

03 March, 2011. **The Prime Minister of Tonga Lord Tu'ivakano launched the second "Eva Mai Tourism Experience" on Wednesday 2nd March, commending the cooperation between**



government and the private sector in boosting the industry.

The 'Eva Mai event brings agents from more than 20 tourism organisations in Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Fiji to visit local attractions and join tourism activities in all the major island groups of Tonga.

The agents will also target local operators in the private sector to work with as partners, on joint travel packages for overseas markets.

At the 'Eva Mai opening ceremony at Fa'onelua Convention Centre, Lord Tu'ivakano said he was "especially pleased" at the level of cooperation between government bodies and local tourism operators in promoting Tonga as a tourist destination to the world.

"'Eva Mai is about doing business in the overseas markets and in Tonga," stated the Prime Minister.

"Over the next few days you will encounter many tourism products, but our best product is our people, named rightly by Captain Cook as the Friendly Islanders.

"My government will continue to support this excellent initiative in conjunction with the private sector, both here and overseas."

Provisional data from the National Reserve Bank show tourism receipts on the rise. Visitor numbers in 2010 were the highest in the past decade, bringing in \$58 million pa'anga, compared to \$31 million in 2009 and \$48 million in 2008.

The 'Eva Mai Tourism Experience initiative is supported by NZAID under the Tonga Tourism Support Project, the World Bank Budget Support Fund, and the in-kind support from private sector businesses.

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