

**New Zealand – Tonga**  
**Statement of Partnership**  
**2024 – 2028**

*He waka eke noa*

*Takanga 'etau Fohe*

*We are all in the waka together*

*Synchronise our paddles*

This Statement sets out the principles and priorities under which the Government of New Zealand and the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga will cooperate, coordinate, and partner in areas of common interest.

We acknowledge the unique nature and significance of the enduring relationship between our two countries.

We recognise our shared Pacific geography, historical ties and culture, the depth of connections between our peoples, economies and institutions, and our common interests in the region.

We recognise our genuine and respectful bilateral relationship founded on sovereign equality and governed by a spirit of close friendship and shared values.

We acknowledge key principles to guide and deepen our partnership: understanding, friendship, mutual benefit, collective ambition, and sustainability.

We recognise the four values that are central to Tongan society, language and culture:

- Faka'apa'apa – Respect
- Feveitokai'aki – Reciprocity
- Mamahi'i me'a – Commitment
- Loto To - Humility

We reaffirm the fundamental shared values at the heart of our partnership, in particular our common support for democracy, human rights, gender equality, effective governance, rule of law, environmental stewardship, and strong regional and international cooperation.

In doing so, New Zealand and Tonga have identified common priority areas for ongoing cooperation and commit to strengthen our bilateral relationship, build deeper

connections, and create a more progressive and inclusive Tonga with a higher quality of life for all Tongans and pursuing inclusive and equitable development that leaves no one behind.

Over the period August 2024 to August 2028, New Zealand and Tonga accept to progress work under the following areas:

- **Partnership** – collaborating and sharing knowledge and expertise
- **Climate change** – working closely together to enhance resilience and addressing this global issue as the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security, and well-being of the Pacific
- **Stability and security** – working together to ensure the safety and security of Tonga and the Pacific region, across a range of threats.
- **People** – connecting our peoples and growing Tonga's human capital
- **Prosperity** – fostering mutually beneficial bilateral and regional trade and a resilient and inclusive Tongan economy.

### **Priority Areas for Cooperation**

Under this Statement of Partnership, New Zealand and Tonga together will:

#### **Partnership**

- Foster cooperation between New Zealand and Tonga, including towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Deepen interagency cooperation between New Zealand and Tonga to realise joint benefits;
- Promote increased coherence between domestic and bilateral priorities;
- Recognise the long-term and multi-faceted partnership of His Majesty's Armed Forces and the New Zealand Defence Force, including the strong partnership in capacity building, leadership development and support for Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief;
- Utilise the partnership between Tonga Police and New Zealand Police to strengthen national and regional security through continued capacity development and technical assistance;

- Collaborate through regional institutions and multilateral fora to identify and prioritise issues, and progress collective action on these priorities;
- Draw on New Zealand volunteers to strengthen organisational and individual capability across the public, private and civil society sectors;
- Support and commit to engagement at the Pacific Islands Forum and regional architecture in line with the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, and collaborate in support of Tonga's term as Pacific Islands Forum Chair in 2024-2025;

### **Climate Change**

- Support national, regional and international undertakings towards achieving the aims of the Paris Agreement, including limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels;
- Deliver on the Fetakinima 'o Ha'amo Taha Arrangement;
- Support action on climate change resilience and adaptation, aligned to Tonga's Joint National Action Plan 2 and Nationally Determined Contribution;
- Through mechanisms, including the Regional Pacific Nationally Determined Contribution Hub, support Tonga's efforts to develop, implement, enhance, and communicate its national climate change plans and strategies.

