



**PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
TO THE OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, GENEVA**

**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW OF TONGA**

**Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2013, 2pm**

THANK YOU, MR. PRESIDENT.

MR. ~~Madame~~ President, Trinidad and Tobago is pleased to add its voice to those welcoming the delegation of Tonga, led by the Honourable Minister and thanks him for his comprehensive report.

My delegation congratulates Tonga for the progress made in the promotion and protection of human rights since its first UPR in May 2008. One significant achievement is the implementation of a broad range of constitutional and political reforms which resulted in the first democratic elections on 25 November 2010. We encourage the Government of Tonga to work tirelessly to build on the foundation that was laid in 2010.

Trinidad and Tobago notes with satisfaction efforts aimed at achieving gender equality and at promoting and protecting the human rights of Tongan women. These include, inter alia, the extension of paid maternity leave within the Public Service from 1 to 3 months; Government approval to review legislation on violence against women and children and the development of the 2011-2014 Tongan Strategic Development Framework, which has the empowerment of women, especially women from rural communities, as one of its key priorities. Madame President we would like to recommend that in addition to the noteworthy initiatives mentioned above, the Government of Tonga give consideration to (i) implementing laws prohibiting sexual discrimination and (ii) affirmative action policies aimed at increasing women's participation in Parliament.

My delegation also appreciates the efforts that Tonga has made to strengthen human rights education, training of public officials and the participation of civil society in the promotion and protection of human rights, with the assistance of the international community.

MR. ~~Madame~~ President, as a Small Island Developing State itself, Trinidad and Tobago identifies with Tonga's concerns regarding climate change, the impact of which has implications for the human rights of Tongans, especially their right to adequate food, water and a means of subsistence. We therefore applaud Tonga for its strong/active engagement on climate change issues at the regional and international levels.

Thank you.