

Information Note
Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Regional Preparatory Meeting
Nuku'alofa, the Kingdom of Tonga, 16 – 18 August, 2023.

Welcome to the Kingdom of Tonga and to the Pacific Small Island Developing States (PSIDS) Regional Preparatory Meeting, to be held in Nuku'alofa, the Kingdom of Tonga, on the 16th – 18th of August, 2023. Please find information on meeting arrangements that you will find useful.

I. General information about the Kingdom of Tonga

Geography

Tonga, officially known as Kingdom of Tonga, also called as the Friendly Islands is a country in the South western Pacific Ocean. It consists of some 170 islands divided into three main island groups. Tongatapu in the south, Ha'apai in the centre, and Vava'u in the north. There are also isolated islands which includes 'Eua, Niufo'ou and Niuatoputapu. Tonga's total land area is dispersed between latitudes 15 degrees and 23 degree South and longitudes 173 degree and 177 degrees West. The main island is Tongatapu, which the meeting will be held.



Language

The main language used is Tongan and English. Most Tongan civil servants are fluent in Tongan and English.

Climate

Tonga's climate is tropical and is defined by a wet season from November to April with moderate and variable rainfall, and a dry season from May to October. The wettest months are January, February and March with a precipitation exceeding 250mm of rainfall per month. However, according to The Weather Channel, Tonga is forecasted to experience rainy and cloudy days in the upcoming fortnight.



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Currency and Banking

The local currency is Tongan pa'anga (TOP). There are two international Bank in Tonga which are ANZ Bank and BSP Bank. There are also local commercial banks which are Tonga Development Bank (TDB) and MBF Bank. Indicative exchange rates are:

1 USD \approx 2.31984 TOP

1€ \approx 2.55035 TOP

(source <https://www.oanda.com/currency-converter/en/?from=EUR&to=TOP&amount=1>)

- Banking Hours are:

Monday – Friday: 09:00am – 04:00pm.

- Tonga Development Bank on Saturdays

09:00am – 12:30pm

Tourist places, shopping areas, ordinary coffee shops and restaurants accept cash payment, *although more established shops may accept debit or credit cards. Credit card purchases often have additional service fees. Currency conversion and ATM bank withdrawals can be completed at the airport, at the hotel, or at nearby tourist spots in town.*



Time Difference

Tonga Time Zone is GMT/UTC + 13

Tonga is 17 hours ahead of Washington, DC, USA.

Business Hours

Public Offices and major business are generally open from 08:30am till 16:30pm from Monday to Fridays. Businesses and the general/super market(s) are open on Saturdays. Only on Sunday most offices and business are closed for business.

Smoking and Alcohol Consumption

Smoking and alcohol consumption is prohibited in public areas except designated areas.



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Conference Venue

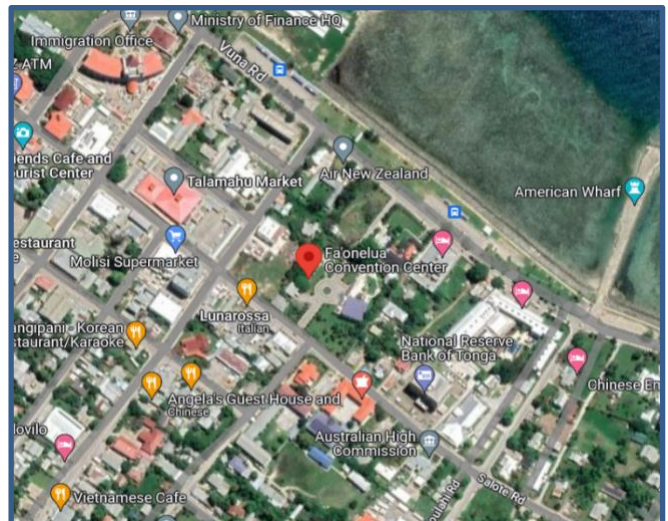
The conference will be held at the Fa'onelua Convention Centre. It is located in Nuku'alofa nearby to several government offices, such as the Ministry of Tourism.

The conference venue is near the handicrafts and fruits market and other shops.



Transportation -

The Government of the Tonga will be providing transportation from the accommodation to the meeting venue and return.



II. Meeting Programme

The meeting will be conducted in English. The regional meeting will be held over three days from the 16th – 18th of August, 2023.

III. Registration and IDs.

Registered participants will be presented an ID before the opening ceremony of the program.

IV. Arrival and Departure/ Transport to and from Airport

Transportation will be made available for the participants from the Fua'amotu International Airport to the hotel, and back to the airport after the conference.



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V. Visa and Immigration Requirements

For entry to Tonga please prepare the following documentation:

- Visa
- Travel Itinerary
- Copy of passport biodata

Persons traveling into or out of Tonga are required to declare to custom officials at the borders if they are carrying on themselves or in their possessions any currency or bearer negotiable instruments of \$10,000 or more (or equivalent amounts in foreign currency). Travellers must make this declaration by completing a Border Currency Reporting Form which will be made available at the customs counter at the airport.

VI. Hotel Accommodation

The Government of Tonga has already allocated suitable accommodation to all meeting participants.

VII. Meals

The Government of the Kingdom of Tonga will offer morning tea, luncheon and afternoon tea throughout the meeting. Dinner receptions will also be hosted by the Government on the 16th and 18th respectively. The venue for the Receptions will be provided in the program. Participants will need to make their own arrangements for other meals.

VIII. Insurance

Government of Tonga does not provide travel or medical insurance cover for participants or their belongings. Participants are expected to make their own arrangements for accident, illness, and luggage insurance, if so desired.

IX. Climate and Conference Attire

According to the weather forecast, the Kingdom is looking at windy and cloudy days during the program. It is advised that conference attire should be smart casual or business wear for the entire duration of the conference. Average weather temperature is approximately 12° – 15°.

X. Internet Services

Complimentary Wi-fi access will be available at the conference venue. The network name and password will be provided at the centre. Please bring your own laptop computer, if desired.

SIM Cards will be provided and participants can purchase their own data at the venue.



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XI. First Aid and Health Services

Medical emergency call number is 922 (Tonga Police), 933 (Ambulance) and 999 (Fire and Emergency Services).

Tonga has one General Hospital which is the Vaiola Hospital. From the Fa'onehua Convention Centre, it is 3.6km (approx. 9min) via Taufu'ahau Rd, or 4.3km (9mins) Vaha'akolo Rd and Fatafehi Rd.

The closest pharmacy is Fasi Pharmacy Clinic and it is located across the National Reserve Bank, next to the conference venue.

XII. Security

Security will be provided.

XIII. Conference documents

Session documents can be accessed at: <https://sdgs.un.org/smallislands/regional-preparatory-meeting-pacific-region>

For ease and in order to reduce the amount of paper used. Only one conference programme and administrative note will be printed and distributed to each participant.

Conference proceedings will be reported and published after the conference. This will be uploaded to the conference website and a printed copy will be sent to each delegate, for their reference.

XIV. Contact Persons

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