

**Country:** Tonga

**Committee:** UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change)

**Topic:** The Effects of Climate Change & Global Warming

A very prevalent issue worldwide, climate change has and still does affect every living thing on Earth. Tonga is a “Small Island Developing State,” and it is extremely vulnerable to the adverse impacts of climate change and disaster risks. The geographical, geological and socio-economic features of Tonga have classified itself as one of the countries in the world most at risk to these impacts. The Government of Tonga understands these impacts and risks to the sustainable development of the country and hence considers these issues as high priorities in its National Strategic Development Framework 2015-2025. Climate affects almost all aspects of life in Tonga. Understanding the possible future climate of Tonga is important so people and the government can plan for changes. Small island countries, such as Tonga, are those that least contribute to climate change but are arguably, those who are most affected. Climate change is an ongoing battle that Tonga wants to win before it's too late.

### **Climate Change on Human Health**

Climate change is among the greatest health risks of the 21st Century. Rising temperatures and more extreme weather events cost lives directly, increase transmission and spread of infectious diseases, and undermine the environmental determinants of health, including clean air and water, and sufficient food. As the planet warms, oceans expand and the sea level rises, floods and droughts become more frequent and intense, and heat waves and hurricanes become more severe. The most vulnerable people—children, the elderly, the poor, and those with underlying health conditions—are at increased risk for health effects from climate change. Tonga believes that addressing climate change is necessary and would be a tremendous opportunity for public health. Steps can be taken to reduce climate change and its impacts on our health and the health of future generations. Tonga believes that providing research on human health impacts related to climate change and adaptation is key. While 95% of reviewed national adaptation of the programs of action (NAPAs) make reference to climate change impacts, only 3% of past and current adaptation funding targets health.<sup>1</sup> Alongside that, Tonga plans to raise awareness, share knowledge, good practices and also create new partnerships to advance key areas of health research and knowledge development on human health effects of climate change. Tonga plans to identify strategies and actions to protect human health, particularly of the most vulnerable groups including the country itself.

### **Climate Refugees**

The Earth's climate is changing at a rate that has exceeded most accurate forecasts. Some families and communities have already started to suffer from disasters and the consequences of climate change, forced to leave their homes in search of a new beginning. These families and communities are called climate refugees. Tonga, itself, is vulnerable to a variety of natural hazards due to its location and topographical nature. Earthquakes and tsunamis cause the highest mortality rates while cyclones cause the greatest economic losses.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Human Health and Climate Change in Pacific Island Countries." N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Nov. 2016.

These disasters force thousands of Tonga's citizens to either evacuate their town or move out of the country altogether, causing mass global migration and border conflicts. 46 percent of Tongans already live outside their country of origin <sup>2</sup>, almost 250 Tongans emigrate each year!<sup>3</sup> Tonga wants to develop soft planned relocation guidance to move people out of disasters and climate change effects while respecting their human rights. Furthermore, Tonga intends to coordinate with the Advisory Group on Human Mobility and Climate Change to help provide technical support to the UNFCCC process.

### **Paris Agreement & Reducing Greenhouse Gases**

The overall effects of climate change will be reduced by implementing and enforcing the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Tonga was among 12 Pacific Islands Forum countries that signed the Paris Agreement in New York on 22 April 2016.<sup>4</sup> Tonga experiences the effects of climate change every day, much like the rest of the world. Temperatures are rising, snow and rainfall patterns are shifting, and more extreme weather events—like heavy rainstorms and record high temperatures—are already taking place. These changes are linked to the climbing levels of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, caused by human activities such as burning fossil fuels for energy. Tonga urges all the other nations to work together to help undertake the efforts to combat climate change and adapt to its effects as a whole. Tonga stresses that by taking action to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gas pollution, we can reduce the risks we will face from future climate change. Countries, businesses, and individuals alike, all have an important role to play. By working together to implement the Paris Agreement's central aims is key. Tonga has made a commitment to reduce our reliance on fossil fuel for power generation by 50%, by 2020, and 70% by 2030. The Government has also made a commitment to double Tonga's marine protected areas by 2030, and increased our efforts in reforestation.<sup>5</sup> Whether that be to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with the impacts of climate change, or to utilize appropriate financial flows and new technology to support developing countries and the most vulnerable countries, Another method may include, providing enhanced transparency of action and support through a more robust transparency framework. Tonga is aware that all are vital for the continuous growth of our global community as a whole.

Tonga is a proud member of the United Nations as well as other global organizations, such as the Pacific Islands Forum. Tonga has always supported innovative and efficient ways to fight global warming and climate change. Although Tonga is yet to be a dominant member of these organizations, Tonga will always look forward to offering its full support to the redirection and prevention of climate change to best benefit the global community.

---

<sup>2</sup> Foreign Affairs. "Sinking States." *Foreign Affairs*. N.p., 2015. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.

<sup>3</sup> "The Uncertain Future of 'Climate Refugees' in the Pacific - Record." *Record*. N.p., 2013. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.

<sup>4</sup> "Tonga Ratifies Paris Agreement On Climate Change." *Home Page*. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Nov. 2016.

<sup>5</sup> "Prime Minister Deposited Tonga's Instrument for ..." *Ministry of Information and Communications*. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Nov. 2016.