

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Mahe ‘U. S. Tupouniua
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations
On Agenda Item 80: United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching,
Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law
At the Sixth Committee of the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

New York, Trusteeship Council Chambers, Monday, 16th October 2017

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Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for giving Tonga the floor to speak on this Agenda Item and let me start by aligning my statement with that delivered by Ecuador on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Chairman,

The dissemination of international law is an essential means for the effective participation of a small island developing State like my own, in the international legal arena, notwithstanding the crucial role it plays in promoting the rule of law at the national and international levels, and promoting friendly relations and cooperation amongst States.

As such, and as mentioned in our intervention under Agenda Item 84 last week, the work of the Secretary-General and the Office of Legal Affairs and its specialized agencies are essential in ensuring the dissemination of international law through the *Programme of Assistance*.

Mr. Chairman,

Limited human capacity is a reality for my country. Our legal counsels are too often inundated with domestic legal affairs and can only engage to a limited extent, on international legal matters. Lack of funding also is an impediment for our legal counsels to attend international legal meetings. However, with the *Programme of Assistance*, the foundational knowledge of our legal counsels in international law has expanded. It is the core tool for the training of lawyers, particularly government officials, to better appreciate, apply, and act in accordance with international law. The Regional Courses provide a platform for our legal counsels to network and establish good relations with participants from other countries, thereby allowing for ease of cooperation in present, or future engagements. We therefore welcome the Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination, and Wider Appreciation of International Law. The work undertaken by the Office of Legal Affairs and its specialized divisions has benefitted Tonga immensely from the trainings and provision of materials, to online sources such as the Audiovisual Library, and more recently, the International Law Handbook. We recognize and appreciate the various topics covered by the Regional Courses over the past years and we support its retention. As a developing state, particularly as a small island developing State, we would also like to see the inclusion of the topic, “international law and sustainable development”.

Mr. Chairman,

We are pleased to see the proposed allocation of resources in the regular budget for the biennium 2018 – 2019, and various voluntary contributions made to allow for the continuation of the good work of the Office of Legal Affairs and its specialized divisions. We are particularly pleased to see the continuation of the United Nations Regional Course in the Asia-Pacific region which has benefitted the legal counsels from our Attorney-General's Office. On this note, we would like to thank all countries that made voluntary contributions for activities under the *Programme of Assistance*.

Mr. Chairman

Tonga recognizes that engaging in negotiations, particularly through the many processes at the United Nations, is an essential step for legal counsels to study and apply international law. Long-term trainings which expose legal counsels to the work and processes of the United Nations is therefore beneficial. On this note, Tonga is grateful for the ongoing genuine and durable partnership with Italy through the Joint Committee mechanism, which is facilitating the inaugural capacity-building and strengthening project, known as the Tonga Fellowship on Sustainable Development (TFSD). This partnership has brought to New York from Tonga, 3 young technical experts in the fields of law, economics, and the environment, and embedded them in our Mission as Advisors for 12 months, in order to develop their skills in international law and diplomacy through academic training and practical experience at the UN processes. The invaluable knowledge and experience gained through academic and practical training will be transferred back to Tonga for the benefit of the Kingdom. Tonga envisions the fellowship to continue annually and we are grateful to Italy for its ongoing partnership in this regard for 2018. We also would like to acknowledge our implementing partner in this year's project, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

Mr. Chairman,

The dissemination of the knowledge, study, and teaching of international law is of central importance for Tonga, and for the international community in its quest to achieve a world based on the rule of law. We accordingly look forward to the confirmation of adequate budget being allocated to the work of the *Programme of Assistance*, thus, ensuring that the United Nations can continue to offer support to developing countries like Tonga in this area which is essential to the achievement of all the United Nations stands for.

I thank you