



The ITU Connect Asia-Pacific Summit and ITU Telecom World: Bangkok, THAILAND (18-22 November 2013)

**28 November 2013 : On Saturday 23 November, 2013, the Honourable Prime Minister Lord Tu’ivakano returned to Tonga after completing high-level meetings overseas since the beginning of November.**

The 2nd China Pacific Island Countries Cooperation Forum held in Guangzhou, China was an opportunity for Tonga to maximize trade and development opportunities with the People’s Republic of China. The Government of the People’s Republic of China extended invitations and partially funded the delegation from various sectors of Tonga’s agriculture, fishery, trade, tourism and new energy technologies sectors to attend the Forum and formulate development proposals with their Chinese counterparts. The outcome of such an opportunity was that Tonga was able to submit its own development initiatives to China. The outcome of the high-level meetings between Tonga’s delegation and the PRC gave a positive indication that China will consider these proposals, whilst assistance towards agricultural development such as the sea cucumbers project have been confirmed for years to come. Tonga continues to consolidate bilateral relations and economic cooperation with the People’s Republic of China. The most significant outcome of the Forum is that bilateral meetings steered by the Lord Prime Minister led to the signing of the Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement for a grant of 50 million RMB.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) that was held in Sri Lanka from 15-17 November concluded on a successful note with Tonga’s Prime Minister agreeing with Sri Lanka’s President to strengthen ties between the two countries, following this year’s CHOGM.

The CHOGM has provided an unprecedented opening for Tonga and Small States to discuss escalating debt issues and inadequate access to financing. Leaders welcomed the report and options suggested by the Commonwealth High Level Mission (CHLM) such as the Debt Swaps for Climate Change and Mitigation. Leaders continued to highlight the importance of sustained collaboration within the Commonwealth Secretariat, the IMF and the World Bank to further elaborate the member states proposals and build small states resilience. The CHLM is led by the Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis and supported by four Commonwealth States comprising of Finance Ministers from Jamaica, Samoa, Seychelles and Tonga’s Minister for Finance and National Planning – Hon. Lisiate ‘Aloveita ‘Akolo.

The CHOGM focused on a range of global issues from Sustainable development, post 2015 development framework, climate change, youth affairs, civil society, trade, migration, human rights, gender equality to information and communication technology. Tonga underscored the need for continued and enhanced meaningful collaboration amongst development partners and Commonwealth members in order to find innovative sustainable solutions to address these

issues.

Meanwhile, Heads of Government accepted the offer of the Prime Minister of Malta to host the next CHOGM in 2015 and the offer by Vanuatu to host CHOGM 2017 followed by Malaysia in 2019.

The Prime Minister concluded the high-level meetings in Bangkok, Thailand last week – with the meetings of ICT Ministers and Heads of State and Government at the ITU Connect Asia-Pacific Summit. Tonga's new fibre optic cable system offers investment opportunities for the people, with expected job creations and economic growth and social development generated from getting connected and having access to the Internet and its endless possibilities for business ventures, education and improved health communication systems

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