**UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW**

**29th Session: Tonga**

**Intervention by Turkey**

Thank you Mr. President.

We would like to welcome the delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga and thank the head of delegation for his comprehensive report.

As a founding member of Pacific Islands Forum, Tonga maintains one of the highest ranking Human Development Index of UNDP among other Island States in the region.

We particularly would like to congratulate Tonga for the conduct of fair and democratic general elections on 16 November 2017 and the election of Tonga’s Prime Minister on 18 December 2017. We praise the Tonga Government’s efforts concerning constitutional reforms that aim at widening the country's democratic space. Turkey believes that the positive steps taken by Tonga in recent years, which contribute to consolidating rule of law and democracy in the country, will pave the way for further respecting human rights.

Turkey commends the establishment of Ombudsman’s Office in December 2016 and recommends Tonga to continue the dialogue that has progressed to a certain level, about forming a national human rights institution.

Turkey praises the efforts of Tonga becoming a party to core international human rights treaties. Turkey recommends Tonga to ratify CEDAW, ICESCR, ICCPR and CAT which will strengthen the legislation of Tonga in respect of the promotion and protection of human rights.

It is also noteworthy that, Tonga has the highest government spending on education in the Pacific and it has made progress towards attaining Millennium Development Goals. The expansion of free basic education in Tonga enables access to primary schooling for children from all segments of the society.

On the issue of women rights (land ownership still remains challenging for women in the country), we encourage Tonga to amend the current Land Act, particularly its provision forbidding women from inhering land.

The children are not able to use the courts to defend their rights effectively. We recommend Tonga to establish a separate juvenile court or system for the children and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We encourage Tonga, a country democratic values of which are based on a constitution dating back to 1875, to continue its efforts to consolidate legal basis for human rights in the country.

Thank you Mr. President.