PACER Plus, Korrer, Palau

Trade Officials from around the region met in Korrer, Palau to discuss issues pertaining to PACER Plus in mid March this year. Some of the issues discussed were based on the guiding mandate given by Leaders for the PACER Plus negotiations. These issues included Rules of Origin, Trade Facilitation (Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures [SPS] and Technical Barriers to Trade [TBT]), Labour Mobility beyond Mode 4 and Shipping, Aviation, Telecommunications and Water Infrastructure. Representatives from all the Forum Countries were present except for Fiji and Vanuatu. The Office of the Chief Trade Advisor (OCTA) and the Oceania Customs Organization were also at the meeting.

One of the key concerns at the Meeting was the legal establishment of OCTA. At the time of the Meeting, the OCTA was operating on an interim arrangement that expired on 28th March 2011. An application for the incorporation of OCTA was submitted to the Vanuatu Financial Services Com-

mission on 7th March. The Meeting discussed whether an extension of the interim arrangement would be acceptable to donors and Forum Island Countries (FICs), or to recognize OCTA Inc. to continue the functions of OCTA. FICs reiterated their support for the latter as they believe that the independence of OCTA was pivotal in ensuring FICs national consultations and negotiations on PACER Plus would not be undermined. Furthermore, FICs indicated that the independence of OCTA would also enable it to source funding from additional donors to ensure its sustainability.

Another area of interest that was discussed was Customs Procedures. It was underscored by a number of FICs that there was a need for PACER Plus to consider the resource constraints of the national administrations. The PACER Regional Trade Facilitation Programme (RTFP) that expired in 2010 was aimed at addressing trade facilitation needs of Forum member Countries. Under this

Scheme, Samoa received assistance from Oceania Customs Organization to modernize and iron out anomalies in its HS Code. Whilst the PACER RTFP was successful in identifying the gaps in FICs customs administration, the FICs are requesting a more consistent support mechanism to be in place rather than ad-hoc assistance.

SPS and TBT issues were also brought to the forefront of discussions. Whilst requesting Australia and New Zealand to remove strict SPS measures may not be a practical proposal, another avenue that FICs are considering is the provision of assistance to domestic producers to enable them to meet these requirements. This would be beneficial to many of the FICs as enabling them to be compliant with Australia and New Zealand standards would also make their produce exportable to other developed countries export markets.

The majority of the FICs view binding La-

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WTO Capacity Building for Trade in Services

The World Trade Organization (WTO) in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore organized and funded an advanced regional workshop held in Singapore on Trade in Services for Trade and Commerce officials from Asia and the Pacific from 8th-11th February 2011. The objective of the workshop was to increase the capacity of officials on trade in services within the WTO.

There was an in-depth discussion of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and its relevance to domestic regulations, scheduling of trade in services commitments, and trade in services under regional trade arrangements.

The GATS is the first and only multilateral

agreement on trade in services. Its role has become increasingly important with the continued rise of services trade and the need for internationally recognized rules. Due to technological progress and regulatory reform, services has undergone a shift from being a largely government controlled sector to a sector driven by businesses in the private sector.

Participants were also engaged in a simulation exercise of a fictional WTO dispute whereby they were given the opportunity to argue either as the (i) complainant country, (ii) the defendant country or (iii) the panel that decided the outcome of the dispute. The purpose of the exercise was for the officials to experience how trade negotiations and disputes were conducted

within the WTO.

Some practical exercises were carried out on how to schedule (i.e., offer) a commitment in services (for e.g. legal services) whilst also outlining the domestic regulations and requirements that foreigners have to meet in order to enter and work or establish a firm in a country.

The advanced workshop was extremely important for officials whose work was directly related to Samoa's accession to the WTO. The Government of Samoa was represented by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour.

New Zealand-Commonwealth Scholarships: 2011 Awards for 2012

Interested applicants for the New Zealand Commonwealth Scholarships tenable in New Zealand commencing in 2012, may uplift application forms from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

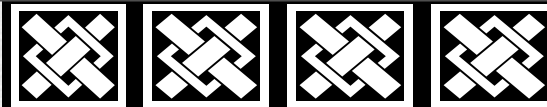
Programme of study should be at the Masters or PhD level, in a field with relevance

to Human Resource Development priority areas. Being nominated for a scholarship does not guarantee a scholarship.

