



**PERMANENT MISSION
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Viliami Va'inga Tōnē,
Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of Tonga to the United Nations
at the meeting of the Sixth Committee during its 73rd Session on
Agenda Item 81: United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study,
Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law**

Trusteeship Council Chamber, Friday 19th October 2018

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Mr. Chairman,

1. This statement is aligned with the statement made by the distinguished representative of Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.
2. Tonga recalls that the United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law was established to contribute towards gaining a better knowledge of international law, which would lead to strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States. We therefore express our appreciation for the ongoing work in promoting and implementing the objectives of the Programme of Assistance.
3. For a small island developing State like mine, the Programme of Assistance has and continues to be a significant force in building and bettering our understanding of international law. We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the Programme of Assistance and the Secretariat's assistance in making an advanced copy available to us. For future sessions, we encourage the Advisory Committee to schedule meetings in a manner that would ensure the timely distribution of the report.

Mr. Chairman,

4. Tonga has benefitted immensely through the work under the Programme of Assistance which includes the international law fellowship, regional courses and the electronic material made available through the Audiovisual Library of International Law and several

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publications. The robust work of the Programme of Assistance has contributed significantly to building the capacity of the legal counsel and the legal policy advisers in Tonga. We thank the Office of Legal Affairs and its specialized divisions for their tireless efforts to support the Programme, despite the limited resources available to them.

5. Tonga reiterates its satisfaction, expressed last year, with the budget allocation for the Programme in the current biennium. This, we understand, will facilitate the fellowship and regional courses through 2019. Tonga is particularly pleased to see the support provided by the Governments of Thailand, New Zealand and the UN agencies and regional offices in accommodating and supporting the Asia Pacific regional course in December of 2017. We also thank the contributors who positively responded to the Secretary-General's request, as mandated in the UN General Assembly Resolution 72/115. We thank and acknowledge their generous contributions, which ensure the continuation and strengthening of the Programme.

Mr. Chairman,

6. The Programme of Assistance, although established as a means of strengthening international peace and security and promoting friendly relations and cooperation among States, is at its heart a vehicle for understanding international law, particularly in maintaining the rule of law both at the international and national levels. In so saying, Tonga reaffirms the significant role of the rule of law as advanced through various mechanisms, including by the Programme of Assistance, in realizing the objectives of the United Nations Charter in its entirety.

Mr. Chairman,

7. As a small island developing State, limited human and technical capacity as well as financial resources are not mere rhetoric but our reality. The inability to retain legal practitioners within the Attorney-General's Office and other Government Ministries means that having adequate and sustained assistance provided through the Programme of Assistance is crucial to building our capacity to effectively address international law issues

and to actively engage in the international fora. Allocation of resources continues to be an issue, as we aim at the domestic level to make progress on the rule of law.

8. Tonga acknowledges the pivotal effect of first-hand experience of international negotiations in building the capacity of legal counsel and legal advisers in international law and processes. In this vein, we express our sincere gratitude to the Government of Italy's Ministry of Environment, Land, and Sea, which, through the Joint Committee mechanism, has made it possible for three female civil servants to undertake a year-long Fellowship with our Mission this year focused on the environment and the ocean. The Fellowship is aimed at civil servants working in the area of economics, the environment and law and provides a platform which fosters an integrated and whole of government approach to achieving the 2030 Agenda.
9. This is the second year of the Fellowship and we are very fortunate to continue this genuine and durable partnership with the Government of Italy's Ministry of Environment, Land, and Sea into 2019, and beyond. An emerging network of alumni has allowed past Fellows to collaborate with the current Fellows, building a foundation of progress in Tonga.

Mr. Chairman,

10. In conclusion, Tonga reiterates the crucial role that the Programme plays in the dissemination, teaching and wider appreciation of international law and thereby building the capacity of small island developing States like mine on international law. We reaffirm our unwavering support for the Programme and we encourage robust support and financial contributions thereto.

I thank you.