

## India-Kingdom of Tonga Bilateral Relations

### Background

India and Kingdom of Tonga have traditionally enjoyed a close relationship. Late King Tupou IV and Queen paid State Visits to India in 1971 and 1976. Former Indian Prime Minister Late Mrs. Indira Gandhi visited Tonga in 1981.

### High-Level Exchanges

**FIPIC:** The Forum for India-Pacific Island Countries was inaugurated on 19 November 2014 at Suva. Hon'ble Prime Minister of India also hosted the First Summit of the Forum in Suva (Fiji) during his historic visit to Fiji on 19 November 2014. The Forum saw participation of 14 Pacific Island Countries. Tongan delegation led by Prime Minister Lord Tu'ivakano attended the Summit.

**FIPIC-II:** As a follow-up of the historic first FIPIC Summit in 2014, India organized the second FIPIC at Jaipur on 21 August 2015, which was hosted by Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Building upon the success of the first FIPIC, India announced major initiatives to boost cooperation with the 14 Pacific Island countries. Tonga delegation led by Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries, attended the Forum.

**Interaction with PSIDS at New York:** On 24 September 2019, on the sidelines of the UNGA, Prime Minister of India Hon. Narendra Modi held an interaction, first of its kind, with the leaders of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS). This high-level exchange will be followed up with the third Summit meeting of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), which is scheduled to be held in the first half of 2020.

**India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC):** Government of India organized the India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference (IPISDC) at Suva, Fiji on 25-26 May 2017. Minister of State for External Affairs Gen. (Dr.) V.K.Singh (Retd.) hosted the event. Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister for Agriculture, Food, Forests & Fisheries led the Tongan delegation to the Conference.

**International Solar Alliance:** Tonga has become one of the Founding Members of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) – a joint initiative of the Governments of India and France to promote solar energy. Hon. Semisi Fakahau, Minister of Agriculture visited New Delhi to attend the Founding Conference of ISA on 11 March 2018.

### **Other Important Visits/Exchanges:**

- Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha Smt. Meira Kumar visited Tonga from 17-20 April 2012 to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentary Assembly Mid-Year Executive Committee Meeting. Hon'ble Speakers of the Legislative Assemblies of Nagaland, Shri Kiyanielie Peseyie and Rajasthan, Shri Dependra Singh Shekhawat also attended the meeting. Hon'ble Speaker launched the Kolomotu'a Solar Project on 19 April during her stay in Tonga.
- Minister for Internal Affairs Hon Fe'ao Vakata, and Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade Elsie Fukofuka, attended Distinguished Visitors Programme for Pacific Islands Countries, from 7-17 February 2016, in India.
- Shri Mansukh Lal Mandaviya, Hon. Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways, Shipping and Chemicals and Fertilizers, visited Tonga on 25-26 April 2018.
- Hon. Poasi Mataele Tei, Minister for Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly of the ISA in New Delhi on 31 October 2019.

### Development Partnership Assistance

Government of India provides annual grants for community development projects in Tonga. In addition, training slots are offered to Tonga under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme of the Government of India. Diplomats are also offered training at the Foreign Service Institute of India. In 2018, India gave US\$ 1 million as assistance for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction after Tropical Cyclone Gita. US\$500,000 was given as immediate cash assistance and the balance amount has been given through UNDP for renovation of export facility in Tonga.

### Commercial and Economic Relations

The bilateral trade figures of the last three financial years (1 April-31 March) are as under:

<b>Year</b>	<b>Exports to India</b>	<b>Import from India</b>	<b>Balance of Trade</b>
2016-17	1.21	0.05	1.16
2017-18	1.26	-	1.26
2018-19	0.35	0.05	0.3

(Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India) in US\$ Millions

### **Cultural Relations**

The **International Day of Yoga** is celebrated with great enthusiasm in Tonga every year with participation from high dignitaries. As part of **Namaste Pacifika Festival of India**, Odissi Dance Group led by Ms. Meera Das visited and performed in Tonga in November 2017