



FALE ALEA 'O TONGA

**Statement by Hon Tevita Fatafehi Puloka
People's Representative for Tongatapu 1**

**Geneva, Switzerland
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MADAM PRESIDENT, H.E. Ambassador Ichikawa Tomiko Permanent Representative of Japan to the Conference on Disarmament

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Mālō e lelei and warm greetings from the Kingdom of Tonga.

It is a great honour to be with you today, and I thank Her Excellency Ambassador Ichikawa Tomiko for her kind invitation. I speak to you not only as a representative of my people, but also as a committed supporter of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention and its goal to be adopted by all nations.

MADAM PRESIDENT,

Last year, I travelled to Cambodia for the Fifth Review Conference of the Convention. There, I saw with my own eyes the terrible damage caused by anti-personnel mines.

I met people who had lost their homes, their limbs, and their loved ones. I saw children whose lives had been changed forever. The pain and suffering caused by these weapons is something I will never forget.

With the strong encouragement and support of the Lord Speaker of Tonga, Fakafanua, and my fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly, I have taken this cause to heart. We have pushed for Tonga to join this important convention. And I am proud to share that our efforts are starting to show results.

Thanks to this growing support, Tonga's Permanent Representative to the United Nations has restarted formal talks about joining the Convention. In April this year, during Parliament Question Time, I asked the Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence, His Royal Highness Prince Tupouto'a 'Ulukalala, to explain the government's position. He confirmed that the Ministry is now working closely with the Attorney General's Office, and that the treaty is being reviewed by the Law Committee of the Privy Council

We have been encouraged to hear that work is already underway, and that Tonga could join the Convention by December. I will continue to follow this process closely in Parliament and give it my full support.

I also wish to congratulate the Republic of the Marshall Islands for officially joining the Convention. This is a great achievement for our Pacific region.

Mr. President, Tonga is one of the few countries in the world that has not yet ratified the Convention. This is something I find very troubling.

That is why I have made it my personal mission to help change that. We do not want Tonga to be left behind. We want to stand with the rest of the world in making our future safer and more peaceful.

To all those who have supported this cause before us – especially Japan – I thank you. Your leadership gives courage to small nations like mine.

Together, we can make sure that anti-personnel mines become weapons of the past.

‘OFA ATU

Mālō ‘aupito. Thank you.