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**Subject:** FORMAL MESSAGE: AMBASSADOR WALL'S VISIT TO TONGA

**Security Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED

[UNCLASSIFIED]

## SUMMARY

Ambassador for Gender Equality (Pacific) Tuia Tāngata, Louisa Wall, had a successful visit to Tonga from 1 to 5 September taking forward her focus on women's full and effective participation and leadership in all levels of decision-making in the Pacific, including through sport. The occasion for the visit, supporting the Women's Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour, provided an opportunity for Ambassador Wall to meet gender focal points, learn more about the Tongan context and consider where Aotearoa New Zealand could provide more support. She was able to build relationships with a wide range of individuals and groups across government, faith-based organisations, international financial institutions and advocacy groups, and establish many strong connections which will likely prove valuable for future initiatives.

## ACTION

For information.

## REPORT

A flagship component of New Zealand's Pacific Sports Diplomacy has been "Championing Oceania", which aims to leverage New Zealand's hosting of the 2022 Rugby World Cup to maximise Pacific participation through a series of engagements and events across the region and in New Zealand. Support from the Pacific Enabling Fund has helped to develop leadership capabilities, participation and competition across the region, including through a Trophy Tour through five Pacific Island Countries and Territories. Ambassador Wall joined the Tonga leg of the Trophy Tour on 1-5 Tonga, joining the New Zealand Rugby programme of sports diplomacy and capacity building with young sportspeople.

2 Ambassador Wall also undertook a day-long formal programme of calls with women leaders from across government and civil society on 2 September. These meetings were an opportunity for the Ambassador to hear from key people from across government and other agencies on gender equality issues and initiatives in the Kingdom of Tonga.

Meetings included:

- Attorney General, Linda Simiki Folaumoetu'i, is the government's senior legal counsel and has been the AG since 2019. She is also a member of King's Judicial Appointments Committee under the Privy Council. The conversation with Ambassador Wall was wide ranging, including potential reforms to the Crimes Act (for the definition of sexual assault and rape), and measures for increasing women's representation in Parliament.
- Clerk of Fale Alea (Parliament of Tonga), Gloria Pole'o, has been in the role since 2013 and has 15 years legal work experience in Tonga. Gloria Pole'o is also a member of the Women in Law Association (WILA). Both Gloria Pole'o and Ambassador Wall discussed the similarities and differences across both parliaments, legislative processes, and their engagement in various global parliamentary groups, networks and conferences.

- Rosamond Bing, CEO of Ministry of Land & Natural Resources, Rosamond Bing, is the current Chairperson of the Pacific Geospatial and Surveying Council, a Co-Chair of the Extended Bureau of the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UNGGIM) and a board member of the UNGGIM Asia Pacific Extended Bureau. Rosamond Bing provided a very useful overview of the work of her ministry and Tonga's land tenure system.
- Director of Women Affairs Division (WAD), Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga, has been in this role since July 2012. Previously she served as Deputy Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office and Deputy Director and Head of Women's Department in the Ministry of Education, Women's Affairs and Culture, providing policy advice on gender issues. The meeting was a timely opportunity for Ambassador Wall and Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga to re-connect following their engagement in Fiji at the Regional Working Group for the Implementation of Domestic Violence Legislation recently and to hear about Polotu Fakafanua-Paunga's priorities for WAD.

3 Ambassador Wall also met with various leaders from various Civil Society organisations (CSOs) and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). A dinner at the Official Residence was a chance to engage with women leaders from across Tonga. Guests included:

- Mrs 'Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki, Women & Children's Crisis Centre Founder and Director
- Mrs Betty Blake, Founder and President of Ma'a Fafine mo e Famili
- Mrs Katrina Ma'u, Human rights advocate and youth training provider
- Ms Vanessa Heleta, Talitha Project Founder/Director, a women's rights activist and Special Olympics organiser
- Mrs Eleni Latu'ila, Director of Tonga National Centre for Women and Children

4 The team from the National Rugby League (NRL) briefly met with Ambassador Wall to talk about their Gender-based Violence programme in Tonga. Ambassador Wall also met with the Secretary General of Tonga's Olympic Committee and they discussed a proposed plan by Australia to support Pacific athletes for the 2032 Brisbane Olympic Games. A meeting was also held with the Director of the Women and Children's Crisis Centre (WCCC), 'Ofa Guttenbeil Likiliki.

5 A working lunch with the ADB Senior Country Officer, Balwyn Fa'otusia, and the Project Coordinator for Families Free of Violence (FFOV) programme in Tonga, Sergeant Mick Serbatoio (Australian Federal Police), was an opportunity for Ambassador Wall to hear about what other development partners are doing in the gender space. Other key players, UN Women and the World Bank were unable to attend.

6 Ambassador Wall also supported the Women's Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour during her visit. The response from people across Tonga was very positive and the tour helped to raise the profile of women's rugby. The tour included an event at the Tanoa Hotel which the Prime Minister attended. The Women's Rugby World Cup Trophy Tour also managed to visit Ha'apai which was positive.

ENDS.