



SECOND ATOA O SAMOA EXECUTIVE MEETING

Taumeasina Island Resort, Apia Samoa

13 – 14 October 2022

OUTCOMES

The Second Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting was held in Apia, Samoa from 13 to 14 October 2022. The Meeting was attended by the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata’afa and the Governor of American Samoa, Honourable Lemanu P.S Mauga and their respective delegations. The Opening Prayer was delivered by His Grace Archbishop Alapati Lui Mataeliga.

2. The co-chairs, Prime Minister Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa and Honourable Governor Lemanu P S Mauga, reaffirmed the importance of strengthened cooperation between the two countries under the Atoa o Samoa framework and the need to look at further opportunities to garner the development potential therein for the benefit of all Samoa people. Copies of the statements are attached.

3. The Meeting considered and approved by acclamation the Minutes of the Two Samoa Executive Meeting that was held in American Samoa on 27 and 28 July 2022.

AREAS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION

4. The Meeting welcomed the utility of site visits by the American Samoa government including discussions with counterpart Ministries and key development sectors of Samoa on Wednesday, 12 October. The Meeting noted that ongoing discussions between the relevant sectors of the two governments will continue at the Taskforce level, to be further guided and informed by processes to be established in consideration of arrangements for potential collaboration and partnerships. The Meeting further considered several areas of mutual cooperation between the two governments, as follows:

Economic Sector

5. The Meeting agreed on the importance of promoting **trade** between Samoa and American Samoa focusing on strengthening exports and manufacturing between the two countries, and to support the diversification of local economies. The Meeting considered the possibility of holding trade shows to further promote trade between the two countries, and also noted opportunities available for business investments and expansion in American Samoa.

6. Acknowledging the importance of **tourism** in the development of both countries, in particular as part of COVID19 recovery efforts, the two Governments reflected on the importance of joint marketing opportunities to promote the two Samoas in global tourist markets, including travels to Manu’atele. The vital links between the tourism industries and air travels as a contributing factor for economic growth and development was also highlighted.

7. Whilst cognisant of assistance available to both countries, the Meeting recognised the significance of **human capital development** specifically for both countries through capacity building and professional development initiatives. The Samoa Government acknowledged a proposal by the American Samoa Government to develop an exchange program to address the development of the workforce, movement of workers and seasonal work between the two countries and that existing recruitment processes would need to be adapted to the specific context of workers for the Starkist operations.

8. The Meeting noted ongoing discussions between the two governments with respect to arrangements for the movement of **agricultural** and livestock products between the two countries, culminating with a proposal of a *trial* agreement that would seek to facilitate the commencement of export/import of such products provided all export/import requirements and processes for both countries are met. The Samoa government welcomed the decision of the American Samoa government to allow the export of meat from Samoa to American Samoa in addition to other approved agricultural products. In addition, American Samoa has also approved the export of salted beef, sausages, eggs, beef meat, and cured corned beef subject to prevailing standards and conditions. The two governments looked forward to further discussions on the matter as well as facilitating further capacity building and training opportunities. Additionally, the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Governor directed the Taskforce to consider and establish proper processes to ensure the completion of agreements or MOUs to facilitate trade between the two countries.

9. The Meeting underscored the importance of the **fisheries** sector in the food security and economic development of both countries. Ensuring the continued viability of the Starkist Samoa tuna cannery was critical, noting benefits accrued to both countries including remittances and with more than 85% of its workers coming from Samoa. On **labour mobility** arrangements with Starkist, the Samoa government recalled the request for additional workers by Starkist and further noted that it had sought the same process as Australia and New Zealand for Samoan workers, including tenure of work/contracts, accommodation arrangements for Samoan workers, and the protection of migrant workers' rights. The Taskforce was tasked to consider using "open access" arrangements between the two countries.

10. The two governments acknowledged the importance of working collaboratively at the regional and global levels on the sustainable management and conservation of fisheries, including at the annual meetings of the WCPFC. This included discussions on limits to high seas access at the Commission. The Samoa government noted and welcomed American Samoa's interest in becoming a member of the South Pacific Group and agreed to work closely with its government in that regard.

11. The Meeting acknowledged the need to further improve the performance of local (alia) longline fleets in the two Samoas. As well, the Meeting noted assistance that could be provided to American Samoa with regard to coastal fisheries and aquaculture including strengthened cooperation to prevent and address marine pollution and diseases affecting marine environments and coastal fisheries. Conscious of maritime security threats to both countries, the two governments agreed to work collaboratively to strengthen their respective responses to maritime security concerns, as well as to provide mutual support to each other as needed.

