



Universal Periodic Review of TONGA, 21 January 2013
Intervention by the delegation of Estonia

Estonia warmly welcomes the high level delegation of Tonga to the 15th session of the UPR and commends them on the completion of its national report and comprehensive presentation today.

We congratulate Tonga on conducting successful parliamentary elections in 2010 and its ongoing development of a democratic society. Estonia recognizes that the human rights agenda has become more important in the domestic policy of Tonga. We are pleased to note that international human rights principles are reflected in the Constitution, despite the fact that Tonga is not yet a party to many important human rights treaties.

Estonia invites Tonga to show strong commitment to justice and the rule of law and to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and fully align its legislation with all obligations under the Rome Statute. We also invite Tonga to accede to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court.

Estonia commends the Government's launch of the Freedom of Information Policy on 28 June 2012 as a major step towards ensuring **freedom of expression** in the country. Use of the Internet is growing and remains unrestricted; however, the access remains low due to the high costs and lack of infrastructure. We would encourage Tonga to take further steps in this regard.

We would like to draw the delegation's attention to the situation of **women's rights** in Tonga. Tonga is one of the few countries in the Pacific that has not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). We encourage Tonga to protect women's rights – amend the legislation discriminating against women in the fields of inheritance, ownership of land, and child support – and to promote women's participation in political life and in other decision-making positions in society. In our view additional human rights protection mechanisms could be developed to fight against violence and mistreatment towards all vulnerable groups in the country.

Bearing in mind these concerns, Estonia would like to make the following **recommendations**:

- We recommend that Tonga continue its endeavours towards better serving its people by securing a higher standard of human rights;
- We recommend that Tonga ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and accede to the Agreement on the Privileges and Immunities of the International Criminal Court.
- We recommend that Tonga proceed swiftly with the ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Thank you.

Mr. Jüri Seienthal

Ms. Piret Urp