11 March 2013, High level commitment to the 57th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), currently meeting at the United Nations in New York, has been shown by the Tonga Government with the head of delegation lead by the Hon. Minister of Internal Affairs, Lord Vaea.

The last time a Minister participated in the CSW was thirteen years ago with the then Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Cecil Cocker. Tonga’s high level commitment was reiterated in its country statement delivered by the Hon. Minister, Lord Vaea, which highlighted several initiatives and programs that Tonga is and continues to provide in its efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Tonga.

In the statement, the Hon. Minister identified The Family Protection Bill which was drafted last year and has been posted for public consultations. “It will be submitted to the next Parliamentary session in June. The Prime Minister launched the first National Domestic Violence Report in 2012. The Government recognizes that ending violence against women and girls needs to be addressed at the highest level. This involves upholding core Tongan cultural values of reciprocity, respect and love.”

The Government’s recent efforts to counter prevalence involves establishing a National Taskforce on Elimination of Violence Against Women in 2011, reviewing its 2001 National Policy on Gender and Development in 2012, participating in the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Programme in 2012 with the Australian Federal Police and the New Zealand Police, and committing to expand and ensure access by survivors of violence to critical health services, information and care.

The Government’s recent activities relevant to women’s rights include completing a second Universal Periodic Review before the Human Rights Council in January 2013 which involved recommendations on CEDAW, “Real Stories: Real Women” Breaking the Silence that Causes Violence, which is the 2013 theme for International Women’s Day in Tonga, and efforts to engage men and boys, including at school and in the community, to commit to relationships free of violence.
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