In addition, candidates must secure an offer of placement from their preferred New Zealand University before applying for this scholarship.

Please submit applications and required attachments directly to the Scholarships, Training & Bilaterals Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Level 3, Government Building, by **23rd May 2011**.

Please be advised that late or incomplete applications will not be considered.



Senior Government Officials Participates in United Nations-Related Meetings

The United Nations Headquarters, New York was the venue of three high level meetings attended by senior government officials.

First Preparatory Committee meeting for the 4th UN Conference on Least Developed Countries, 10-14 January 2011

Ms Noumea Simi (*Assistant CEO, Aid Coordination and LDC Focal Point, Ministry of Finance*) and Leiataua Henry Ah Ching (*Assistant CEO, Economic Policy and Planning, Ministry of Finance*) participated in the first of two preparatory committee meetings in the lead up to the Fourth UN Conference on Least Developed Countries to be held in Istanbul, Turkey from 9-13 May 2011. The second preparatory meeting will be held in early April 2011.

Ninth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (24 January – 4 February 2011)

Taupāū Maturō Paniani, (*Assistant CEO, Forestry Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment*) represented Samoa at the above meeting to consider, inter alia, the progress made in the implementation of the Non-legally Binding Instrument on all types of forests, a multi-stakeholder dialogue, enhanced cooperation, means of implementation and regional cooperation including the launching of the International Year of Forests 2011. The meeting's theme was "Forests for people, livelihoods and poverty eradication"

42nd session of the UN Statistical Commission (22-25 February 2011)

Sefuiva Reupena Muagututia, (*Government Statistician, Samoa Bureau of Statistics*) as a current member of the Bureau of the ESCAP Committee on Statistics participated at the above-titled meeting of the UN Statistical Commission which considered amongst other items, the UNDP's "Human Development Report". The HDR 2010 conspicuously omitted some countries (*about 23 UN member states, 7 from the Pacific region including Samoa*) on the grounds of a lack of data, yet national statistical officers were not informed prior to the decision to omit them. In Samoa's case, data was readily available but was never asked of nor the Bureau consulted.

In the margins of the Commission's meeting, Sefuiva Reupena and Dr Gerald Haberkorn, Manager for Development Program, SPC's kindly gave a briefing to the Pacific Small Island developing states with missions in New York on work in the field of statistics regionally and on issues discussed by the UN Statistical Commission. The briefing was timely and was well received given the repeated concern about the absence of credible and internationally comparable data for the Pacific region.

Samoa and Barbados to represent the Group of Small Island Developing States (SIDS/AOSIS) on Transitional Committee to design the Green Climate Fund

The Conference of the Parties at its 16th session in December 2010 in Cancun, Mexico agreed to establish a new Green Climate

Fund. The Fund will be governed by a Board of 24 members comprising equal representation from developed and developing countries with its operations to be supported by an independent Secretariat with a Standing Committee under the Conference of the Parties to assist member states in exercising their functions viz -a-viz the new Climate Fund. The latter will have a Trustee to be accountable to the Board with the World Bank was chosen to serve as the interim trustee subject to a review 3 years after the operationalisation of the Fund.

Developed countries through a variety of financial means and mechanisms have committed to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD\$100 billion per year by 2020 to address the climate-related needs of developing countries.

The Green Climate Fund will be designed by a Transitional Committee of 40 members (*15 from developed countries and 25 from developing countries comprising of 7 each from the Africa, Asia and GRULAC groups and 2 each from the LDCs and SIDS*) and its report will be submitted to COP17 in South Africa in December 2011 for approval. The Transitional Committee's initial meeting will be held on 28 and 29th April 2011.

Mr. Derek Ricardo Gibbs, Chief Economist, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs will serve with Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia, Samoa's Permanent Representative to the United Nations as SIDS representatives on the Transitional Committee.

The Intra-ACP Mobility Scheme, Brussels

The Intra-ACP mobility information session was held in Brussels on the 23rd February 2011. The main purpose of the program was to learn more about the newly launched scheme as well as to meet stakeholders active in the field of higher education throughout ACP countries.

What is the intra-ACP academic mobility scheme?

