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MEDIA RELEASE

Tonga Meteorological Services consults Ha'apai stakeholders on its 2022-2031 Strategic Plan and preliminary discussions about the upcoming Tropical Cyclone Season (2021-2022) Outlook

(24th September 2021, Pangai, Ha'apai)

The Tonga Meteorological Services has successfully completed a 1-day consultation workshop with selected stakeholders of Ha'apai to plan the development of the Tonga Meteorological Service Strategic Plan 2022-2031.



Figure 1: Participants of the Tonga Meteorological Service Strategic Planning Strategic Consultation workshop on the 24th September 2021, LDS conference room Hall, Pangai, Ha'apai.

In a Statement, the Director of Meteorology, Mr. Ofa Fa'anunu stated ***“Traditionally the planning of the activities of the Meteorological Service in the past was very much Regionally driven. With the support of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Program (SPREP) a series of Regional Strategies were developed to guide the work of Meteorological Services in the Pacific since***

around the year 2000. Since that time, we have come a long way in terms of the Development of the Met Office. We now have a Legislation (Meteorology Act 2017) that mandates what we do. What's left is a long-term plan to guide the Development of the MET Service to where we want it to be in 10years time. To complement Regional plans like the Pacific Islands MET Strategy (PIMS) 2017-2026 and the Corporate and Annual Plans of the Department. Its important to plan well and have a structured approach to our development as it will ensure that we are working collaboratively and in-sink with our stakeholders.

Our approach is to work closely with our Meteorological Offices and Stakeholders in the Niuas, Vava'u, Ha'apai, Tongatapu and Ha'apai to Develop this long-term strategy. This work is timely to establish our 10year goals and priorities since the Pacific Islands FORUM Leaders Meeting just approved the Decadal Weather Ready Investment Initiative for the Pacific Islands Meteorological Services tabled by Tonga at the recent FORUM Meeting to the tune of USD166M. Setting our priorities early is vital so we are able to tap into the various regional funding schemes available. The bottom line is finding the appropriate resources to develop the Meteorological function in Tonga. The Strategy we are developing will assist in this important aspect.

The consultation workshop was enriched by the interactive discussions on the Strategy and Meteorological needs of the various Sectors. During the Ha'apai Consultations a wide range of participants from the Government Sector, the Private/Business Sector, the Informal Sector and the Academia Sectors were present. The Director of Meteorology, Mr. Fa'anunu also discussed with all the representatives from each stakeholders the analysis of the upcoming Tropical Cyclone (TC) Season (2021-22) Outlook. A Moderate to High chance (50% to 70%) is indicated for this TC Season to be in La Nina Status. This implies that at least 2 Tropical Cyclones is expected to cross Tonga waters in the 2021/22 Season with High (75%) chance that 1 Tropical Cyclone will be Severe.

It is also typical that during a La Nina TC season there is an elevated risk of above normal rainfall for Tonga. Despite the fact that we are only one month away from the official start of the TC Season in 1st November 2021 to 30th April 2022, it is very important that we should always remain vigilant to the latest weather forecasts and updates in regard to the TC Season and outlooks. The official Tropical Cyclone Outlook for Tonga for the Season will be released around Mid-October. It is encouraged that all stakeholders and the people of Tonga should take note of the this and to make all necessary means for preparation for the upcoming season. Similar briefings were being made in a special meeting with the MEIDECC Officer in Charge Mr. 'Amoni Taumoe'anga at the Ha'apai Multi-Hazard Early Warning Emergency Operation Centre.



Figure 2: Stakeholders from the Academia Sector discuss their Meteorological, Ocean and Coast Radio Priorities. Mr. Laitia Fifita from the Ha'apai Meteorological Services facilitates this group at the LDS conference room, Pangai, Ha'apai.



Figure 3: Small Business & Private stakeholders considers their priorities for inclusion in the Meteorological Strategy 2022 – 2031. Mr. Samiu Vaitaki from the Ha'apai Meteorological Services facilitates this group at the LDS conference room, Pangai, Ha'apai.



Figure 4: Ha'apai Government and Public Enterprises stakeholders' representatives reflect on their Sector needs analysis for consideration for inclusion in the Meteorological Strategy 2022 – 2031. Mrs. Viva Veikoso from the Ha'apai Meteorological Services facilitates this group at the LDS conference room, Pangai, Ha'apai.



Figure 5: Ha'apai Non-Government Organization stakeholders' representatives reflect on their Sector needs analysis for consideration for inclusion in the Meteorological Strategy 2022 – 2031. Mrs. Seluvaia Vea from the Ha'apai Meteorological Services facilitates this group at the LDS conference room, Pangai, Ha'apai.



Figure 5: District and Town Officers stakeholders reflect on their Sector needs analysis for consideration for inclusion in the Meteorological Strategy 2022 – 2031. Mr. Pesa Kula from the Ha’apai Meteorological Services facilitates this group at the LDS conference room, Pangai, Ha’apai.



Figure 6: The Officer in Charge with the planning team of the Tonga Meteorological Services during their special meeting to further discuss the strategic planning priorities of the Ha’apai MET Services and the preliminary discussion of the TC Season (2021-22) Outlook at the Ha’apai Multi-Hazard Early Warning Emergency Operation Centre, Pangai, Ha’apai.

The Ha’apai consultations is the 3rd of 6 consultations planned Nationwide in the development of the Tonga Meteorology Strategy 2022-2031. The consultation was attended by 40 participants. The World Meteorological Organization through the

Climate Risk and Early Warning Systems (CREWS) Initiative and the Secretariat of the Pacific Environmental Program (SPREP) is funding the consultations.

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