



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Enhanced High Level Political Dialogue between the Kingdom of Tonga and the European Union

The first enhanced High Level Political Dialogue between the Kingdom of Tonga and the European Union under Article 8 of the ACP-EU Partnership (Cotonou) Agreement was held in Nuku'alofa. The meeting was chaired on the Tongan side by the Acting Prime Minister, Honourable Siaosi Sovaleni, and H.E. Andrew Jacobs, Ambassador to Tonga and Head of Delegation of the European Union for the Pacific. H.R.H. Crown Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala and the Minister of Fisheries, Hon Semisi Fakahau participated in the political dialogue. The Parties reviewed bilateral relations between the Kingdom of Tonga and the European Union and discussed possibilities to intensify trade relations and strengthen co-operation in regional and international matters of common concern.

The Political Dialogue Meeting was organised in the framework of Article 8 of the Cotonou Agreement which provide for regular exchange of views at the highest level, covering all subjects of mutual interest, including respect for human rights, good governance, democratic principles and the rule of law.

Following the fruitful exchanges the Honourable Siaosi Sovaleni said, "The European Union and the Kingdom of Tonga have a long standing relationship in cooperation and partnership. European Union has provided assistance to the civil society organizations and construction of the Niuatoputapu hospital. The EU is also providing significant support to ensure access to modern, affordable and environmentally sustainable energy to the people of Tonga. We also discussed the challenges we face in areas such as deportees, youth unemployment, climate change and natural disasters."

H.E. Ambassador Jacobs added that "Today we had an excellent opportunity to take stock of our cooperation and assess how it benefits the lives of Tongans. For example, we discussed European Union's support to renewable energy and civil society organisations, and the way forward towards a full implementation of the EU-Tonga short-term visa waiver Agreement. Our frank exchanges will pave the way forward to enhance our joint development and diplomatic aspirations and go beyond our strong partnership in the fight against climate change. In this we are fully guided by the renewed partnership with the Pacific and the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy".

This is the last trip of H.E. Ambassador Jacobs to the Kingdom of Tonga before his assignment in the Pacific comes to an end later this year. During the rest of the week he will hold a series of meetings to bid farewell to Tongan authorities, friends from civil society organisations and private sector.

Background

The Cotonou Agreement offers a framework for the European Union's cooperation relations for the economic, social and cultural development of the African, Caribbean and Pacific States (ACP). Centered on the target of reducing, and in the longer-term, eradicating poverty, the cooperation must also contribute to peace and security and the democratic and political stability of the ACP states.

The objective of the political dialogue is to exchange information, to foster mutual understanding and to facilitate the establishment of agreed priorities and shared agendas, in particular by recognising links in the various areas of cooperation between the Parties as laid down in the Cotonou Agreement.

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