



GOVERNMENT OF TONGA

MEDIA RELEASE

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“Tonga leads Polynesian Leaders Group’s in 7th Meeting in Apia”

The annual meeting of the Polynesian Leaders Group, was held in Apia, Samoa on 4th September, 2017 on the margin of the 48th Pacific Islands Forum meetings. The Seventh meeting (PLG7) of the PLG was chaired by Tonga’s Prime Minister, Hon. Samuela ‘Akilisi Pohiva, under the theme, ‘Sustainable Polynesia, Empowering Polynesia through regional innovation, infrastructural cooperation and resilience’.

The meeting was attended by the Heads of Government of American Samoa, Cook Islands, Tahiti French Polynesia, Niue, Samoa, Tokelau, Tuvalu and Wallis of Futuna. Representatives from Hawaii, Rapanui, Maori and CROP agencies also attended the meeting as observers.

In his opening statement, Hon Pohiva urged members to pursue firm tangible solutions and action oriented goals to bridge the gap in the group’s development and survival.

“Tonga has chosen the theme *Sustainable Polynesia* as an extension to the UN Global Sustainable Development Goal Theme and the promotion of nationalism in the PIFS countries.

”He stated that the Polynesian Leader Group has specific focus on empowering Polynesia through regional innovation, infrastructural cooperation and resilience.

“In the spirit of regionalism, the Pacific Islands Forum is taking leadership in pursuing issues that has been long common and central to the survival of our island nations such as climate change, social economic development and political stability,” he said.

He noted that the Pacific nations are the smallest in development yet occupying the largest ocean in the world.

He told members that connectivity was the key to overcome the isolation experienced and emphasized the need to take advantage of the modern development and infrastructures and to collaborate with other countries that can.

“But for some of us we cannot do this alone. Hence, we look into this forum to join collaboration and cooperation with those of us, like Samoa and French Polynesia who can.”

Hon Pohiva reminded members of the uniqueness of Polynesia to sustain heritage, culture, traditional knowledge and information in order to uphold diversity and sovereignty.

He also extended the gratitude of the Tongan Government, to the Prime Minister and Government of Samoa for their coordination and hosting leaders during the PLG and PIF Meetings.

Some of the priorities discussed in the meeting included tourism and regional aviation, connectivity, infrastructure, innovation, ICT and transport and climate change and oceans.

The next PLG meeting will be chaired by Tuvalu in 2018 (PLG8), followed by American Samoa in 2019 (PLG9).





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