The objective of the program is to promote development and poverty alleviation by increasing the availability of trained and qualified high level professional manpower within the specified region. This is to be achieved by ensuring the cooperation between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in ACP region. The program also aims at promoting brain

gain in the region along with mobility of staff while increasing attractiveness of the institutions.

Mobility of students (at masters and doctoral level) and staff will take place with Africa (Lot 1) and the Pacific and Caribbean regions (Lot 2). Eligibility of students and the conditions of scholarships offered in either Lot were also discussed.

Call for proposals

Calls for Proposals aims at selecting Partnerships that are eligible from both Lot 1 (the African component of the intra-ACP academic mobility scheme) and Lot 2 (the Caribbean and Pacific component of the intra-ACP academic mobility scheme). Con-

currently the chosen Partnership institutions from either Lot will also determine the Academic fields covered under the scheme. A lump sum amount for the implementation of their activities as well as scholarship funds will be granted. Partnerships will also be responsible for issuing a call for applications with its own deadlines and application conditions.

Budget Available

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is 9 million Euros out of which 7 million will be allotted to Lot 1 and 2 million for Lot 2. To kick start the process for the Caribbean-Pacific, both regions should make

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Political, International Relations and Protocol

New Zealand – Samoa Mutual Assistance Programme Talks

The New Zealand – Samoa Mutual Assistance Programme Talks for this year was held on 18 January at the New Zealand High Commission, Apia. Representatives from the New Zealand Defence Force and the New Zealand Police travelled from Wellington to participate in the meeting.

The Mutual Assistance Programme Talks is an annual event and is a valuable opportunity to take stock of the relationship between the New Zealand Police and Samoa Police; reaffirm the activities that continue to take place and possibly identify new areas for cooperation. This year's talks concentrated on the achievements and cooperation between New Zealand Police and the New Zealand Defence Force in working with Samoa Police. The support given by New Zealand Police and the New Zealand Defence Force is invaluable and also critical for the law and justice sector in Samoa.

Police-to-police cooperation is also strong with a bilateral Arrangement that was signed last year, August in Wellington, New Zealand. The objectives of this Cooperation Arrangement are to enhance the relationship between the two Police Departments and to develop a programme of activities in areas of mutual benefit as well as to conduct continuous dialogue and engagement on law enforcement issues.

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations

The Government of Samoa formally established diplomatic relations with the following countries:

- ◆ Montenegro on 28th January 2011
- ◆ Kingdom of Morocco on 28th January 2011
- ◆ Republic of Paraguay on 28th January 2011
- ◆ The State of Qatar on 9th March 2011

The Joint Communiqués to formalize these inter-governmental bilateral relations were signed in New York by the Permanent Rep-

resentatives to the United Nations of the respective countries concerned and Samoa's Permanent Representative.

The State of Qatar became the seventy-ninth (79th) member state to establish diplomatic relations with Samoa, with the Republic of Poland to follow suit in April once arrangements for the joint signing ceremony of the Communiqué have been finalized.

Presentation of Credentials

The new Ambassador of Japan to Samoa, H. E Mr. Hideto Mitamura presented his Letter of Credence to the Head of State on 27 January 2011, officially appointing him as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Samoa. Ambassador Mitamura replaces H. E Mr Toshihiro Takahashi whose tour of duty was completed in September last year. Ambassador Mitamura is based in Wellington.

H. E Mr. Antonius Agus Sriyono, Ambassador of Indonesia to Samoa also travelled from Wellington for the presentation of his credentials to the Head of State on 15 February 2011.

Other envoys that presented their credentials to the Head of State during this period include H. E Dr Stephen Henningham, High Commissioner of Australia to Samoa, whose credentials presentation took place on 10 February 2011 and H. E Mr Zhao Weiping, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Samoa, who presented his credentials on 10 March 2011. Both envoys are based in Apia.

Farewell Calls

His Excellency Matt Anderson completed his term as High Commissioner of Australia to Samoa in January 2011. Mr. Anderson and family arrived in Samoa in January 2007. During his post he worked closely with the Government of Samoa in promoting issues of mutual importance for both Samoa and Australia. Mr. Anderson was

succeeded by H.E Mr. Stephen Henningham who took up the post in February this year.

