



## PRESS RELEASE

### GOVERNMENT OF TONGA'S ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FORUM

*“Partnership for Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Development”*

**Date/Time:** 28th February, 2023 9:00 am – 5:00 pm (Fa’onelua Convention Centre, Nuku’alofa)



The Ministry of Finance hosted and led the 2023 Government of Tonga’s Annual Development Partner Forum at Fa’onelua Convention Centre on the 28th February, 2023 with the theme “Partnership for Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Development”. Delegations from the Diplomatic corps, development partners, multilateral institutions, regional organisations, government ministries and officials, and sector representatives were present, to participate in this full-day high-level discussion, after conducting these platforms virtually in the past 2 years.

The Prime Minister, Hon. Hu’akavameiliku, in his keynote address, reflected on the severe and mutually reinforcing shocks that had battered Tonga’s economy in 2022 – Hunga-Tonga Hunga-Ha’apai (HTHH) volcanic eruption and resulting tsunami, the COVID-19 pandemic, energy crisis with surging inflation and debt tightening. These shocks had decelerated economic growth down further to -3.1 percent in 2022 from -2.7 percent in 2021, marking the 2nd lowest growth rate in recent decades.

He expressed his most sincere gratitude for the highest level of support and assistance that all development partners have bestowed in responding to Tonga’s very urgent development needs during unprecedented times, in order to ensure that the people of Tonga, have recovered and built back better a resilient and better living of standards.

The full-day programme included sessions from the Ministry of Finance and the National Reserve Bank on fiscal and monetary measures to boost economic growth forecasted which is forecasted to pick up to 2.4 percent for 2023/24 due to heavy reconstruction still undergoing after the shocks. In addition, leading fiscal and monetary policies, and budgetary structural measures, and prioritizing investments in key sectors can stimulate employment. Prime Minister’s Office presented a snapshot of the Government Priority Agenda (GPA) and the National Investment Infrastructure Plan (NIIP) 3. MEIDECC presented its priority investment agendas specifically climate change, energy, disaster recovery management, and environmental. Representatives from key sectors - Agriculture Fisheries, Tourism - and from the Civil Society Forum shared their investment prospects, challenges, and proposed programmes. The Tonga Development Bank presented and highlighted their commercial services, and provided progress on the Government Loan Scheme for the private sector. Development Partners delivered their respective statements pledging their ongoing commitment to supporting Tonga to achieve growth and prosperity. There were special events such as marking the Hon. Prime Minister’s birthday and a remembrance of the late Kelemete Vahe – former CEO Revenue and Customs, who was a frontier warrior of the HT-HH.

The Hon. Prime Minister calls on the Development Partners delegation for their continued financial assistance and sustained partnership as we work together with renewed momentum to achieve a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable development for Tonga. Bilateral meetings followed after the forum.

**Ministry of Finance**