

OceaniaHR

A Grassroots NGO Movement
For the Promotion & Protection of
Global Human Rights in the Pacific

OceaniaHR is pleased to participate in the second session of the UN Human Rights Council Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review. It is in this historic session that the human rights situation in Oceania – the liquid continent – is being part of the global dialogue in this new body.

We are pleased to participate and look forward to further creative collaboration to ensure the effective promotion and protection of human rights in the Pacific.

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TONGA: The Pacific Kingdom Promoting Greater Human Rights in Region

Issue: Throughout the region of the Pacific, there is a very low record of ratification of the core international human rights instruments such as the International Bill of Rights – the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) etc. There is equally a low level of completion of reports in a timely manner and participating fully in the UN treaty body mechanisms.

Question: Would Tonga work with NGOs in country as well as the region of Oceania to draft a working schedule for the ratification of the major core human rights instruments and institutions such as CEDAW? Would Tonga live up to its accession to the UN ICERD specifically article 9 and submit its periodic report that is a decade overdue? Would Tonga submit its report to the CRC and appear before the CRC as well as consider adoption of the UN Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography?

Recommendation: Tonga work in collaboration with civil society to complete its periodic report and appear before the ICERD in 2009/2010. Tonga work in collaboration to finalize its initial report and appear before the CRC in 2009/2010. Tonga work with civil society and its female member of Parliament to prepare to ratify the CEDAW instrument to ensure gender justice in the Pacific.

Issue: The regions of the world have created important human rights mechanisms in the Americas, Europe and Africa. These international charters, declarations, conventions and protocols enshrine the cultural values and principles of the people of the region. These international instruments are implemented through regional instruments such as commissions and courts. The Pacific is the only region that doesn't have such a human rights mechanism.

Question: Would Tonga be a leader in the Pacific and encourage the creation of a regional charter and commission to develop a culture of human rights in Oceania?

Question: Would Tonga host and work with other nations in the region to create a regional mechanism rooted in the culture of the Pacific?

Recommendation: Tonga participate in regional dialogues focusing on the creation of a regional human rights mechanism for Oceania to better protect and promote human rights.

Issue: There is a lack of knowledge of the international human rights instruments enshrining human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is important for the peoples of the Pacific to know their rights. It is important to create training programs and seminars to educate and empower citizens to be aware of fundamental freedoms. Human Rights Education could be offered in schools but also have training programs for civil society.

Question: Would Tonga work with international partners and regional NGOs to host a seminar on human rights education for school children, teachers and also NGOs? As Tonga has ratified the CRC, would Tonga introduce a human rights curriculum in schools? Would Tonga work with NGOs focusing on human rights education to organize trainings for citizens to learn about their basic rights under international law?

Recommendation: Tonga host a national human rights education seminar focusing primarily on human rights education for children leading to an adoption of national curriculum for human rights. Tonga host a national human rights training to educate citizens about the UN charter and treaty bodies, especially with recent reforms such as the creation of the UN Human Rights Council and the UPR. Tonga produce popular human rights education material in indigenous language so people aware of their human rights.

Issue: The special rapporteur mechanisms rarely visit the Pacific region. It is important that the special mechanism of the UN Human Rights Council visit the countries in the region to assist and support in follow-up activities. In the past, there have been requests for SR to visit Tonga and there has been little interest by the government in engaging these mechanisms.

Question: Would Tonga issue a standing invitation for UN special rapporteurs to visit?

Recommendation: Tonga allow UN special rapporteurs to visit Tonga.

Thank you for your consideration on these important issues in Oceania