

Draft 1

Seventy-eight World Health Assembly Kingdom of Tonga Intervention

Committee A- Pillar 2: One Billion more people better protected from Health Emergencies.

Agenda Item 16.3 – Health Emergency Preparedness and Response:

16.3: Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) Document: A78/11 Add. 1 and A78/11 Add 2)

Thank you, Chairperson.

1. **The Kingdom of Tonga** is pleased to note the Report: ***Implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005) Document: A78/11***
2. The Government and people of Tonga greatly value the leadership and coordination that **WHO** provides in the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response space.
3. The Government of Tonga works continuously to enhance the country's preparedness for future emergencies.
4. Tonga, like other Pacific Island countries, faces distinct challenges that render it particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, natural disasters and outbreaks of infectious diseases.
5. For example, in 2022, the country faced three simultaneous emergencies: a volcanic eruption, a related tsunami and the first wave of COVID-19 community transmission.
6. Tonga achieved a milestone in 2024 when it became the first Pacific Island country to apply **WHO's** Strategic Toolkit for Assessing Risk (STAR) with the goal to identify hazards the country faces, including their seasonality and likelihood to occur.
7. Tonga used insights from the STAR workshop to contribute to the JEE preparation, prioritizing hazards to further improve emergency preparedness, response and multi-sectoral coordination.

8. Additionally, Tonga published a national, multi-hazard risk communication and community engagement strategy to advance multi-hazard preparedness and ways to effectively communicate and engage with communities prior and during emergencies.
9. Six key recommendations emerged from the JEE to advance health security capacity in Tonga.
10. These include the need for high-level political commitment and accountability at all levels to advance implementation of the IHR, including through revision and enactment of legislation and regulations to ensure implementation of IHR core capacities.
11. The JEE recommendations offer an opportunity for Tonga to review its laboratory capacities; to create a National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS); to further develop and implement a package of human resources policies, strategies and plans; and to produce a “**One Health**” framework addressing a unified approach to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems.
12. To strengthen implementation of the IHR and to enable the recommendations of the JEE to be addressed, Tonga requires WHO and development partners to provide the technical assistance and funding support to progress this important work as Tonga currently does not have sufficient capacity or capability to do this alone,

MALO ‘AUPITO AND THANK YOU

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