



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Tonga on Alert for Flash Floods: Prime Minister and Minister Responsible for Disaster Management Convenes National Disaster Risk Management Committee Meeting to Assess Situation and Response Readiness**



Nuku'alofa, Tonga (March 19, 2024) – In response to the recent heavy rain and flood alerts issued by the Tonga Meteorological Services (TMS) for Tongatapu, 'Eua, Vava'u, and Ha'apai spanning from last Monday to this upcoming Thursday, the National Disaster Risk Management Committee (NDRMC) held its third consecutive meeting today, following the 17th of March, to assess the flood situation across the Kingdom. Led by Tonga's Prime Minister and Acting Minister for MEIDECC, Hon Hu'akavameiliku, the meeting was held at the National Disaster Risk Management Office (NDRMO). The main objective of the gathering was to promptly assess any flash flooding impacts resulting from the ongoing heavy rainfall patterns and to address immediate concerns within affected communities.

During the meetings, updates on the evolving flood situation were discussed. Tonga Meteorological Services provided weather updates and forecasts, while the NDRMO presented the first Situation Report from the Interagency Rapid Assessment to the NDRMC members. Responding to the situation, NDRMO activated the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC), conducted rapid initial assessments, and deployed two Interagency assessment teams to identify affected areas, impacts, required actions and necessary resources.

The Prime Minister of Tonga has urged local authorities to initiate preparations for potential flood-related emergency. This includes inspecting evacuation facilities and arranging for the evacuation of families if deemed necessary. The Prime Minister has specifically advised the NDRMO, Tonga Police, Tonga Fire & Emergency Services, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Infrastructure and other relevant ministries to stand ready with their response strategies for potential flooding situations. Additionally, the Tonga Police Commissioner has been instructed to conduct patrols and monitor

flood-prone areas, ensuring that defense resources are on standby. Updates are to be obtained from district and town officers regularly.

With the forecast of upcoming rainfall, NDRMO urges caution on inundated roads to prevent accidents and minimize the impact on neighboring homes. Drivers are reminded to drive slowly and heed signage on flooded roads. Should homes become inundated, citizens are encouraged to seek shelter in designated evacuation centers and halls. In case of urgent evacuation needs, Tonga Fire & Emergency Services can be reached at 999, Tonga Police at 922 and the National Emergency Operation Centre at 08006366 (Toll Free).

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