4 March 2013 TOKYO - Tonga was represented at the 43rd General Assembly and 77th Council Meeting of the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Union Conference held at the Diet (Parliament) Building on Tuesday 26 March, 2013, by Lord Fakafanua, Speaker of Parliament.

Tonga’s delegation included Deputy Clerk, Dr Sione Vikilani, Deputy Clerk who visited Tonga’s Embassy in Tokyo.

Lord Fakafanua also had meetings with the Tonga-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Association, the Tonga Community and visited APU in Kyushu. With the Ambassador, the Speaker met with the Tonga-Japan Parliamentary Association, Mr Mahe Tupouniua, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade was present at its inception in 2012. The group consists of Japanese Members of Parliament interested in issues for Tonga.

The President of the Tonga Community and Vaha’ifeke (Uatesoni and Lesieli Namoa) hosted the meeting with Tongans residing in Japan. The Secretary of the Tonga Community, Takai Palei conducted the event with Rev Vanisi Takeifanga leading with prayers. Also present were Losaline Kaho Havili daughter of The Lord Prime Minister, Lusila Palei, Amelia Latu, students from Nihon University Kita Taumoefolau and Mosese Mau and Lute Finau of Tokyo Gakugei University and seven of our young Tongan youth attending primary and middle school in Tokyo. While in Japan Lord Fakafanua accepted an invitation to the Asia Pacific University (APU)-Ritsumeikan in Kyushu. He met with the Mr Shun Korenaga President of APU and Vice Chancellor of The Ritsumeikan Trust, other high ranking officials and Mr. Kaitu'u Funaki, Admissions Counselor. Lord Fakafanua also spoke encouraging words to the following Tongan students currenty studying in APU- Viviena Kaitapu, Sisilili Alex Fielea, Jean Malupo, Mark Sionosa, Tuialo Kaufononga, Alamoti Tei, Adeline Vete and they were pleased to meet with The Speaker and Deputy Clerk.

Mr Mahe Tupouniua, Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Trade Sixth Aid for Trade Regional Technical Meeting, 26 March, 2013

Mr. Mahe Tupouniua attended the Sixth Aid for Trade Regional Technical Group Meeting on March 26th, 2013 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting outcome was successful in that important views were exchanged on the stance of Tonga with regard to Aid for Trade. As the Embassy is under the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Mahe Tupouniua was able to visit the Embassy and view the work accomplished to date. Mr Tupouniua continues to Vanuatu for completion of the handover of Trade to the portfolio of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Dr Fusi Fifita and Malimali Program

Dr Fusi Fifita, Oral Pathologist Specialist of the Ministry of Health and Drs Kawamuras paid a courtesy call to the Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga on March 22nd, 2013 in relation to the
Malimali Project in Tonga. The Malimali Project commenced in 1998 with the team from Japan the SOUTH PACIFIC MEDICAL TEAM (SPMT) headed by Drs Koji and Sayuri Kawamuras. Throughout the project the JICA has been contributing to the SPMT. Dr Kawamura (Sayuri and Koji) have donated fluoride medications etc, to decrease the caries rate among school children of Tonga and this program has covered the whole of Tonga.

The team also donated vehicles for the Malimali Program for outreach to Primary schools, kindergartens and village visit. The donation included ambulances now used by Vaiola Hospital and they have sought the Embassy assistance and directed to other non profit organisations and to avenues for future similar assistance. To note is that the assistance made by Drs Kawamuras were personal and financial donations to date of vehicles etc out of their own pocket for the Malimali Program.

The Embassy is grateful for the assistance by the South Pacific Medical Team and personally of Drs Kawamuras from Japan and also JICA for the Dental Health of the school children of Tonga. To note are the untiring efforts of Dr Fusi Fifita who is the leader of the Malimali Team from Tonga. The assistance they provide allow Dr Fifita and the Malimali team outreach to kindergartens/primary schools and village visit for health talks to parents with children less than 6yrs old or preschoolers for improvement in the oral health condition of school children of Tonga and to decrease the carious rate (fksiisii e maumau e nifo e fanau Tonga).

The Malimali project aims to continue the improvement of oral health hygiene of the children of Tonga and as a well established program amongst the school children the SPMT are looking to continuing in relation to the fight against Non Communicable Disease's a priority for the Ministry of Health and His Majesty's Government. The new project to be launched in August 2013 for the next three years until 2016 is targeted at improving adults lifestyle for oral dental health.

The Kingdom of Tonga is ranked as second place in the list of countries with the greatest percentage of overweight people due to binge eating of high calorie/cholesterol foods and little exercise. The South Pacific Medical Team (SPMT), proposes a campaign to conserve oral health in the Kingdom of Tonga by treatment of periodontal disease (PD). This campaign will provide improvement of adult's life style by increasing their health consciousness. PD is a risk factor for a delivery (e.g., premature delivery) and impairment of diabetes mellitus. Throughout this project, the Tongan dental staff will be specialist for prevention of PD and improvement of patients' life style, then will dedicate efficient treatment for oral health.

The Embassy of the Kingdom of Tonga in Tokyo is also committed to fighting the uprise in NCD's and is supportive of this pending initiative of the Ministry of Health and of His Majesty's Government.

ENDS
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