

THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

FIFTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENERGY AND TRANSPORT MINISTERS' MEETING

Port Vila, Vanuatu, 8 – 12 May 2023

TD 07: DEVELOPING MARITIME SKILLS FOR TOMORROW

[Submitted by Solomon Islands]

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek Transport Ministers' endorsement of a regional approach to developing maritime skills for tomorrow and support the Pacific Islands in decarbonisation of their maritime industries.

Background

2. At present, there are fourteen¹ (14) national Maritime Training Institutions (MTIs) that provide differing levels of seafarer training in Pacific Islands Countries and Territories (PICTs).
3. In April 2017, Transport Ministers supported the development of a long-term approach for capacity building based on relevant data and information provided on maritime education and training, qualifications and placement of seafarers, fishermen and shore-based professionals. They also requested development partners to support MTIs in PICTs to develop training infrastructure and equipment and participate in South-South collaboration in the Pacific Islands' region.
4. In September 2019, Transport Ministers adopted the text of the multilateral *Memorandum of Understanding on the recognition of training and certification of seafarers for service on board vessels registered in Pacific island countries and territories* and supported a consistent approach towards a Pacific maritime competency framework, training courses and qualifications.
5. The maritime industry is undertaking its second revolution to move from the use of fossil fuel on board ships to innovative maritime operations and ship-borne technologies with the perspective to phase out fossil fuel use in shipping within the next three decades. Capacity development is essential and is even more crucial if PICTs are not to be left behind or face a prohibitive transition.

Current status

6. Most of MTIs in PICTs provide training at deck and engine rating level, catering and hospitality, and fishing. Some MTIs deliver training courses for seafarers employed only on domestic coastal and inter-island ships, while some deliver training courses for levels of qualification recognised under the *International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers 1978* as amended (STCW).
7. The Pacific Community (SPC) maintains maritime training materials to assist MTIs comply with the STCW convention. Many organisations develop and offer short-term courses to complement MTIs' efforts and build capacity of maritime administrations. There are numerous eLearning packages and webinars adding to traditional maritime training courses. Even though these training packages are neither accredited nor recognized, they provide an opportunity to further develop in micro-qualifications of new maritime skills.
8. In the Pacific Islands region, the Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) "Low Carbon Sea Transport in the Republic of the Marshall Islands" (LCST) project is a good example of integrating capacity building and supporting the local MTI to deliver training courses on low emission sea transport technologies. The project also delivers boat building workshops for local boatbuilders for inside lagoon transportation.

¹ These maritime training institutes are in Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, plus fisheries training colleges in Papua New Guinea and Kiribati

Issues

9. Most of the PICTs' domestic maritime industries lack investment capacity and personnel with the skills to use and maintain modern technologies and equipment. Too often, the capacity to maintain ships and ship-borne equipment or operate port equipment is limited and require overseas support. Marine officers have often been trained on obsolete ship-borne equipment and experience on ships of 20-30 years of age while there are limited training opportunities for shore personnel.
10. In some PICTs, marine officers with STCW qualifications are rare and most of them are about to retire leaving a capacity gap that must be addressed now. The consequence is that MTIs also employ instructors who were not able to upgrade their skills and knowledge, and have the opportunity to use modern technologies and equipment in their workshops. Another unfortunate result of the limited number of marine officers with STCW qualifications is that PICTs have only a limited cadre of officers who can transition to maritime administration careers after their sea time.
11. The transition to innovative port and maritime operations and ship-borne technologies has huge implications for the maritime industry which will be called upon to use and maintain new technologies and support new types of ships. It is an even more pressing issue for PICTs to ensure new technologies and ships are affordable, they can be used in their own maritime industry and MTIs are able to train the next generation of seafarers and shore personnel.
12. This also provides promising opportunities to MTIs in PICTs and national and regional academia to develop the maritime skills required by the Pacific Islands region to decarbonize maritime shipping and ports within the next three decades.
13. ***A regional approach to developing the maritime skills for tomorrow*** should be adopted aligning to and benefitting from SPC and partners' current initiatives and the International Maritime Organization (IMO)'s Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy:
 - a. ***develop a regional maritime training and development network*** of regional organisations and academia, maritime development projects and IMO regional presence;
 - b. ***review and develop a maritime competency framework*** for Pacific Islands' domestic maritime industries integrating carbon-free technologies and operations of ships and ports in traditional maritime training courses;
 - c. ***review and upgrade maritime training courses*** to assist MTIs in Pacific Islands develop skills for the next generation of seafarers and shore personnel and enhance maritime labour mobility within the Pacific Islands' region; and
 - d. ***facilitate partnerships within the regional training and development network*** to support regional academia and MTIs in upgrading their training courses, infrastructure, and equipment.

Recommendations

14. Transport Ministers are invited to:
 - a. **endorse** the proposal for SPC, development partners, and regional maritime academia and MTIs to coordinate their efforts in a regional approach to developing maritime skills for tomorrow;
 - b. **request** IMO to deliver the *Capacity-Building Decade 2021-2030 Strategy* in the Pacific Islands region partnering with regional and national development organisations and academia; and
 - c. **call** on development partners to assist MTIs in PICTs to upgrade their training courses, infrastructure, and equipment.

Date: 17 April 2023