Situation Overview

One month after the Hunga-Tonga-Hunga-Ha-apai underwater volcano in Tonga erupted generating tsunami waves rising to 15 metres and causing volcanic ash to cover much of the islands. A World Bank Damage Assessment report estimates the damage at USD 90 million. The Pacific Logistics Cluster (PLC) has facilitated the transport of critical relief items listed by the Government of Tonga (GoT) with the support of the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, United States, France, United Kingdom, Japan, China and Fiji Defence Force. The initial damage assessment (IDA) report compiled by the National Clusters is expected to be released this week by the Government of Tonga (GoT) with a new list of humanitarian cargo needs and transport needs.

Tonga entered lockdown for the first time upon detecting several COVID-19 cases. COVID-19 restrictions on entry of commercial scheduled aircraft and vessels are still in place at this stage. All cargo arrivals still require 72-hour quarantine before release. At least seven villages are isolated which has caused further delays in the release of cargo, as workers and consignees are in lockdown.

Communication is still difficult however the sea vessel repairing Tonga’s severed undersea communications cable is hoping to have communications restored by the start of next week.

Coordination

- The Pacific Logistics Cluster will continue to send updates to the coordination group on air and sea transport opportunities. The coordination groups are still active.
- As the Governments start to withdraw support, it is anticipated that the PLC will take on a stronger lead on the transport coordination.
- The GoT through the UN focal point in Tonga has advised that cargo storage facilities are reaching full capacity. WFP has already provided one additional Mobile Storage Unit this week (now five MSUs have been installed so far. The GoT has requested 5 additional MSUs to support port and outer island storage needs.
- Technical support for logistics and warehousing has been offered to GoT and PLC awaits the formal reply.

Air cargo

- 30 flights have been dispatched to facilitate foreign governments bringing humanitarian cargo in Tonga.
- Fua’amotu Airfield is fully operable with normal NAVAID.
Regular commercial flights are still not permitted due to COVID-19.

After conducting the required risk assessments, three commercial airlines have commenced support for charter repatriation and air cargo flights on an as needs basis. It is now safe for jet aircraft to land.

The regular DFAT/ADF flight from Brisbane to Tonga has now slowed to Wednesdays only, or on an as needs basis.

The Pacific Logistics Cluster’s aviation coordination group will continue to monitor for updates on airport regulations, available flights and humanitarian cargo sent or to be sent by air.

Sea cargo

- 15 sea vessels have been dispatched to assist foreign governments with relief items in Tonga.
- Charter vessels require approvals from NEMO, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Port Authority.
- PLC is seeking to clarify on scheduled commercial vessels and when they may be permitted to berth again, given the anticipated withdrawal of government support now the emergency phase is winding down.
- The Pacific Logistics Cluster’s shipping coordination group will continue to monitor for updates on airport regulations, available flights and humanitarian cargo sent or to be sent by sea.

Contacts

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