



**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 73<sup>rd</sup> Session on  
Agenda Item 86: The Rule of Law at the National and International Levels**

**Trusteeship Council Chamber, Monday, 08<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

*Check against delivery*

**Mr. Chairman,**

1. Thank you for giving my delegation the floor again and to speak to this very important item.
2. Tonga welcomes the report of the Secretary-General, Strengthening and coordinating United Nations rule of law activities as contained in document A/73/253 and we applaud the ongoing activities of the organization in ensuring peace and fostering the rule of law at the national, regional and international levels.

**Mr. Chairman,**

3. The United Nations is the epitome of global multilateralism, a strong platform for our collective efforts to jointly address and achieve the objectives of the United Nations' Charter. It is only through multilateralism steered by the United Nations that we can endeavor to foster human rights, peace and security. Our common roadmap, the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals, provide guidance in building a sustainable future for current and future generations where no one is left behind.

4. In so saying, we reaffirm the instrumental role that the rule of law plays in realizing the principles of the United Nations' Charter, in particular, through equal access to justice, good governance and transparency. These are crucial elements for, *inter alia*, fostering peace, sustainable development, gender equality, inclusive economic growth, environmental protection and the eradication of poverty.

**Mr. Chairman,**

5. Tonga attaches great importance to the rule of law at the national and international levels, where we appreciate its role as the mainstay of peaceful, secure, fair and stable societies. To that end, Tonga's Constitution calls for maintaining the principles of the rule of law at all times, in alignment with SDG 16. Tonga acknowledges that the rule of law is founded on the principles of equality before the law, judicial independence and access to justice.
6. In an effort to promote access to justice, particularly for our most vulnerable groups, Tonga, with the assistance of Australia and Sweden through the Pacific Community, established a Community Legal Aid Center, which provides free legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence. The issue of equal access to justice may even be considered a sub-topic under this item given its central importance to the rule of law.

**Mr. Chairman,**

7. The codification and development of international law is vital in promoting the rule of law at the international level as highlighted in Part C of the Secretary-General's report. In so saying, Tonga as a large ocean developing state, welcomes the commencement of the intergovernmental conference on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction, pursuant to UNGA Resolution 72/249. The timely work of the Conference will ensure a robust and binding agreement is concluded by 2020.

8. Tonga also welcomes the decision by the International Law Commission at its seventieth session to include an important topic for my delegation, “Sea-level rise in relation to international law”, in its long term programme of work, and we look forward to the Commission moving this topic to its active work programme and consideration. For a small island developing State like Tonga and coastal States generally, sea-level rise has implications on the sovereignty of States and has yet to be addressed by international law in any meaningful way. Pronouncement by the Commission would give guidance to our discussions in this Committee and decisions at the General Assembly. We will speak more to this important and pressing issue when the Committee considers the report of the Commission later.
  
9. Tonga welcomes all of the sub-topics proposed in the Secretary-General’s report for the Committee’s consideration for in-depth study as highlighted in Part III(B) of the Secretary-General’s report, in particular, the implementation of the rule of law elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and sharing of best practices. We note the intricate value of each sub-topic for pursuing, maintaining, and fostering the rule of law, and thereby supporting international peace and security.

**Mr. Chairman,**

Tonga is grateful for the support of Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, UNDP, regional organisations and civil society and other development partners, in our efforts to improve access to justice. These partnerships have resulted in a justice sector-wide and targeted support projects being implemented in Tonga. These are aimed at strengthening our courts through improving its record management capacity, the judicial capacity on managing family and juvenile cases, and the police in mainstreaming gender and human rights policies into its work.

**Mr. Chairman,**

10. Tonga is fully committed to achieving our collective goal of a just, fair, and peaceful world through the rule of law at the national and international levels and its implementation and enforcement.

I thank you.