

**3<sup>rd</sup> Chief Justices' Leadership Forum**

***Press Release***



*Back row (L to R): Chief Justice Carl Ingram (Marshall Islands); Chief Justice Owen Paulsen (Tonga); Chief Justice Filimone Jitoko (Nauru); Chief Justice Sir Hugh Williams (Cook Islands).*

*Middle row (L to R): Justice Helen Winkelmann (New Zealand); Chief Justice Patrick Savage (Niue); Chief Justice Sir Salamo Injia (Papua New Guinea); Acting Chief Registrar Joel Shemi (Vanuatu).*

*Front row (L to R): Chief Justice Sir John Muria (Kiribati); Chief Justice Dennis Yamase (Federated States of Micronesia); Chief Justice Sir Albert Palmer (Solomon Islands); Chief Justice Patu Sapolu (Samoa); Chief Justice Arthur Ngiraklsong (Palau).*

The Honourable Chief Justice Dame Sian Elias of New Zealand, as represented by Justice Helen Winkelmann, is hosting a high-level regional Forum of Chief Justices in Auckland from 16-18 April, 2018. This Forum is attended by 13 Chief Justices or their representatives from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tokelau and Vanuatu.

The Chief Justices' Leadership Forum is promoting regional leadership as part of the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade funded Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative (June 2016-July 2021). In their meeting this week, the Chief Justices of the region are discussing a range of topical issues to promote improvements to justice. These include *court performance*: exploring options to strengthen and align existing court performance measurements and reporting with international approaches; *efficiency*: administering tools and mechanisms to improve efficiency in the disposal of cases; *annual reporting*: improving transparency by internally monitoring and evaluating court performance, collecting and externally publishing annual court performance knowledge; *information and communication technologies*: identifying existing ICT options that enable courts to deliver more efficient, accessible and timely justice services; and building education and knowledge through the University of South Pacific Certificate of Justice and PNG Centre for Judicial Excellence.

The Chief Justices will also review the planning of activities to be conducted over the next 12 months. They will provide direction and feedback on the implementation of these activities and use the Forum as an opportunity to continue dialogue on judicial development across the region.

This Forum is one of the many activities and workshops conducted by the Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative across the region. The initiative is funded by New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade which has supported promoting the rule of law across the Pacific over recent years.

The **goal** of Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative is to build fairer societies by supporting the courts in the Pacific region to **develop** more accessible, just, efficient and responsive justice services. The Initiative operates in 14 countries, namely: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

The Pacific Judicial Strengthening Initiative builds on the achievements of earlier phases under the Pacific Judicial Development Program and Pacific Judicial Education Program to enhance the professional competence of judicial and court officers, along with the processes and systems that they use, in order to provide more accessible and responsive justice services.