

Draft 1

Seventy-eight World Health Assembly Kingdom of Tonga Intervention

Committee B- Item 28:

Pillar 1: One Billion people benefiting from Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Agenda Item A: Strengthening Diagnostic Capacity (Resolution WHA 76.5 (2023))

Thank you, Chairperson.

1. **The Kingdom of Tonga** takes note of the Progress Report: ***Strengthening Diagnostic Capacity – Document A78/34***
2. The Government and people of **The Kingdom of Tonga** greatly value the leadership and coordination that **WHO** provides in Strengthening Diagnostic Capacity and we will endeavour to leverage updated WHO tools such as EDL4, the MeDevIS database (v2.0) and the Global benchmarking tool for medical devices to strengthen national diagnostic strategies and procurement processes.
3. Among the challenges in terms of '**One Health**', include uneven availability of human resources across relevant sectors (especially animal health professionals, laboratory technicians, IT technicians and surveillance professionals), ensuring adequate human resources to detect and respond to events of public health importance.
4. Supported by **WHO**, Australian AID and US AID, Tonga's first Joint External Evaluation was undertaken in May 2024.
5. Under the technical area of **Detect**, indicators assessed under the national laboratory systems included: Specimen referral and transport system, laboratory quality, laboratory testing capacity modalities and effective national diagnostic network
6. Priority areas to address include the need to:
 - a. Perform a needs assessment for the continuous development of national laboratory capacities, with the goal of reducing costs and turnaround time for tests for high priority and outbreak-prone diseases.
 - b. Perform a national review and gap analysis of laboratory facilities and equipment; based on the results, strengthen laboratory infrastructure to a level adequate for the detection, surveillance and early detection of health threats.

- c. Implement a digital inventory management system for reagents and diagnostics: and
 - d. Appoint a full-time pathologist in Vaiola Hospital.
7. One of the key recommendations of the JEE is for Tonga to map and review Tonga's laboratory capacities across all sectors relevant to health security.
 8. This plan should cover clinical, public health and animal health laboratories as well as any private laboratories.
 9. Based on the results, a plan can be designed and implemented to strengthen laboratory services.
 10. Tonga requires on-going **WHO** technical support and development partner funding to develop a five-year, risk-based, prioritized, costed and financed **National Action Plan for Health Security** (NAPHS),
 11. As importantly, financial and technical support is required to build a National '**One Health**' Laboratory in Tonga that is equipped with the latest technology.
 12. This approach integrates human, animal and environmental health in one holistic framework.
 13. The Government and people of Tonga thank the **WHO** for assisting our efforts to strengthen the '**One Health**' approach in Tonga.

MALO 'AUPITO AND THANK YOU

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