

GOVERNMENT OF TONGA



## **METEOROLOGY DEPARTMENT**

**MINISTRY OF METEOROLOGY, ENERGY, INFORMATION, DISASTER MANAGEMENT, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE  
CHANGE & COMMUNICATIONS**

**P.O. Box 845, Domestic Terminal, Fua'amotu Airport, TONGA  
Tel: (676) 35355/35008 Fax: (676) 35123 Email: metstaff@met.gov.to**

---

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **TONGA CELEBRATES WORLD METEOROLOGY DAY**

(23 March 2016)

**HOTTER, DRIER, WETTER: FACE THE FUTURE** is the theme of the World Meteorological Day being commemorated today, 23 March 2016, by 191 Member Countries of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) including Tonga.

The year 2015 made history, with shattered temperature records, intense heat waves, exceptional rainfall, devastating drought and unusual tropical cyclone activity, according to the World Meteorological Organization. That record-breaking trend has continued in 2016.

The WMO Statement on the Status of the Climate in 2015 gave details of the record land and sea surface temperatures, unabated ocean warming and sea level rise, shrinking sea ice extent, and extreme weather events around the world. It was released to coincide with World Meteorological Day on 23 March, which has the theme "Hotter, drier, wetter. Face the Future."

In a Statement by the Secretary General of the United Nations World Meteorological Organization, Mr. Petteri Taalas, he said "The future is happening now". "The alarming rate of change we are now witnessing in our climate as a result of greenhouse gas emissions is unprecedented in modern records.

The global average surface temperature in 2015 broke all previous records by a wide margin, at about 0.76° Celsius above the 1961-1990 average because of a powerful El Niño and human-caused global warming. With 93% of excess heat stored in the oceans, ocean heat content down to 2000 meters also hit a new record.

January and February 2016 set yet more new monthly temperature records, with the heat especially pronounced in the high northern latitudes. Arctic sea ice extent was at a satellite-record low for both months, according to NASA and the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Greenhouse gas concentrations crossed the symbolic and significant 400 parts per million thresholds.

"The startlingly high temperatures so far in 2016 have sent shockwaves around the climate science community," said David Carlson, Director of the World Climate Research Programme, which is co-sponsored by WMO.

Tonga, through its Meteorology Department under the Ministry of Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change and Communications (MEIDECC) joins the rest of the Meteorology Community in the Region and throughout the world in marking the 66<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WMO of which Tonga became a Member in February 1996.

"Since Tonga became a Member of WMO, we have benefited significantly in the area of Meteorology. WMO has provided more than 80% of the training of Meteorology personnel currently working in the Meteorology Department. One of the big projects that WMO and its Members has assisted Tonga with is the capacity building of the Meteorology Department to establish Tonga's own autonomous and Weather Forecasting Centre in 2007". Currently WMO is also financing the drafting of Tonga's first Meteorology Bill, said 'Ofa Fa'anunu, Director of Meteorology.

Fa'anunu also mentioned, "2015 has been the Warmest year on record for our Planet. Brought about by human activity. Only on 01 February of this year 2016, we also recorded our highest temperature on record in Tonga of 35.5 degrees Celsius at Niuafu'ou. Cyclones are starting to become stronger as well in our region with category 5 cyclones becoming more common than before. The theme for this year's World Meteorology Day points to a changing climate in the future with more climate extremes. I can see that the work of the Meteorology Department will become more and more important moving into the future and investments should be made now".

The Government of Tonga (MEIDECC) through a joint Resilience Project (PREP Project) with the World Bank has invested \$US16.7M for the upgrade of Tonga's Early Warning System as well as improving Disaster Financing. The Project includes among upgrades to the National AM Radio, the construction of the new office facility for the Meteorology and Disaster Management Departments at Matakileua, fibre optic cables to link disaster management agencies and upgrade of Nuku'alofa Maritime Radio.

To mark WMO day, the Meteorology Department will hold an open day today and tomorrow (23 and 24 March 2016) where all Meteorological Offices throughout the country will be open for visits for members of the general public.

Tonga's Contribution to WMO is through annual membership subscriptions as well as the engagement of Tonga's Director of Meteorology, Mr. 'Ofa Fa'anunu as the Vice President of the Southeast Asia and Southwest Pacific WMO Region.

For further information please contact the Meteorology Division on 35355 or [metstaff@met.gov.to](mailto:metstaff@met.gov.to). More information is also available at [www.met.gov.to](http://www.met.gov.to)