

TOKELAU a true Small Island Developing State

The Land and the People of Tokelau:

- Tokelau consists of three small coral atolls that lie between latitudes 8 and 10 degrees South and 171 and 173 degrees West. Atafu, the most northern atoll has a surface area of 3.5km²; Nukunonu, the central atoll is 4.7km² and Fakaofu, the southern atoll is 4km². From Atafu in the north to Fakaofu in the south, Tokelau extends for less than 200km and the atolls are 3–5 metres above sea level.
- The coral atolls provide a sustainable subsistence lifestyle but within a fragile environment. Tokelau maintains strong social cohesion, active traditions and a strong communal culture, which places considerable emphasis on collective effort and reward.
- Its total Exclusive Economic Zone is about 300,000km².
- Tokelau's population is 1383 (Dec. 2013 population count) with relatively large dependent groups – older and younger people – because younger people and those with young children tend to emigrate to pursue better employment and education opportunities overseas. There is a significant population gap in the 25–34 age groups.
- All Tokelauans have New Zealand citizenship and 7173 people indicating full or partial Tokelauan descent live in New Zealand (2013 NZ Census).
- Tokelau currently has no air transportation, and the only means of transport is by sea from Samoa (the trip usually takes between 24 and 30hours). All travel and supplies into and out of Tokelau originate and terminate in Samoa, Tokelau's closest neighbour.

Climate and Weather:

- Tokelau, being located in the easterly trade wind zone, has a tropical and marine climate. The mean annual temperature is 28 degrees centigrade and the mean annual rainfall is 2800 millimetres. There is a marked seasonality in rainfall incidence, with the 6 months between October and March accounting for about 60% of the total annual rainfall; December and January account for 25% of the annual total. The recent impacts of climate change have already been felt in Tokelau, with a severe drought in 2011, followed by Cyclone Evan in 2012.

Geology and Soils:

- The atolls are composed of calcium carbonate reef, sands, and rock. The soils are generally characterized as being highly alkaline, highly porous, and nutrient-poor and as having low humus content and a high surface salinity. Soils are considered to be one of the country's major restricting factors, especially in relation to land-based agricultural development. Because of the nature of soils, the agricultural economy is limited to a basic subsistence level.

Land-Based and Agricultural Resources:

- Cultivated food crops are generally limited to breadfruit (*Artocarpus altilis*), giant swamp taro 'pulaka' (*Cyrtosperma chamissonis*); taro palagi (*Xanthosoma sagittifolium*); giant taro (*Alocasia macrorrhizos*); bananas (*Mus* sp. [2 varieties]); papaya (*Carica papaya*); pandanus 'fala' (*Pandanus odoratissimus*); pumpkin (*Cucurbita* sp.); and coconut (*Cocos nucifera*).

Marine Resources:

- It is generally recognized that Tokelau's greatest asset is in its natural marine resources. Tokelau's fisheries are made up of an inshore lagoon fishery, reef fishery, and an abundant offshore pelagic fish and deep-ocean fishery. It has been reported that up to 55% of all animal protein consumed in the atolls is from reef, migratory, and shellfish. The Offshore fisheries provide Tokelau with the majority of its annual national income and therefore are of great importance.

Political Structure:

- Tokelau is a non-self-governing territory of New Zealand. Tokelau wishes to move toward greater self-governance and is supported in this by the Government of New Zealand and the UN Special Committee on Decolonization. The 'modern house of Tokelau' is the product of a major initiative that aims toward self-government: it provides a governance structure that fits the cultural context and increases Tokelau's capacity to manage its own affairs in a more sustainable fashion. An elected Council (Executive Council) works through a General Fono approval system (Parliament) which comprises representatives of the Taupulega (Village Council of Elders), Fatupaepae (Women's Group) and Aumaga / Taulealea (Men's Group).
- Tokelau's national development challenges are similar to those of other Pacific Island Countries (PICs), especially the atoll nations. These are:
 - A meagre and fragile natural resource base;
 - Relative geographic isolation;
 - Heavy emigration;
 - Limited human resources;
 - Restricted human development capacity, and
 - A general dependency on foreign aid and remittances.

All these limitations are acute in Tokelau's context. In some cases they are exacerbated by the current impacts of climate change.

Tokelau's Current Development Strategy:

- Tokelau's pathway is largely guided by its premier agenda-driven initiative called the Tokelau National Strategic Plan (TNSP 2010–2015). The TNSP has 4 main Policy Outcome Areas:

GOAL 1: **Good Governance:** Improved governance, public sector and financial management and application of the rule of law;

GOAL 2: **Infrastructure Development:** Improved standard of living through reliable, adequate and efficient infrastructure;

GOAL 3: **Human Development:** Improved health, education outcomes and social well-being of communities;

GOAL 4: **Sustainability:** Improved economic, cultural, environmental and spiritual sustainability.

Tokelau's Significant Achievements:

- This small atoll nation has several claims to achievements, especially in recent years. Perhaps the most globally profound of these has been the dedication, foresight and public commitment towards curbing global climate change. Tokelau has set its collective sights on a target of 100% renewable energy and aspires to be the first nation of the world to achieve this. Is this realistic?—Yes. Is this achievable?—Well not without further support, assistance and sustainable partnerships, especially in the key areas of sustainable development proposed in the SIDS Outcome Document.
- Since 2010 Tokelau has embarked on a tremendous journey towards the sustainable development goal. It has indeed, through the initial help of both New Zealand and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), established a Tokelau Renewable Energy Plan (TREP Phase I). Tokelau has now established a solar voltaic grid system on each atoll commissioned since 2012. This system of electrification can realise a total island-by-island electricity supply (nearly 100%) with some supplemental support, provided under the TREP, by generators and/or additional solar voltaic panels added to the grid.

Tokelau's Way Forward:

- For Tokelau, the SIDS is a rare opportunity to let the rest of the world know of its actual physical being; its global and regional aspirations; its current constraints and limitations; and the lessons it can share as a real small nation (typically as a voice unheard) moving toward developing true and sustainable partnerships.
- We see our key partnership avenues through the following focal areas at SIDS in Samoa from 1–4 September. We especially hope to maintain and even enhance momentum on the following key issues:

1. Disaster Preparedness
2. Renewable Energy
3. Fisheries

4. Oceans, Seas and Biodiversity
5. Climate Change
6. Water and Waste Management

- It's a tall order, yet we are hopeful and reassured that a global way and answer will be found for the best answer (post 2015 agenda) especially on the issue of **“the establishment of a true, and all-inclusive sustainable development mandate, regardless of any political and/or geographical boundaries”**.
- We have all agreed to advocate and aspire towards the true spirit of partnerships, and to support meaningful global actions on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Let's make it a key issue for the SIDS and help save Tokelau and all other SIDS by simply suggesting:

‘Let no one be left behind!’

For more information on Tokelau please contact:



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