FIRST Regional Symposium for the Pacific: Fact Sheet

This document is a preliminary fact sheet for the 2023 FIRST Regional Symposium for the Pacific, a full report will be provided after survey results and photos from the event are collected.

Event Details:
The FIRST Regional Symposium for the Pacific was organized from 20 to 22 September in Port Vila, Vanuatu and took place alongside the Pacific Cyber Security Operational Network (PaCSON) Annual General Meeting (AGM).

During the Regional Symposium, cybersecurity subject matter experts from the Pacific and global FIRST community shared insights, case studies, and trainings designed for operational practitioners. Participants were drawn from across stakeholder groups, including telecom operators, private sector organizations, financial sector, local ICT communities, and government representatives from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and 12 Pacific PaCSON members.

The event was co-hosted by FIRST (Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams), PaCSON, the Government of Vanuatu, OGCIO (Office of the Government CIO), and CERT VU.

The event was made possible with generous support from the Government of Vanuatu, the PaCSON Secretariat – a function of the Australian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), U.S. State Department, and APNIC Foundation.

Program Design:
FIRST Regional Symposiums are designed around operational content and focused on community building by fostering a space for practitioners to meet, share insights, build trust, and develop new collaborations.
- The Symposium agenda was decided by a Program Committee of leading figures in the Pacific cybersecurity community.
- The group included the PaCSON Executive Committee to ensure alignment and avoid duplication with the PaCSON AGM agenda.
- The Program Committee included:
  - Kensly Jose, CERT VU – PaCSON Chair
  - Pua Hunter, Cook Islands Office of the Prime Minister – PaCSON Incoming Chair
  - Domingo Kabunare, Kiribati CERT – PaCSON Deputy Chair
  - Saia Vaipuna, Global Forum on Cyber Expertise (GFCE) Pacific Hub
  - Adli Wahid, APNIC (Asia-Pacific Network Information Centre)
- The Pacific Program Committee received 23 presentation and six training proposals through the open Call for Proposals.
- The Program Committee designed the agenda to balance opportunities to hear and learn from both Pacific speakers and international partners. Speakers and trainers

came from 13 economies, including six sessions from the Pacific; five from Australia and New Zealand; and five from international participants.

- The final agenda included 20 speakers and trainers across 12 presentation sessions and four training sessions.
- The full agenda and select TLP:CLEAR slides are available at https://www.first.org/events/symposium/pacific2023/program.

Participation:

Over the 2.5 days, 97 participants from 21 economies joined the Symposium.

- Participants travelled from Australia, Canada, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, Japan, Kiribati, Malaysia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Poland, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States, and Vanuatu.
- The organizations and sectors represented include CERTs/CSIRTs, academia, regional organizations, technical community, telecommunications operators, private sector entities, financial sector, community groups, law enforcement agencies, and various parts of government.
  - o <u>Regional Organizations</u> included the PaCSON Secretariat, Pacific Island Forum Secretariat, Pacific Fusion Centre, Forum Fisheries Agency, and GFCE Pacific Hub.
  - o <u>Pacific community groups</u> included, the Pacific Island Chapter of the Internet Society (PICISOC), Tonga Women in ICT (TWICT), Women in IT Solomon Islands (WITSI), IT Society of the Solomon Islands (ITSSI), Samoa Information Technology Association (SITA), PNG Digital ICT Cluster, PNG Women in Cybersecurity Network, and a leading closed Pacific cybersecurity trust group.
  - o The event also included participants from 14 PaCSON and 6 APCERT members.
- Recognizing the gender disparity in the field, FIRST actively worked to promote greater female participation which resulted in a positive 32% female participation rate.

Fellowship Support:

Strong representation from across the Pacific was made possible by fellowships provided through the generous support of the U.S. State Department and APNIC Foundation.

- 20 Pacific fellows from seven economies received fellowships, including travel and accommodation support.
  - o Fellows were selected in collaboration with TWICT, SITA, WITSI, ITSSI, PNG Digital ICT Cluster, GFCE Pacific Hub, the Symposium's Pacific Program Committee, and the Pacific cybersecurity trust group.
  - o Unfortunately, seven fellows were unable to attend the in-person event due to illness (1), family emergency (1), and extensive flight cancellations (5). Remote participation was arranged to facilitate their presentations and participation.
- The PaCSON Secretariat extended the PaCSON AGM fellowships to include participation in the Symposium.
- Fellowships were also coordinated with the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) training activity to ensure no duplicated support. One shared fellow was co-funded under this coordination.
- Travel and accommodation for two FIRST staff and one international speaker were also supported.