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Delegation from the National Reserve Bank of Tonga to attend the 2016 Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI) Global Policy Forum

Governor Kioa is leading a delegation from the National Reserve Bank of Tonga (NRBT) to attend the AFI's 8th annual Global Policy Forum (GPF) in Nadi, Fiji on 7th - 9th September 2016. This forum is co-hosted by the AFI and the Reserve Bank of Fiji. The GPF is a platform for senior financial regulators to exchange ideas and engage in peer-to-peer learning activities. The theme of this year's forum is "Building the Pillars of Sustainable Inclusion" which focuses on the development and improvement of national financial inclusion strategies and policies.

Tonga is a member of the Pacific Island Regional Initiative (PIRI) initiative, within the AFI network, which aims at improving access to financial services, utilizing technology for financial service provision and access, and empowering and protecting the interests of financial consumers in the Pacific region through financial literacy and education. Governor Kioa will be sharing Tonga's experience in developing of its national financial inclusion strategy which has been greatly assisted by its membership in the AFI as well as the PIRI. This includes the outcome of the surveys on the public's demand for financial services (Demand Side Survey) as well as suppliers of financial services (Supply Side Survey), associated challenges that have been identified, and work in progress to develop policies and strategies to address these challenges. Tonga would also benefit from the dialogues and discussions of successful and effective initiatives by the other PIRI member countries, with similar challenges to Tonga, in terms of promoting financial inclusion. This would in turn assist with improving our people's standard of living as well as support inclusive economic growth.

The delegation will attend various working groups during the forum which are aimed at ultimately improving access to finance by all levels of society in terms of enhancing financial consumer protection, promoting of the access of Small to Medium Enterprises to finance, learning from peers on developing of Financial Inclusion Strategy, and ensuring global standards are applied proportionately in order to support the promotion of financial inclusion.

The NRBT's financial inclusion initiatives since the 2015 GPF include the Demand Side Survey and the Supply Side Survey, and the implementation of Tonga's commitment to the Maputo Accord 2015 which is aimed at developing of Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs) and their access to finance with a target of increasing SME finance by 20% in 2020. The NRBT is also in the process of developing laws for the regulation of non-bank financial institutions and policies for financial consumer protection.

This year's GPF is a milestone for the Pacific region as it is the first time to be held in the Pacific. This is an opportunity for the Pacific Island country members to display the unique Pacific culture. Tongan cultural dances and traditional costumes will be showcased by the University of the South Pacific (USP) Tonga Students Association.

The NRBT has become a member of the AFI since 2012 as it recognizes the valuable contribution of financial inclusion initiatives towards achieving the bank's vision of being an effective and dynamic central bank in promoting Tonga's economic prosperity.

National Reserve Bank of Tonga