

From: DS PDG

Sent: Monday, 11 September 2023 9:27 am

To: PACPF; DEVPP; DS PDG; NUKU'ALOFA

Cc: DCE; CEO; ALL DIVISIONS (FM); ... ALL POSTS; FM.P/S MFA (Seemail); FM.P/S Associate MFA (Seemail)

Subject: FORMAL MESSAGE: AMBASSADOR FOR GENDER EQUALITY (PACIFIC)/TUIA TĀNGATA, LOUISA WALL, VISIT TO TONGA 8-14 JULY 2023

RĀPOPOTO – SUMMARY

On the invitation of the Tonga Leiti's Association (TLA), Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific)/Tuia Tāngata, Louisa Wall visited Tonga from 8-14 July 2023. The purpose of Ambassador Wall's visit was to advance discussions on SOGIESC equality with a range of Pacific LGBTQIA+ leaders and allies; participate in TLA's national Rainbow Family Consultation; participate in the Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN) Regional meeting; and judge part of the TLA's 30th anniversary Miss Galaxy Competition.

Ambassador Wall was also invited to participate in a discussion about fair representation of women in the Tongan Legislative Assembly by the Fi-e-Fi-a`a Fafine Tonga (FFFT) Coalition Executive Committee.

HOHENGA – ACTION

Hei titiro māu – For your information.

PŪRONGO – REPORT

Tonga Leiti's Association

The Tonga Leiti's Association (TLA) is an advocacy and education organisation in Tonga, and is the only organisation in the country dedicated to LGBTQIA+ issues. It has long advocated for the decriminalisation of consensual same-sex relations between men in Tonga. As part of its advocacy function, TLA hosts annual Miss Galaxy pageants and undertakes consultations on SOGI-related rights and issues across the country.

Tonga Leiti's Association Second National Rainbow Family Consultation

2 According to TLA President Joey Mataele, the purpose of the Rainbow Family Consultation was to educate faith leaders about Leiti issues and to discuss a pathway to decriminalise same-sex relations in Tonga.

3 The one-day Consultation was opened on 11 July by Guest of Honour Princess Frederica Tuita, and attended by Tonga's Deputy Prime Minister and Justice and Prisons Minister Samiu Vaipulu; New South Wales Legislative Council Member Hon Penny Sharpe; members of the diplomatic corps; TLA members, and guests.

4 Government representatives made vocal expressions of support for LGBTQIA+ members of the community exercising their equal rights under the law. Justice and Prisons Minister Samiu Vaipulu noted the violence and abuse directed at the community and underscored his commitment as to holding perpetrators of violence to account and to providing a responsive justice system.

5 s6(a)

Faith and Law: Centring the Conversation to Genealogy Panel

6 Ambassador Wall was joined on the "Faith and Law" panel by Hon Penny Sharpe, Mataele, and British LGBTQIA+ activist Lady Phyll.

7 In a Q&A style session, panellists suggested using common language and core values to highlight the connection between LGBTQIA+ peoples and Tonga, drawing on the Tongan values of Faka'apa'apa (respect) and Tauhi vaha'a (maintaining good relationships), and centring the conversation on people and their stories, rather than laws and policies.

8 There was consensus at the session that the time was not right to push for amending legislation to decriminalise crossdressing and sodomy. A staggered approach beginning with raising awareness with real-life stories, to foster a coalition-like arrangement with church and religious leaders, was discussed as an alternative to law reform, for the time being.

The Commonwealth Equity Network (TCEN)

9 TCEN is a network of Commonwealth civil society organisations working to challenge the inequalities faced by LGBTQIA+ people. The Network was set up with the aim of giving a voice to LGBTQIA+ communities across the Commonwealth and to support joint advocacy in identifying a Commonwealth solution to a Commonwealth problem. TCEN also was established to catalyse the meaningful change needed to end discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity/expression or sex characteristics. There are 66 organisations in TCEN located across 47 Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Pacific.

10 TCEN members from Aotearoa New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Samoa and Vanuatu gathered for the first time in the Pacific region to share the challenges and opportunities being faced within their respective countries. The convening focused on:

- Building links and solidarity among TCEN members based in and working in the Pacific;
- Understanding TCEN and its core work influencing change via Commonwealth processes;
- Reviewing and discussing TCEN's current strategy, so each member could identify how working to deliver the strategy could support achievement of their ongoing work and identify new areas of collaboration; and
- Discussing and brainstorming on some critical points of advocacy and preparation towards the CHOGM 2024 in Samoa.

11 Key emerging issues and challenges identified were the lack of legal protection of LGBTQIA+ rights; social stigmatisation, gender-based violence; lack of political will &

commitment to LGBTQIA+ issues; lack of resource allocation and support to LGBTQIA+ CSOs and difficulty accessing funding due to complex funding applications, processes and requirements from donors.

12 TCEN members worked to translate the key emerging issues into three action plans for the Pacific Region – a Communication Strategy, a Safety & Security Plan and a Resource Mobilisation Plan (Comment: we will forward these once available).

TLA Events

13 This year marked the 30th anniversary of the Miss Galaxy Queen Pageant. Over several nights TLA used the Miss Galaxy platform to raise awareness and promote this year's theme: "protecting Tonga Leitis from violence and injustice". The Pageant is a highlight in the Tongan calendar and is attended by hundreds each night.

14 With support through the High Commission Fund, TLA and Tonga Netball awarded prizes on the final night of the Arii 'o e Hau Netball Tournament, themed "All Sports are for All Genders: Health & Justice for All". s9(2)(g)(i)

Other discussions

15 Fi-e-Fi-a 'a Fafine Tonga (FFFT) Coalition is a group whose aim is to increase broad-based support for, and unified advocacy around, women's leadership. Its membership includes the Civil Society Forum of Tonga (CSFT), Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili (MFF), Women and Children Crisis Centre (WCCC), Tonga National Youth Congress (TNYC), Tonga National Centre for Women and Children (TNCWC) and representatives from academic, church, private sector and CSO sectors in Tonga.

16 A priority focus for the FFFT Coalition is the development of a roadmap for the introduction of Temporary Special Measures for women's political representation. Ambassador Wall met with the Executive Committee, which is in the process of identifying more members and developing a Campaign Strategy. Ambassador Wall will have ongoing virtual contact to support this initiative.

KA MUTU/ENDS