**A Closer China-Tonga Cooperation in 2022**

---Remarks by H.E. Cao Xiaolin
at the Handover Ceremony of the Agricultural Machinery and Educational Materials from
Dongguan Municipal Government, Guangdong Province,

People’s Republic of China to
the Government of the Kingdom of Tonga

(Wednesday, 12th January, 2022)

Honorable Prime Minister Hu’akavameiliku,

Honorable Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we are very happy to hold this handover ceremony of the grant-aid materials from China to Tonga, which include 8 farm tractors and more than 200 computers. This is the first batch of grant-aid assistance from China to the new Tongan Government at the beginning of 2022. It is a gift from the municipal government and people of Dongguan City, Guangdong Province, People’s Republic of China to the Tongan government and the Tongan people.

The bilateral relationship between China and Tonga over the past 24 years has fully demonstrated that the people of our two countries have been good friends, good brothers and sisters, and good partners. We have respected and treated each other equally, supported each other to strive for common development. The China-Tonga relations set a role model of friendly cooperation between the countries of different sizes in the world. We are very proud of this cordial relationship.

As the Chinese Ambassador to Tonga, I have been firmly committed to promoting the friendly relations and cooperation between China and Tonga, especially to ensure more Tongan people benefit from the Chinese aids, and to support Tonga achieve a better economic development and improve people’s standard of living. My colleagues and I visited many schools, communities, plantations and families, and gained the first-hand understanding on what the people need. The Chinese embassy provided them with necessary support. Over the past two years, around 100 grant-aid projects, big and small, have been carried out by the Chinese embassy for the Tongan government and the Tonga people, which covered agriculture, fishery, education, health, environment protection and climate change, etc. The Embassy also sponsored some individual farmers to encourage them to grow more agricultural products, such as yams and watermelons, to export to overseas markets so as to make more profits. This will help establish a model for the other Tongan families to lead a better life through hard work.

It is worth noting that, as an outcome of the telephone audience between H.E. President Xi Jinping and His Majesty King Tupou VI last September, the Chinese embassy immediately provided 1000 water tanks for the Tongan government to be distributed to the Tongan people. With these water tanks, many Tongan families in the rural areas have begun to use clean drinking water at home for the first time, and have built up their resilience in response to cyclone risks. This is one of the concrete results of our cooperation.

I have realized, through my life and working experience in Tonga for many years, that Tonga is blessed with many advantages, such as very smart and capable people, fertile land and pleasant weather. Should all these good human and physical potentials be fully tapped and a proper development path be found, Tonga will certainly become more prosperous, and the Tongan people’s life will become much better.

There is an interesting comparison between China and Tonga. On the one hand, our two countries are quite different from each other. On the other hand, both China and Tonga are developing countries, and share many similar national conditions. We can inspire and learn from each other on our development paths. Over the past four decades, the Communist Party of China has led the Chinese people to take the path of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics, to bring about the Chinese miracles of rapid economic development and enduring social stability, and continue marching towards the goal of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. In terms of international relations, cooperation in sharing experience is at a higher level than some other areas. China stands ready to enhance exchanges on development experience with the Tongan government and the Tongan people to step on a more sustainable development path.

In recent years, China has provided computers, farm tractors, fishing boats, agricultural production technology, etc. for the Tongan government and the Tongan people to help explore and develop the human and land resources, and create more economic and social wealth. The Chinese companies invested in the solar power and aquacultural fishery development to leverage the renewable resources with the Tongan companies. These are some examples of development experience exchanges. We can expand this experience exchange to wider areas.

Looking ahead into 2022, the cooperation between China and Tonga will be even closer under the Belt and Road Initiative. More China-aid projects will be implemented. I have a long list here. The heavy machinery equipment from China will be handed over to the Tongan government by the end of February. The royal military band facility project will be completed in the fist half of this year. The Chinese agricultural technical cooperation team will continue to enrich our cooperation with their innovative products. If the border of Tonga opens some time this year, the custom inspection equipment from China will be installed and launched, and the wind power farm project and Tonga High School complex project will start to construct. At the same time, more water tanks, farm tractors, computers, solar power street lights and police vehicles will be provided to the Tongan government and the Tongan people. The Chinese Government Scholarships and more training opportunities will be offered to the Tongan students and people from the public and private sectors. All these cooperation areas are fully aligned with the priority development goals of Tonga.

I believe that these tangible results of cooperation will not only support the Tongan government and the Tongan people to achieve a better economic and social development, but also enhance mutual political trust between our two countries, and deepen the friendship between the Chinese people and Tongan people.

Thank you.