

SOLOMON Islands Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Mark Bell has welcomed regional delegates and observers to the 10th Anniversary meeting of the Pacific Islands Tax Administrators' Association (PITAA) to Honiara Tuesday.

Opened by the Minister of Finance and Treasury, Rick Houenipwela, this is the first time the Solomon Islands is hosting the meeting.

In welcoming the delegates, representatives of the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre (PFTAC) and observers Bell noted that this is evidence again of Solomon Islands ability to host these large regional gatherings in a friendly and welcoming environment.

The delegates include several Commissioners of tax administrations in other Pacific countries and are therefore well-placed to gain great value from the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

Ten years ago, tax administrations in the Pacific recognized the need to develop a cooperative and collaborative relationship in administering the taxation systems of their respective countries.

In particular, it was recognized that small tax administrations cannot hope to replicate the range of expertise and advanced systems of the more developed tax administrations in larger countries.

In the 10 years since it was formed, PITAA has been instrumental in identifying areas of common need across the Pacific and in turn PFTAC has often provided technical expertise to meet those needs, either in-country or through regional training programmes.

One of the key objectives of PITAA is to help promote international standards and best tax administration practices suitable to the characteristics of Pacific Island countries.

"We all face similar challenges of small administrations, a widely dispersed taxpayer base, a large informal economy and limited understanding of the importance of good business management practices as a key to compliance with tax obligations," Bell explained.

"Our task as administrators is to try to take those international best tax administration practices and adapt them to the reality of our own environment.

"We can do that much better by sharing our experiences and learning from each other," he added.

Up to 16 Pacific tax administrations are to be represented at the meeting which is being hosted by the Inland Revenue Division of the Ministry of Finance and Treasury and will run over three days in the Forum Fisheries Agency's conference centre.