

**FINAL STATEMENT BY LORD VAEA, MINISTER FOR INTERNAL
AFFAIRS
AT ADOPTION OF UPR WORKING GROUP'S REPORT ON TONGA'S
REVIEW**

Friday 25 January 2013

Palai de Naciones, Geneva, Switzerland

Mr President, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I begin in making these brief final remarks before the Working Group, on how much the Tongan delegation appreciates and recognises the tireless efforts that the Distinguished Delegates and the Secretariat inject to this UPR mechanism, particularly the review of Tonga.

In the last five days I have witnessed myself first-hand the time, concentration and commitment that all Distinguished Delegates ^{JAVE} ~~give~~ to the review of States.

The Tongan delegation was indeed humbled that 41 States took the effort and time to prepare interventions and recommendations to assist Tonga in its path to greater human rights commitment. I thank you for the efforts Mr President.

In relation to the preparation of the Working Group's report, I would like to thank the Distinguished Delegates of Costa Rica, Pakistan and Angola – as members of the troika States who facilitated the review, for their facilitation efforts, provided on top of their own work for their respective Missions. I also would like to thank the Secretariat in the efforts to construct the report within the tight timeframe.

Mr President, Tonga has taken in all the valuable recommendations offered, and over the last few days, we are already realising the volume of work that ~~has to be done~~ ^{is before us.}. Although challenging to a small and under-resourced Pacific Island State, Mr President, it is not insurmountable, without the strength and blessings of God, and also the assistance of this great gathering of States.

As I mentioned in my opening statement Mr President, there are special and unique circumstances for Tonga when attempting to pursue more human rights commitments. These circumstances are the reason why 28 of the recommendations have been deferred for more time to consider, and then report back a position in the next regular meeting of the Council. Tonga hopes that States understand this situation and support it.

As for the four recommendations that were not supported, Tonga had concerns with the pace recommended for the ratification of CEDAW in those four recommendations, and that reservations not be made. Again, may I state that Tonga remains committed to ratifying CEDAW, but it will do so after public consultation due to its unique circumstances, which may likely result on reservations being filed together with ratification.

Mr President, I thank you for this opportunity, and wish you and all Distinguished Delegates abundant strength, good will and best wishes, from the King and the people of the Kingdom of Tonga in continuing the second cycle of the UPR process.

Tonga remains committed and in support of your work, and I wish to reassure Tonga's highest consideration to you Mr President, Your Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates.

Thank you very much. Malo 'aupito.