### **Stability and Security**

- Support Tonga's governance models, economic management, accountability institutions, and processes, and contribute to the reconstruction of Tonga's Fale Alea and Office of the Legislative Assembly;
- Reaffirm our commitment to a Pacific-led regional approach to security facilitated through open dialogue and information exchange on shared security challenges, applying an expanded concept of security as outlined in the Boe Declaration;
- Work together bilaterally to identify and respond to shared security challenges in the Pacific region and internationally, including environmental and climate change security, transnational and human security, applying an expanded concept of security as outlined in the Boe Declaration;

- Cooperate on information and assessment exchange in areas of common interest, including, but not limited to: geo-political and geo-economic developments policing and law enforcement, maritime security, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, cybersecurity, health security, biosecurity, illicit drugs, border security, and other emerging security issues;
- Work together to uphold the international rules-based order;
- Improve Tonga's telecommunications resilience and strengthen cyber-security cooperation;
- Continue to support Tonga's leadership in managing disaster response and respond swiftly to disasters.

## **People**

- Encourage and strengthen heritage, cultural, and sports linkages between New Zealand and Tonga, including through leveraging Tongan diaspora connections;
- Work together to achieve universal health coverage through a portfolio of bilateral and regional programmes, and institutional linkages, that strengthen health security, workforce capacity, and inclusive service delivery
- Strengthen cooperation in sports including sports events, sports development in Tonga and exchanges.
- Continue to collaborate to improve education outcomes and explore opportunities to expand vocational pathways;
- Deliver targeted scholarships and workplace training opportunities that enable leadership and professional capability development and work together on ways to increase joint partnerships in the process.
- Continue our cooperation on cross-border child protection issues and broader human rights issues.

## **Prosperity**

- Foster economic growth and resilience through joint strategic economic policy dialogue, and by supporting macroeconomic and fiscal reforms, linked to budget support;
- Grow reciprocal economic benefits and development impacts from Tonga's participation in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) and other labour mobility schemes;
- Seek to address the challenges associated with participation in labour mobility to align with Tonga's own aspirations, and ensure schemes are well designed, managed, and supported;
- Recognise our shared Blue Pacific identity, our connection to, and importance of, the ocean for our food security as well as our social, cultural, environmental and economic well-being;
- Leverage trade and economic opportunities created by the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations (PACER Plus) and other trade initiatives to increase the value of trade in goods, services and investment.

### **Shared Understandings and Approach:**

Under this Statement of Partnership, New Zealand and Tonga together will:

#### **Shared Understandings:**

- Hold periodic ministerial level talks to consider and refresh the priority areas set out in this Statement;
- Explore opportunities for Tonga to re-establish its permanent diplomatic presence in New Zealand;
- Hold annual officials' level talks to monitor progress against the accepted priority areas set out in this Statement;
- Jointly develop a framework to monitor progress, and ensure collaboration, in the accepted priority areas;

- Coordinate long-term and predictable assistance to priority sectors in accordance with sector plans;
- Work towards increasing the proportion of development expenditure channelled through higher level aid modalities and managed within Tongan country systems;
- Strengthen the bilateral partnership through open and honest communication and effective delivery of accepted priority areas of cooperation;
- Coordinate development assistance at sector level alongside other partners and stakeholders; and
- Provide timely and regular financial updates on the Tonga development assistance programme.

**Approach:**

- Pursue these understandings based on the joint respect of each country's integrity and sovereignty;
- Maintain ongoing open communication at all levels to ensure effective cooperation, coordination, and accountability;
- Pursue coherence and integration across internal and foreign policy and development efforts;
- Pursue development activities that are inclusive, resilient, sustainable and effective;
- Respect the channels of communication and processes for coordination between governments;
- Be clear about, and accountable for, what we will each deliver; and
- Pursue flexibility to respond to emerging priorities as they arise.

This Statement of Partnership will take effect on the date of its signature. Any jointly decided amendment to the priorities, commitments, or principles will be decided in writing. Either side may withdraw from this Statement of Partnership by providing written notice at least ninety (90) days prior to the intended date of termination.

Signed at

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**For New Zealand**

**For the Kingdom of Tonga**

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*Rt Hon Christopher Luxon*

*Hon Hu'akavameiliku*

*Prime Minister of New Zealand*

*Prime Minister of the Kingdom of  
Tonga*