
Note

Establishment of the Pacific International Maritime Law Association

Fagaloa LSR Tufuga

A new initiative in maritime affairs in the Pacific is the recent formation of a regional maritime law association. The new organisation is known as the Pacific International Maritime Law Association (PIMLA), and was formed at the recent IMLI Alumni/Maritime Legal Seminar held in Suva, Fiji from 12-15 July 2005 under the auspices of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, with the assistance of the Regional Maritime Programme.

The Association is the product of intense discussion by graduates of the IMO/International Maritime Law Institute (IMLI) in Malta. Since its establishment in 1989, IMLI has provided the Pacific countries with 18 international maritime lawyers with specialised, graduate training in international maritime law.

IMLI was established by IMO, which is the specialised agency of the United Nations responsible for facilitating cooperation among governments on technical matters affecting international shipping, in order to achieve the highest practicable standards of maritime safety and efficiency in navigation, specifically to train specialists in maritime law and to develop and disseminate knowledge and expertise in the international legal regime of merchant shipping and related areas of maritime law and the general law of the sea.

IMLI is a sister organisation of the World Maritime University at Malmö, Sweden, and has trained over 332 lawyers from 103 States, who are able to serve the international maritime law community and, in the process, help fulfill the IMO objective of making the seas safer for those who daily risk their lives in maritime related activities.

Some of the objectives of the Association are to provide legal and maritime assistance to member countries of the Pacific Community and the Regional Maritime Programme (RMP) in implementing its work programme, as well as bring together under one umbrella all maritime professionals in order to foster and share their maritime expertise and experience for the benefit of Pacific countries.

The RMP sees this initiative as a positive step to highlight the importance of maritime law and to enhance maritime legal interests in the region. The RMP has been assisting Pacific island countries and territories (PICTs) with technical training and advisory services in order to enable them to respond themselves to the relevant maritime conventions and to draft relevant legislation.

There are currently eighteen lawyers from within the region who have undertaken specialised maritime law training at IMLI. They come from Fiji (4), Papua New Guinea (4), Samoa (3), Vanuatu (2) and one each from Tonga, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Marshall Islands and New Zealand. Most, if not all, currently hold high positions within their respective countries or with regional or international organisations. The RMP believes that the region has a pool of expertise that could help further maritime interests and developments within the maritime sector in the region.

The establishment of PIMLA is also in keeping with the objectives of the Pacific Plan for strengthening regional cooperation and integration, and the pooling of

resources. PIMLA is looking forward to a close working relationship with the Regional Maritime Programme of the SPC. SPC/RMP plays both the secretariat and treasurer role for PIMLA, which will be registered in Fiji as being the most convenient and practical location for the Association.

Representatives from ten Pacific countries were at the Seminar and the new Association elected Mr Kiniviliame Keteca, the Principal Legal Officer of the attorney-General's Chambers of Fiji, as their Chairman. Other executive members include Fred Amoa (Samoa) who is a maritime law consultant based in Auckland, Masio Nidung (Papua New Guinea) who is Deputy State Solicitor (International Law), Silipa Kubuabola (Fiji) who is National Manager Legal of the Fiji Islands Revenue & Customs Authority, and James Tari (Vanuatu) who is a barrister and solicitor with Trans-Melanesian Lawyers.

Contact:

Fagaloa LSR Tufuga
Regional Maritime Legal Officer
Regional Maritime Programme
Secretariat of the Pacific Community
Private Mail Bag
Suva
Fiji