

Draft 1

Seventy-eight World Health Assembly Kingdom of Tonga Intervention

Committee A- Agenda Item 16.4 - Document: A78/12

The Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.

Thank you, Chairperson.

1. **The Kingdom of Tonga** is pleased to note the Report: **The Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the WHO Health Emergencies Programme.**
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2. The Independent Oversight and Advisory Committee for the **WHO** Health Emergencies Programme conducted an Assessment in Tonga between the 11 and 14 February 2025.
3. The **IOAC mission report for Tonga**, noted that **WHO** is visible and well appreciated by a wide range of stakeholders and partners in the Region and the people and Government of Tonga greatly value the leadership and coordination that **WHO** provides for the Health Emergencies Programme of work.
4. The Report noted the Ministry of Health in Tonga expressed appreciation for **WHO's** support in developing preparedness and response plans, training health care workers, coordinating partners, and mobilizing resources through advocacy of the plans to in-country donors.
5. The Report also noted the strong Government of Tonga commitment to the provision of free-of-charge health services to citizens.
6. The IOAC observed that Tonga has among the highest overall health standards, notably high life expectancy of over 68 years for males and over 73 years for females and the lowest child mortality rate in the Pacific at 11.14 per 1000 live births.
7. Immunization coverage in Tonga is high, with at least 95% of children receiving vaccines.
8. However, maternal health, respiratory diseases in children and NCDs remain a concern.
9. 83% of deaths in Tonga are from NCDs and the report noted that **WHO** is supporting Government-led efforts to promote prevention strategies, improve clinical management, and strengthen health promotion.
10. Officials at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries (MAFF) informed the Committee that the Government is investing in fruit importation and farming to combat NCDs in collaboration with the Ministry of Health.

11. Findings from the interviews with officials from several Government of Tonga ministries confirmed close cooperation and cross-sectoral collaboration among the ministries for key health issues and emergencies through a cluster system under the Government's leadership and with the support of **WHO**.
12. The IOAC noted **WHO** has well-established partnership with Australia, Japan, New Zealand and the United States in Tonga, but that the US announcement of withdrawing its membership from **WHO** will have negative impacts at regional and country level.
13. Cultivating and leveraging partnerships is crucial for **WHO** to deliver its mandate.
14. In light of this, the Western Pacific Regional Director hosted a side event on the **Pandemic Fund** during the Seventy-fifth session of the Regional Committee for the Western Pacific to raise awareness among eligible countries and promote engagement with the **Pandemic Fund** governing board.
15. The **WPRO** is leading development of a Western Pacific multi-country proposal, in partnership with ADB and FAO, as well as supporting single-country proposals through its **WHO** country offices.
16. Tonga thanks **The Independent Oversight Committee** for the report and we will reflect on the recommendations so **WHO** and the Government of Tonga can work smarter together to address gaps in our Health Emergencies planning, preparedness and response.
17. We look forward to continuing our excellent relationship with **WHO**.

MALO 'AUPITO AND THANK YOU

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