



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release*

### **European Union supports Tonga with TC Gita Recovery Efforts**

**Nauru, 04 September 2018-** The European Union (EU) has today endorsed the mobilization of EUR 2 million (TOPS 5.3 million) to the Kingdom of Tonga to support recovery efforts following the significant damage caused by tropical cyclone Gita in February of this year.

Mr. Jean-Louis Ville, the Head of Unit for East Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific at the European Commission Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development, endorsed the mobilization of the funds in the margins of the 49<sup>th</sup> Pacific Islands Forum in Nauru. He underlined: "The EU is proud to support Tonga. Many people were severely affected by the tropical cyclone Gita. While emergency assistance was rapidly provided, there is still need for medium term reconstruction. Following continued dialogue and exchanges with the Government of Tonga and development partners, the EU is making available EUR 2 million to support recovery efforts. The EU provided a similar support to Tonga in 2014, following tropical cyclone Ian."

While expressing his gratitude, the Minister of Finance and National Planning, Hon. Dr Pohiva Tu'i'onetoa said: "The Government of Tonga is grateful for the generous additional support provided by the EU. The funds will be used to implement its medium and long term recovery and rehabilitation programs that are outlined in the Disaster Recovery Framework."

The EUR 2 million is a top up to the EU's current bilateral development cooperation (energy sector budget support programme) with the Kingdom of Tonga worth EUR 10 million (TOPS 26 million). The programme is consistent with the country priorities and supports the implementation of Tonga's National Sustainable Energy Sector Policy, by means of Tonga's own implementation modalities and public finance management processes. Topping up this facility will make the funds immediately available for investing in reconstruction action.

The EU energy sector budget support programme is relevant for the Agenda 2030. It contributes primarily to the progressive achievement of Sustainable Development Goal target 7, ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, but also promotes progress towards target 13, taking urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.

### **Background**

Cyclone Gita made landfall on the islands Tongatapu and Eua on 12 February. Damages are substantial and most of the country remains without electricity. The capital of Nuku'alofa is still largely paralysed by extensive floods and debris blocking most of the roads. UN OCHA reports that around 20% of Tongalapu's houses were damaged or destroyed. This is in addition to damages on

some essential public buildings including a hospital, Parliament building, and meteorological station. Some 4 521 people, or 5% of the population of Tongalapu island are displaced in 108 evacuation centres. Floods and stagnant water, still present in many parts of the town, combined with destruction of infrastructure providing safe potable water to the residents of the country prompt fears of possible disease outbreaks.

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