Country Statement by the Kingdom of Tonga

United Nations Economic and Social Commission in Asia and the Pacific
75th Session
Bangkok, Kingdom of Thailand; Tuesday, 28th May 2019

Chairman,
Excellencies,
Madam Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of the United Nations ESCAP,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government and People of the Kingdom of Tonga, I warmly congratulate you on your election as Chairman of this Session and assure you of the full support of the Tongan Delegation throughout your distinguished chairmanship.

The Tongan Delegation also conveys its sincere gratitude to the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand and the UN ESCAP for organizing and hosting this important 75th Session.

The Kingdom of Tonga aligns itself with the Statement delivered by H.E. The President of the Republic of Nauru and Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum Group.

We welcome the central and timely theme of “Empowering People and Ensuring Inclusiveness and Equality”, which builds upon Tonga’s focus when it presents the progress on the status of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at the 2019 High-level Political Forum on sustainable development in July this year, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

Indeed, included in the Key Messages for six (6) SDGs to be reported in Tonga’s 2019 Voluntary National Review is SDG 8: To strengthen sustainable economic growth through use of relevant trade tools and employment opportunities for our people, we will continue to implement relevant structural reforms and further develop productive sectors. We will also
promote decent work including those in the informal sector and public private partnerships for improved service delivery.

Furthermore, Tonga recognized the need for equal opportunities for all, in particular vulnerable and marginalized groups including access to employment, political leadership, and social services. This is underpinned by our commitment for all men, women, and children to live in an environment free from all forms of violence and exploitation.

While we value transforming our world and our own countries to achieve the 2030 Agenda, we also appreciate that it rests upon leadership, innovation, and strategic collaborations at the local and national levels.

Therefore, with adherence to its longstanding Christian Belief and cultural and traditional values on sustainable development, the presentation of Tonga’s Voluntary National Review is an embraced opportunity to share its collective efforts in terms of the national development agenda and related SDG implementation. Essentially, it highlights the improved coordination amongst all stakeholders towards implementation while identifying key issues, selected priority programmes, and updates on priorities contained in the Tonga Strategic Development Framework (TSDF II) 2015-2025.

We also wish to acknowledge with much appreciation the assistance and support provided by UNDESA UN ESCAP and related UN Agencies to ensure the VNR Process has progressed well with the recent submission of the final VNR key messages to the UNHQ in New York.

We convey sincere best wishes to all Delegations for fruitful and successful deliberations and outcome during this 75th Session.