In February 2011, His Excellency Ambassador Chongren Ma completed his term as Ambassador of China to Samoa. H.E Ma arrived in Samoa in 2008 and served as Ambassador of China to Samoa for a period of three years. He has been replaced by H.E Mr. ZHAO Weiping.

Submission of Samoa's National Report on Human Rights

Samoa submitted its national report on Human Rights to the United Nations before the end of January 2011. The required national report will be used by the United Nations Human Rights Council when Samoa is to be reviewed under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism in May this year.

The UPR is a cooperative mechanism and a unique process that involves a review of the human rights records of all 192 member states of the United Nations once every four years. It provides an opportunity for all states to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their countries and to overcome challenges to the enjoyment of human rights. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country as well as to prompt, support and expand the promotion and protection of human rights.

In compiling the national report, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade sought the views of relevant stakeholders and a taskforce comprising Government agencies and Non-Government organizations was established to facilitate the process. The inclusion of NGOs in the Government taskforce encouraged dialogue and involvement of all stakeholders including Government, civil society and human rights defenders on the preparation and discussions on the report. This process ensured national ownership.

Foreign Affairs & Trade Quiz!!!

1. Where is the WTO headquarters based at?
2. Where was the world expo held last year?
3. How many countries are members of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat?
4. Who is Samoa's Permanent Representative to the United Nations?
5. What was the latest country that Samoa established diplomatic relations with?
6. Who is the High Commissioner of New Zealand to Samoa?



(answers are at the bottom of page 7)

Business Support Services to Encourage Exports

The World Trade Organization (WTO) – International Trade Centre (ITC) Programme hosted a 2-day workshop on 9th to the 10th March in Apia, as an initiative in Trade Capacity for the Accession of Samoa to WTO membership.

The workshop entitled *Business support services with a view to foster exports* was organized in response to issues raised by the Private Sector in a previous ITC Accession workshop which convened in Apia in October 2010. Concerns raised by the private sector included the lack of capacity building opportunities for their members to better understand the WTO and trade issues in order to contribute effectively in trade related discussions, especially leading up to Samoa's accession to the WTO.

The main objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of the private sector and officials through a better understanding of existing market requirements. There was also the opportunity to access WTO and ITC websites for information on markets, trade and investment.

Different sources of information on trade data and the WTO were introduced to Samoan Government officials and business representatives alike, including Samoa's WTO Reference Centre, the WTO website, WTO library and documents online.

Market Access tools available on the ITC



Participants at the ITC workshop held at Aggie Grey's Hotel, Apia

website were also accessed and introduced to participants at the workshop. The various tools are most useful to trade facilitation institutions and officials in providing recent and current trade data and efficient analyses.

Data used in the tools on the ITC website are by default, reported by countries. It was stressed by trainers at the workshop that although the data available is up to date on the website, it is not always reliable; hence it is best to also have on-hand *national data* for export analyses and capturing trade trends.

The workshop was a significant support service in providing accessible tools for both the private sector and government officials that enabled them to assess and monitor trade trends for Samoa and global markets.

Participants were especially pleased to learn that users from Samoa (as a Least Developed

Country) are able to register and access ITC's trade tools online for free until December 2011 at: www.intracen.org/marketanalysis/

WTO Reference Centre

Samoa's WTO Reference Centre is located at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on Level 3 of the Government Building. The Reference Centre houses publications from WTO, FAO, WIPO and UN as well as trade-related materials on the South Pacific and Samoa. A Computer is also available in the Reference Centre for users to browse the WTO website and CD-ROMs available. The WTO Reference Centre is accessible to members of the public by contacting the Ministry on 21171.

PICTA Trade in Services Negotiations to Conclude by End of 2011

Senior Officials from the Forum Island Countries (FICs) met in Koror, Palau from 16th to the 18th March 2011 for the fifth round of negotiations of a trade in services agreement under the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement (PICTA).

The objective of the meeting was to advance the negotiations through the exchange of new and revised PICTA trade in services offers and requests as well as engaging in bilateral discussions.

Dr Chakriya Bowman, Director of the Economic Governance Program of the

Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in her introductory remarks urged countries to start thinking of the end game scenario leading to the conclusion of the PICTA trade in services negotiations and the need for countries to engage intensively in the negotiations to be able to deliver on the Trade Ministers directive for the conclusion of the PICTA TiS negotiations by end of 2011.

