



GOVERNMENT OF TONGA

# MEDIA RELEASE

(10 December 2019)

## “PM Tu‘i‘onetoa urges world leaders that the time for climate action is NOW”

The Prime Minister, Hon. Dr. Pohiva Tu‘i‘onetoa on 10 December, 2019, delivered Tonga’s National Statement at the high level segment of the 25<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 25) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).



*The Prime Minister of Tonga, Dr the Honourable Pohiva Tu‘i‘onetoa, delivering Tonga’s Statement the COP25 in Madrid Spain.*

The Prime Minister informed the prestigious high-level plenary of Tonga’s vulnerability to climate change as the second most at risk country in the world to natural disasters, according to the 2016 World Risk Report, and compounded by the adverse impact of climate change.

“As such, climate change is the single greatest threat to Tonga and the Pacific Island countries, and Tonga therefore stands in solidarity with all other Small Island Developing States in calling for urgent action to combat climate change.”

The effects of climate change, according to the Prime Minister, continue to threaten the environment, land, the ocean and marine resources, upon which the livelihood and existence

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**Issued by the:** *The Prime Minister's Office, P.O. Box 62, Nuku'alofa, Tonga. Tel:* (676) 24644 **Fax:** (676) 23888; *For media enquiries- Email:* [pressroom@pmo.gov.to](mailto:pressroom@pmo.gov.to) **Website:** [www.pmo.gov.to](http://www.pmo.gov.to)

of our people depend on. In the course of time and as science tells us, these impacts are rapidly exacerbating our vulnerabilities and swiftly eroding our capacities for resilience.

He further emphasized that Tonga experienced unprecedented rates of coastal erosion, inundation, flash flooding, sea-level rise, and intensity of tropical cyclones like Tropical Cyclone Gita that hit Tonga in February 2018, where they undermine Tonga's capacity to respond to and recover from.

He reminded the Conference that these climate change effects, are direct result of global warming, and that the world is currently on a course where we have now reached a 1.1 degree Celsius, according to the latest International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Special Report, and he strongly emphasized the intrinsic value and imperative for limiting temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Such goal, continued the Prime Minister, can only be achieved through genuine commitment and cooperation from governments, development partners and parties fully engaging in the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals, and the SAMOA Pathway.

The Prime Minister mentioned the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Kainaki II Declaration and calls for urgent climate action to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions and prevent catastrophic global warming, extreme weather events, flooding and droughts, is an example of such commitment and cooperation effort.

Such commitment in Tonga, stressed by the Prime Minister, is ensuring rapid progression at the national level to implement the necessary actions toward achieving its NDC targets of 50% renewable energy by 2020, 70% by 2030 and 100% by 2035, improve energy efficiency through reduction of electricity line losses to 9 percent by 2020 and to double the 2015 number of Marine Protected Areas by 2030.

Tonga is also committed to prepare its Long-Term Low Emission Development Strategies (LT-LEDS).

In raising its ambition and climate action, Tonga also uses a whole-of-country approach through its Second Joint National Action Plan on Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Management, 2018-2028.

The Prime Minister concluded on urgent need to strengthen partnerships between countries, governments, non-government organizations and private sectors towards the 'enhancement of actions, support and synergies in the areas of technology, capacity building, and the mandatory financing, for effective implementation of the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

The occasion was presided over by the COP25 Presidency and Chile's Environment Minister, Her Excellency Ms. Carolina Schmidt, and also attended by, His Excellency Mr. Tijjani

Muhammad-Bande, President of the United Nations General Assembly, Mr. Petteri Taalas, Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization, Her Excellency Ms. Teresa Ribera, Minister of Environment of Spain and Ms. Patricia Espinosa, UNFCCC Executive Secretary.

Among other important issues for Tonga at COP 25, is accessing climate finance to fund the implementation and actions of various climate change policies and action plans already in place, to save Tonga and its children and their future from the effects of climate change.

During the Conference, the Prime Minister and his delegation also held bilateral meetings with various donor agencies and development partners such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Green Climate Fund (GCF), International Solar Alliance (ISA), New Zealand, and Norway in naming a few, to foster closer mutual cooperation and partnerships to fight against climate change in Tonga.

COP 25 commenced on Monday, 2 December and will conclude on Friday 13 December, 2019, in Madrid, a last minute switched from Santiago, Chile, where it was originally planned to be held.

About 25,000 delegates at COP 25, comprising of world leaders, and representatives from almost 200 countries, gathered to iron out the unresolved items from COP 24 in Poland, for the implementation guidelines or the Paris rulebook to implement the historical Paris Agreement.

As a result of Tonga's participation at COP 23, 24 and now 25, are the **US\$23.8 million** on the Climate Resilient Sector Project (CRSP) that included the construction of the Ha'apai Hospital, the construction of the Hahake Foreshore, reconstruction of 5 primary schools including the GPS Kolomotu'a, GPS Halaano, GPS Fanga, Lavengamalie School, etc, 7 Special management areas (SMA's), the Tonga Water Board Reservoirs, and Marine Science Bachelor degree scholarships.

In addition, is the **US\$26.1 million** for the Outer Islands Renewable Energy Projects (OIERP) to finance the costs of the solar farms in Ha'apai, 'Eua, and Niuatoputapu; the solar mini-grids for Nomuka, Ha'afeva, 'Uiha and Ha'ano; the grid -upgrade for Vava'u and 'Eua; and the solar batteries for Niua Fo'ou.

Furthermore, the Tonga Renewable Energy project (TREP) of **US\$53.2 million** for solar batteries in Tongatapu, Matafonua, Kolovai, and Fahefa. The Nuku'alofa Integrated Development fund of **US\$20 million**.

Finally is the Fanga'uta Bridge of **US\$45 million**, and the new proposed Climate Resilient pathway projects with the Green Climate Fund of **US\$250 million**, yet to be determined by the Green Climate Fund.

Tonga's delegation led by the Honourable Prime Minister, Dr. Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa comprise of the Honorable Poasi Tei, Minister for MEIDECC; Mr. Edgar Cocker, Chief Secretary and Secretary to Cabinet & Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs; Mr.

Paula Ma'u, CEO for MEIDECC; Ms. Balwyn Fa'otusia, CEO for Finance; Ms. Lu'isa Tu'i'afitu Malolo, Climate Change Director, MEIDECC; Mr. Viliami Kami, Deputy CEO for Quarantine and Quality Management; Mr. Othniel Mintang Yila, Climate Finance Advisor, MEIDECC; Ms. Fololita Sila, Principal Assistant Secretary, MEIDECC; Ms. Losana Latu, Principal Assistant Secretary, MEIDECC; Ms. 'Elisapeta 'Akau'ola, Policy and Planning Officer, MEIDECC; Ms. Lilu Moala, Principal Assistant Secretary, MEIDECC;

### **Fellows Students**

Ms. 'Ilaisane Ve'a, Ministry of Finance; Mrs. Cadinia Tonga'onevai, Assistant Geologist, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources; Ms. 'Elisiva 'Akauola, Assistant Crown Counsel, Attorney General Office; Mr. Sione Folau, Mitigation Advisor, University of the South Pacific; Mr. Christopher Taufatofua, Legal Advisor, Milbank Law Firm; Mr. Uili Lousi, NGO Representative, OHAI Inc ; Mr. Sione Talolakepa Fulivai, Adaptation Advisor – SPREP and other self-funded delegates.



*Tonga's delegation during the meeting.*



*Tonga's delegations to the COP25 meeting in Madrid, Spain.*