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**Tonga Country Statement at the 2019 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, Geneva, Switzerland, 17 May, 2019**

*Delivered by Mafua-‘i-Vai’utukakau Maka*

*Director- National Emergency Management Office*

*Government of the Kingdom of Tonga*

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished delegates*

*Ladies and Gentlemen*

1. At the outset, allow me to first express the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga’s utmost gratitude to the Government and people of Switzerland for their most sincere and warm hospitality accorded to our delegation upon our arrival in to your beautiful country.
2. Behind Vanuatu, Tonga is the second most disaster- prone country in the world according to the 2018 World Risk Index. Because of its location in the South Pacific, Tonga is prone to experiencing a multitude of different disasters in a given year such as tropical cyclones with damaging winds, rain, and storm surge. Tonga is also located near the Pacific Ring of Fire, which aligns with the boundaries of tectonic plates in the area that can bring about extreme seismic and volcanic activity, with a strong change for earthquakes and tsunamis.
3. In February 12, 2018 Tongatapu and ‘Eua island groups were hit by the Category 4 Tropical Cyclone Gita. Almost seventy five percent (75%) of the population were impacted, including widespread destruction to infrastructure, schools building, housing, agriculture and livelihoods. The total economic loss was close to US$164.1 million dollars. This is equivalent to 37.8 percent of the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) in Tonga. Tonga is progressing with its recovery and reconstruction efforts with the emphasis on developing the resilience of it’s people.
4. Tonga was the first country to formally integrate its approach to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in terms of national governance with the adoption of its JNAP – Joint National Action Plan – in 2010. This JNAP has proved successful in terms of our own governance efforts. Tonga is now being guided by its second JNAP to strengthen its resilient and sustainable development. Our JNAP details disaster risk reduction and climate change priorities for the country and outlines sector and local level interventions, which is in line with Target E. I pleased to say that the Pacific as a region has come together to adopt and implement the Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific: *An Integrated Approach to Address Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management.*
5. The Sendai Framework covers 7 targets and 38 indicators across various sectors from now back to 2005. This is a substantial amount of data to collect and manage. Some but not all data is available or accessible to implement the Sendai Framework. In fact, no country in the world can satisfy all reporting requirements, according to a data readiness assessment in 2017 by the UNDRR.
6. Tonga’s reporting progress for 2018 covers Targets A and B, including validation and no disaggregation. Tonga was the fifth country, out of 195 reporting, with validated data in the Sendai Framework Monitor, as displayed in the Global Country Reporting Overview screenshot. The data entry for 2017 is also validated, while no disasters occurred. Further data entry is planned to cover the years 2016 back to 2005. As part of this effort we have establised a workplan to guide a structured process ensure that the data gaps are addressed including the development of consolidated assessment templates.
7. Tonga recognises that disaggregation is a challenge and can be strengthened in the future. We, along with our Pacific counterparts recognise that better access to locally relevant data and strengthened practical understanding of disaster and climate change impacts are essential to support evidence-based action including investments by our governments and communities;
8. Tonga is committed to further strengthening the collaboration, coordination and information sharing across Government Departments to address the Sendai Framework, SDG and other development challenges with more coherence.

9. We have also invested in strengthening multihazard early warning and preparedness with the support of bilateral partners. This includes strengthening our response capacity through the support and guidance of Pacific regional organisations, UN Partners and civil society organisations.

10. As a developing nation, Tonga will continue face competing priorities for the resources that we can access. That said, we do commit to working with regional organisations, development partners and civil society to better use the resources at hand.

11. To address the need for actions and investments in resilience wecall for the further support of international multilateral funds, in enhancing our efforts through direct financial support to implement our national plans and project proposals with a focus on resilient development.

12. Tonga continues to place great emphasis on the importance of cooperation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Sendai Framework and the Paris Agreement. We commit to fully implement the sustainable development targets and mainstream those goals into our national plans to strengthen our resilience to the effects of natural hazards.

1. In closing, I urge us all to work together and build on what we have achieved here in Geneva and continue to share good practices and resources to sustainably meet all our global and national disaster risk reduction targets.

Malo ‘aupito, Thank you