



PERMANENT MISSION  
OF THE KINGDOM OF TONGA  
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

**Statement by**

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Assistant Director of Environment**

**on the occasion of the**

**Twelfth Session of the  
Commission on Sustainable Development**

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**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

**Thank you Mr. Chairman,**

**Before I make some remarks in a national capacity, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the earlier statements delivered by:**

**Qatar, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China;  
Mauritius, on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States; and  
New Zealand, on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Water resources, sanitation and human settlement issues underpin the processes towards achieving the three pillars of sustainable development for small island countries such as Tonga. As these three thematic areas inter-related in terms of their use and impact, addressing them in a holistic and concurrent fashion not only takes account of the environmental impacts that bear upon them but also the driving forces that shape the state of water resources. At the same time we are able to take into consideration the outputs of human use such as waste water and sanitation issues.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**Sustainable water management will continue to be a development challenge in Tonga and other similar small island developing countries where fresh water resources are controlled by the geophysical characteristics of the islands and its climatic variability. Surface water resources are not present in most of the island groups in Tonga. Where they are present (i.e. 'Eua, Tofua, and Niuafo'ou) they are either small or saline and rainwater collected in water tanks remain the main source of water supply. On the 'bigger' islands in Tonga, in addition to rainwater tanks, water is taken from the underground aquifers. However, the size of each island directly corresponds to the size of the freshwater lens floating on top of sea water, and water recharge is dependent on precipitation.**

**Mr. Chairman,**

**On the main island of Tongatapu, the average annual recharge rate is only 30% or 520 mm. Despite, these geological constraints, it is estimated that 97% of the population has access to safe water supply and that 94% of all households have adequate sanitation facilities.**

**Over 40% of Tonga's 'urban' population lives in the capital, Nuku'alofa. Such a concentration, accelerated by a continuing population inflow from the outer islands, will undoubtedly greatly impact water availability and quality as well as sanitation.**

However, Mr. Chairman, sustainable water management and sanitation management in Tonga also means technology development and transfer and related capacity building. The development of appropriate desalination facilities is an option for partnership with the international community as recent monitoring in Tonga, shows a situation of increasing salt concentration.

Water, sanitation and human settlement planning and management arrangements should take account of climate variability, our capacity to identify trends, manage risks and adapt to hazards such as extreme weather conditions exacerbated by climate change and sea level rise.

Mr Chairman,

During this CSD session and the next we will undoubtedly continue to build collaborative efforts, partnerships and identify further priorities for action. The situation of water availability and quality in Tonga and other Pacific island countries in our region only emphasizes the unique vulnerability of small island developing states - a vulnerability that is controlled and determined by its physical state. These specific concerns are well known and have recently been reaffirmed by the global community at the Third World Water Forum and in initiatives such as the Caribbean-Pacific Joint Programme for Action on Water and Climate (JPfA).

Finally Mr. Chairman, my delegation is optimistic that the CSD process and other relevant and related processes will further strengthen global, regional and national assistance in striving for the common goal of sustainable development for all.

I thank you.