



PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Commission on the Status of Women

National Statement

**Delivered by head of delegation
Ms. Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga**

Tonga Mission to the United Nations
New York
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Mr. Chairman,

I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Kingdom of Tonga, and wish to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by distinguished representative of Sudan on behalf of the Group of G77 and China, and the statement made by the distinguished representative of Niue on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum Group.

Mr. Chairman,

Our government has made several policy changes and legislative reforms pertaining to women's rights:

- A Royal Land Commission who has been appointed for a term of three years will also deal with the issue of inheritance by women where there is no male heir;
- The Nationality (Amendment) Act 2007 made provisions for dual citizenship, which allows the nationality to be determined not only on a person's father's nationality, but also the nationality of the mother;
- Female officers of the Tonga Defence Services can now continue in their services within the army once they are married;
- The Domestic Violence Unit was established in the Ministry of Police in 2007 with a 'no drop' policy which ensures that all charges of domestic assaults cannot be withdrawn by the victims once reported, thereby strengthen work against gender based violence;
- The Constitutional and Electoral Commission established in 2008 has received submissions from Civil Society and Women, which incorporates the gender perspective into the reform process.

Mr. Chairman,

We have also completed work around CEDAW: (1) CEDAW Legislation analysis, (2) CEDAW Information Research, (3) CEDAW national awareness raising activities, and (4) CEDAW Translation into the Tongan language.

Although the HIV infection rate is low, our government is proactive in preventing the spread of HIV AIDS. The second national HIV & STI Strategic Plan (2009-2013) ~~was recently launched,~~ *is completed and it* complementing ~~the regional policy.~~ *the regional plan.*

We have identified areas that require further assistance:

- Promoting health education, including safe sexual behavior;
- Training for professional HIV/AIDS medical officers;
- Increasing the health services to address HIV advocacy, support, treatment and care;
- Funding education programs, advocacy and health services.

Mr. Chairman,

In many countries, aid and remittances have often acted to counter the impact of economic down turns in previous years. As a result of the global crisis, more aid flows is needed to counter the

impact on pro-poor and climate change adaptation policies of developing countries. Developed countries' unclear initial reactions to aid flows have placed the commitment of donor countries to the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development. This is at odds with the situation in our region, where some countries may face the prospect of restrictive macroeconomic policies. This will result in outcomes that are the direct opposite of the Doha Declaration.

The threat of climate change induced sea-level rise negatively impacts women's health, livelihoods and security due to the loss of land. The competition over scarce resources fuels the tensions within our region, putting women at risks of conflicts. To address the issue, the Pacific islands have initiated a General Assembly draft resolution entitled 'Security and climate change' highlighting the security implications of sea-level rise.

Mr. Chairman,

My government is proactive in improving women with access to quality education, healthcare services, employment, security and social-economic status. We have identified several areas needing assistance:

- Funding assistance and technology transfer to mitigate and to adapt to the impacts of climate change, including development projects;
- Direct assistance in strengthening infrastructure, healthcare and education, particularly in rural areas;
- Mainstreaming gender and capacity building to increase women's participation in the economy, and at the decision making level,
- Conduct research and data collection of gender disaggregated data, and develop gender indicators for evaluation and monitoring of women's status in all areas including violence against women

Tonga continues to be supportive in many UN debates concerning the empowerment of women. We have been proactive in the System-Wide Coherence Debate on gender reform; the Security Council resolution 1325 and the impact of climate change on women. And we supported the Convention of Persons Living with Disabilities, which protects the rights of persons living with disability, both men and women.

In closing we take this opportunity to thank all of our donor partners who have assisted us with our efforts to advance gender issues and look forward to the continuation of their commitment and support in the future.