The meeting itself recorded a great milestone with all fourteen (14) FICs tabling revised PICTA trade in services offers for consideration and discussions. All fourteen FICs had agreed to make liberalizing commitments in three key sectors (business, tourism and transport services) and this was reflected in

most of the offers that were tabled.

The sectors or subsectors offered by the countries and the commitments made under the four modes of supply were based on the outcome of national consultations and in line with each country's national legislation/policies for those specific services.

Samoa held extensive bilateral discussions with the Cook Islands, Fiji, Federated States of Micronesia, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Tonga mainly to seek clarification on their commitments for specific sectors which were of interest to Samoa. As a result of these bilateral discussions, countries have agreed to intensify national consulta-

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3rd Forum Trade Officials Meeting on PACER Plus, Korrer, Palau

hour Mobility commitments beyond Mode 4, as the principle gain for their small economies from PACER Plus. For instance, Samoa currently accesses the NZ labour market under the New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme.

This Scheme has provided many positive contributions for RSE workers not only in providing employment opportunities but also enabling the transfer of skills such as pruning, harvesting and picking fruits. However the RSE Scheme does not always cater for the Government Work-Ready supply pool of workers that express their will-

ingness and interest to participate. FICs are hence recommending the possibility of developing the Scheme to consider other categories of employment in industries which Australia and New Zealand face a shortage in.

The next PACER Plus Trade Officials meeting is anticipated to be held in October, 2011. Between now and then, the Trade division of MFAT will be liaising with key ministries and stakeholders on a way forward for many of the PACER Plus issues so that the region's vision for economic integration under a possible PACER

Plus will be optimal to Samoa's interests. Samoa was represented at the meeting by Officials from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

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Intra-ACP Mobility Scheme

known the interested HEIs in order to be potential partners under the scheme. In addition, HEIs must also draw up a MOU with the aim to have sound management of the partnership and to address aspects pertaining mainly to the academic mobility scheme.

The intra-ACP mobility scheme should therefore benefit tertiary institutions in Samoa.

Other Related mobility Schemes:

Various programs have been launched that are related to the Intra ACP mobility scheme this includes the "Mwalimu Nyerere programme" which pertains mainly in the African region and the "Erasmus Mundus program" which targets other areas of the Pacific. A similar scheme "Erasmus Mundus Action II" will be launched soon.

For more information on intra-ACP academic mobility scheme:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/intra_acp_mobility or http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm

For more information on Erasmus Mundus programme:

http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus_mundus



Belinda Filo-Tafuna'i (second from top-right), Principal Foreign Service Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, was one of the representatives of Samoa at the PICTA Trade in Services Negotiations round in Palau

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tions and conduct bilateral negotiations electronically so that countries can make the necessary adjustments to their offers with the hope of concluding these negotiations on the three priority sectors by the end of 2011 in line with the FIC Trade Ministers' directive.

The meeting also considered a presentation by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat on the current status of the proposed PICTA Temporary Movement of Natural Persons (TMNP) scheme. The scheme aims to allow easier movement of PICTA nationals (under **Tier 1** – professionals and **Tier 2** – skilled & semi-skilled) for employment purposes in PICTA countries.

One of the priority issues now is for countries to determine the professional categories (list of professions) that each country would be prepared to include in the scheme. The Pacific Regional Qualification Register

(PRQR) and respective National Qualifications Authorities would have a critical role to play in conducting competency based assessments for the eligibility of skilled and semi-skilled nationals who do not have formal qualifications.

The meeting also acknowledged the necessary technical assistance to be provided by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat to the countries to assist them in progressing the conclusion of the PICTA trade in services negotiations.

Overall, the FICs agreed that further work needed to be conducted at the national level through consultations with the relevant agencies and stakeholders to revise their PICTA trade in services offers as well as consider the TMNP scheme and the professional categories that needs to be included.

Quiz answers

1. Geneva, Switzerland
2. Shanghai, China
3. 16 countries
4. H.E. Mr. Aliioaiga Feturi Elisaia
5. The State of Qatar
6. H.E. Mr. Nicholas John Hurley



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