



**ICAO FACILITATION CONFERENCE 2025**  
**Doha, Qatar, 14 – 17 Apr 2025**

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**17 Apr 2025**

**Venue: Sheraton Grand Doha (Al Dafna)**

**ICAO Facilitation Conference 2025**

Ministerial Statement by Honorable Dr. Taniela Fusimalohi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Infrastructure for the Kingdom of Tonga.

1. Honourable Chairman, Honourable Ministers, Distinguish Guests and Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.
2. Malo e Lelei and warm greetings from the Kingdom of Tonga.
3. It is my honor and privilege to address this conference on behalf of the Government of Tonga, as we partake in the *International Civil Aviation Organization Facilitation Conference 2025*. I am grateful for the constant efforts of ICAO in elevating the importance of ensuring that passengers remain at the heart in the future of the global air transport.
4. I wish to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to our host country, the State of Qatar, Ministry of Transport and the Qatar Civil Aviation Authority for graciously hosting us here at your beautiful city of Doha.
5. Mr Chairman, before us is a critical and crucial theme “*Facilitating the future of air transport: collaboration, efficiency, inclusivity: Streamlining Travel, Connecting Communities*”. The positive global outlook for the air traffic growth projecting to reach 12.4 billion passengers in 2050; highlights the timeliness of this theme and is fully supported by Kingdom of Tonga (herein refer to thereafter as Tonga).
6. My statement focused on sharing Tonga’s perspectives as one of the Pacific Small Island Development State (PSIDS) in respect to the theme of this conference. Tonga is a Pacific island country and it is made up of 171 small islands spread across 700,000 square kilometers of the Pacific Ocean. The aviation sector is one of the key economic enablers of Tonga as it provides direct connectivity to the world supporting the tourism, trade and the socio-economic sector in Tonga. Hence, Tonga is committed to strengthening the resilience, safety, and efficiency of our aviation sector – not only for the benefit of our people but for the broader Pacific region.
7. In December 2024, Tonga reached 92% of our pre-COVID air traffic as we strive to overcome the adverse impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Hunga Tonga Hunga Haapai volcanic eruption in 2022. Our vision is to build a robust aviation sector that connects Tonga domestically, regionally, and globally, while fostering opportunities for our workforce to develop, thrive and lead. We equally focused on ensuring our regulatory

frameworks are tailored to our unique context and capable to meeting both current and future demands. However, the on-going updates of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Standard and Recommended Practices (SARPs) as demanded by the global aviation community but proven to be very challenging for Tonga.

8. Tonga firmly believes that no country can achieve its aviation objectives in isolation. Multi-dimensional and robust collaboration is vital as we strive to meet and implement the requirements of the ICAO Annex 9. As such, I am pleased to advise that Tonga have just re-established our National Facilitation Committee with relevant stakeholders and agencies, and anticipates that our first meeting will convene in June 2025. We acknowledge the challenges in navigating through various sectors but with robust communication strategies between key stakeholders will overcome such challenge and ensures effectiveness and efficiency in facilitating of passengers.
9. Tonga has increased its efforts to prevent human trafficking. Tonga adopted the 2023-2027 Tonga National Action Plan to Counter Trafficking in Persons and Protect Vulnerable Migrants in November 2023. Tonga is taking measures to ensure that relevant procedures are established to enable reporting of trafficking incidents to competent authorities; and capacity building programs are provided for the relevant stakeholders.
10. Additionally, Tonga had recently launched the Migration Information and Data Analysis (MIDAS) as the new Border Management Information System (BMIS) aiming for a smoother, faster and more secure journey for the passengers within our border. This system empowered immigration officials to swiftly manage cross-border movements and enhance security protection of passengers by detecting and preventing of human trafficking, migrant smuggling and other risks.
11. Tonga prioritizes the protection of rights of passengers by establishing policies to support the inclusiveness and accessibility of person with disabilities. The infrastructure design of the Fua'amotu International Airport Upgrade Project factored the inclusion of passengers with disabilities. Additionally, Tonga is in the process of establishing our national policies to confirm that quality support is provided for families of aircraft accident victims as it engages with Australian Transport Safety Bureau.

12. In relation to developing of a national plan in preparation for an outbreak of a communicable disease such as the COVID-19 pandemic, Tonga has established a COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan 2020, and the Civil Aviation Office will establish a National Aviation Plan with focus on mitigating strategies for any outbreak communicable disease.
13. Tonga acknowledges the opportunities that are afforded through technological innovation to support seamless travel of passenger. However, Tonga is also very cautious of the security risks it may entail. Therefore, Tonga is exploring key technological initiatives and pertinent mitigating strategies such as cybersecurity risks that may impact passengers.
14. Tonga acknowledges the on-going support from our development partners in investing in our people and capacity building initiatives to shape a safe, sustainable, resilient and connected future for the aviation industry here in Tonga.
15. Honorable Chairman, while Tonga has made some progress, there is more that needs to be done. Tonga is committed to exploring common strategies to address share challenges with other Members States on this conference. We are confident that collaborative capacity building will lead to a more robust partnership to achieving sustainable future aviation.
16. As a final comment, I wish to emphasize that we should not just be talking about our challenges. Action is much needed to address challenges of the projected growth of the aviation sector.

Honourable Chairman, Your Excellencies, Our Generous Hosts, you can continue to count on Tonga's full support of all efforts towards the Doha Declaration.

**Malo 'Aupito and Thank you very much.**