

**15th Session of the Universal Periodic Review Working Group: Review of
the Kingdom of Tonga**

**Statement by Ambassador Daw Penjo, Permanent Representative of
Bhutan on 21st January 2013**

Mr. President,

Bhutan joins the previous speakers in extending a warm welcome to H. E. Lord Vaea, Minister of Internal Affairs of the Kingdom of Tonga to this session of the UPR Working Group. We thank His Excellency for the comprehensive presentation of their National report which has been prepared in line with the established UPR guidelines.

As a fellow LDC, Bhutan is aware of the challenges and constraints faced by the Kingdom of Tonga. We applaud the significant strides that Tonga has taken in meeting those challenges to promote political, economic and social rights of its population. Bhutan would like to commend the Kingdom of Tonga for the profound constitutional and political reforms that it introduced in 2010. Legislative reforms such as insertion of a Constitutional provision to protect the principles of the rule of law and judicial independence and, Constitutional recognition of the independent office of the Attorney General are noteworthy.

Bhutan appreciates the various measures that the Kingdom of Tonga has undertaken since its last UPR to protect and promote human rights of its citizens. We commend the progress made in promoting socio-economic development and protecting the interest of the vulnerable groups such as women, children and persons with disabilities. In this regard, we have noted with appreciation the efforts of the Government of Tonga to advance the position of women and combat gender based violence and discrimination.

In conclusion, Bhutan would like to make the following recommendations:

- i) Expedite the ratification of CEDAW.
- ii) Continue the policy of free and compulsory education through cooperation with and assistance from the international community.
- iii) Continue to develop its legal and institutional framework with respect to the promotion and protection of human rights.

I thank you, Mr. President.