



GOVERNMENT OF TONGA

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Tonga’s Turn: Leading the Pacific with Purpose”

In a year marked by geopolitical tension and climate urgency, Tonga has emerged as a steady hand guiding the Pacific Islands Forum. Over the past seven months, Tonga’s leadership has revitalized regional cooperation, championed Pacific priorities, and reaffirmed the value of Pacific-led solutions.

Tonga’s leadership was on full display as it hosted the Special Forum Economic Ministers Meeting (FEMM) in Nuku’alofa and chaired the FEMM Proper in Fiji this July. These gatherings were more than ceremonial—they were strategic platforms for advancing shared Pacific goals. The Forum Troika Leaders Meeting in Nadi on August 3rd further underscored Tonga’s commitment to regional unity, bringing together leaders to navigate a shifting geopolitical landscape with clarity and cohesion.

Tonga’s leadership was further solidified when HRH Crown Prince Tupouto’a ‘Ulukalala chaired the 2025 Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting in Suva. His stewardship emphasized Tonga’s diplomatic maturity and its ability to convene diverse voices around shared Pacific priorities.

As Tonga prepares to hand over the Forum Chair to Solomon Islands in September, its legacy of inclusive and proactive leadership sets a high bar for regional stewardship.

Driving Regional Priorities Forward

Throughout 2025, Tonga chaired key ministerial meetings across economic, trade, and foreign affairs portfolios. These forums were instrumental in progressing critical initiatives such as the Review of Regional Architecture, the Pacific Resilience Facility, and the Talanoa on deep sea minerals. Tonga’s facilitation ensured that these complex issues were approached with transparency, collaboration, and a clear focus on Pacific interests.

At the Forum Troika Leaders Meeting in Rarotonga, Tonga’s Prime Minister Hon Dr. ‘Aisake Valu Eke led discussions on the Review of Regional Architecture, the Pacific Resilience Facility, and preparations for the 54th Leaders Meeting. The Troika reaffirmed their commitment to regional unity and endorsed Solomon Islands as the incoming Forum Chair.

Championing Gender Equality and Inclusion

Tonga’s leadership also brought renewed energy to gender equality efforts. Under its guidance, the Pacific Women Leaders Meeting endorsed a revitalized Gender Equality Declaration. Tonga supported the development of a Polynesian Sub-Regional Gender Equality Framework and a regional Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) system—tools that will help track progress and ensure accountability across the region.

Tonga's Minister for Internal Affairs, Hon. Sinaitakala Tu'itahi, chaired the Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders Meeting in July. Key outcomes included:

- * Endorsement of the Pacific Regional Gender Equality MERL Plan.
- * Approval to establish a Polynesian Sub-Regional Gender Equality Framework.
- * Commitment to sustained funding for gender-responsive climate justice and prevention of gender-based violence.

Navigating Geopolitical Crosscurrents

In an era of intensifying global competition, Tonga has demonstrated and managed diplomatic finesse with transparency and tact, preserving unity among Forum members while upholding Pacific values. Tonga's approach has reinforced the Pacific's identity as a "Zone of Peace," even as external pressures mount.

Looking Ahead: Unity, Resilience, and Action

Tonga's leadership is a reminder that Pacific solutions must be led by Pacific voices. As we look to the 54th Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting in Honiara—under the theme Iumi Tugeda: Act Now for an Integrated Blue Pacific Continent—the region must build on this momentum.

Climate action, sustainable development, and economic resilience remain at the heart of our shared agenda. Guided by the 2050 Blue Pacific Strategy, we must continue to safeguard our region through strong leadership, inclusive participation, and people-centered development. Recent dialogues on education, health, and social inclusion will shape the upcoming Leaders Meeting, ensuring that our policies improve the daily lives of Pacific citizens.

With COP31 on the horizon—the first Pacific COP to be hosted in Australia—the time is now to mobilize as one. Tonga's leadership has helped shape the agenda, ensuring that climate resilience, inclusive development, and regional governance reforms remain central.

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