

**PHILIPPINES**

Statement by  
H.E. Amb. Evan P. Garcia *Emilio FOS*  
Permanent Representative of the Philippines *First Secretary*  
to the United Nations and other International Organizations in Geneva

Human Rights Council  
**15<sup>th</sup> session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review**

**UPR of TONGA**  
21 January 2013

Mister President, the Philippine delegation is pleased to welcome the delegation of Tonga headed by \_\_\_\_\_ to the Human Rights Council. We thank Tonga for its comprehensive report and constructive engagement with the UPR process.

Tonga is in a significant juncture of its history. The Philippines is pleased that numerous constitutional and political reforms are occurring in Tonga. We encourage Tonga to maintain its strong partnerships with the international community, particularly friendly neighbors in the Pacific, towards institutionalizing democratic principles in its society.

However, the Philippines noted that Tonga is yet to accede to a number of core international human rights conventions. Hence, the Philippines recommends that Tonga considers ratifying these core international conventions, especially the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families as well as the ILO Convention 189.

On the matter of violence against women and children, the Philippines is confident that Tonga will give special attention to the need to protect the welfare of women and children and the most vulnerable members of society.

The Philippines takes particular note that, despite the lack of sufficient domestic violence legislation in Tonga, the OHCHR Regional Office in the Pacific cited positive developments, such as the establishment of the National Domestic Violence Unit in 2007. Tonga's "no-drop policy" with regard to domestic violence-related crimes is a significant measure to ensure that these cases will be investigated and prosecuted.

The Philippines encourages Tonga to continue to intensify efforts to protect the human rights of women and children, and recommends to the Government to consider acceding to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Cognizant of the challenges and difficulties being encountered by Tonga, the Philippines calls on the international community to extend the utmost support to Tonga to sustain the positive developments in the country, and to support its efforts in improving the lives of its people.

Thank you, Mister President.