12. The Meeting noted ongoing collaboration to strengthen relevant processes, including legal and regulatory processes and mutual understanding between the two governments on their respective **customs/cargo/manifest** clearance processes and procedures. Concerns were raised

by the two governments on the increasing number of counterfeit goods including prescription drugs, merchandise, cosmetic, and electronics passing through the borders of both countries. These impact the growth of legitimate businesses in both countries, particularly with the practice of repackaging expired goods. It was important for the customs agencies of the two countries to verify the place of origin invoices. The Meeting noted training opportunities offered by American Samoa for Samoan officials on intelligence sharing.

13. The Meeting also noted the critical need for closer collaboration between the two countries to address the rising incidences of narcotic drugs trafficking through seaports, airports, and post offices. The Meeting encouraged opportunities for enhanced capacity building and training of police from the two countries to address increasing drugs smuggling as well as other transnational crimes.

Social Sector

14. The Meeting acknowledged an existing need to develop mutually beneficial partnerships between the two governments in the area of **education**, focusing in particular on teacher development and improved student learning. The Meeting took note of programs and trainings available through universities in Samoa to build knowledge, skills and expertise of teachers and students as well as the development and promotion of STEAM¹ Education in American Samoa in partnership with the United States government to prepare students for careers in related fields.

15. The Meeting welcomed advice of potential assistance for further teacher training that could be provided by the National University of Samoa (NUS) on STEM subjects including the Samoan language, Technical and Vocational Educational and Training (TVET) courses, maritime training courses, and training through its School of Medicine. The Meeting also took note of the Engineering program (civil, mechanical, and electrical training) offered by the University of the South Pacific (USP) and welcomed recognition of (US certified) degrees from Samoa for use in the US. This provided important opportunities for students and teachers from American Samoa to train or pursue further studies in Samoa.

16. The Meeting reiterated the importance of strong and robust **health** systems as a critical contributor to social and economic development. The Meeting noted opportunities to further strengthen cooperation between the two governments on health care information exchange and health care collaboration. The Meeting was informed of the development of a standalone electronic health records system (EHR) in American Samoa, which will play an important role in patient management and effective medical care services. To address the continuing shortage of health care professionals in both countries, a physician and nurse exchange program could be considered. Nurses from Samoa will be required to complete the NCLEX exam to be able to work in American Samoa. The Meeting noted that the Samoan government has engaged the Samoa diaspora to seek specialised human resources to assist with Samoa's development.

17. Acknowledging the increasing incidence of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in both countries, the Meeting noted opportunities to increase awareness programmes and impact assessments to further inform programmes to prevent and control NCDs, including communicable diseases like measles and tuberculosis. The Meeting took note of healthcare access and requirements for non-residents and foreigners, including visitors to American

¹ STEAM - science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics

Samoa in line with its regulations. The Meeting also took note of the commencement of discussions between the two governments on possible ways to provide mutual support on health work and development priorities.

Environment Sector

18. Fully aware of the impacts of climate change on the two countries, the two governments encouraged concerted efforts to become more **climate resilient**, including through shared expertise and technical assistance on climate resilience and climate action, and collaboration on effective **green and renewable energy** projects. The Meeting noted the potential for a partnership between the Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa and the American Samoa Environment Protection Agency on laboratory analysis and environmental sampling, amongst other services. These would ensure a quick turnaround time for American Samoa for its tests and allow SROS the opportunity to further promote its services to other markets.

19. Noting increasing weather related hazard events, ensuring disaster **preparedness and robust response mechanisms** and improved communications can help minimising the vulnerabilities and disaster risks faced by the two countries. Equally important was the need for enhanced **pre- and post-disaster** management measures, which could include the re-establishment of cross-Samoa capacity building trainings and exercises in the areas of emergency responses to oil spills, industrial fire fighting and hazmat training amongst others.

Transportation, Infrastructure and Connectivity

20. With regard **shipping and transportation** arrangements, the Meeting welcomed continuing efforts by American Samoa to both resolving as well as identifying short to long term solutions to bottlenecks/long processing times and wharf clearances by upgrading its technologies, and increasing and better managing its human resources. These would enhance and optimise passenger and cargo processing flows. As well, the American Samoa government aims to redevelop and improve its dock facilities and operational footprint to allow for better processing of passengers and cargo.

21. The Meeting welcomed the opportunity to advance consultations and work exchange programs between the two governments to further strengthen and improve efficiencies and effectiveness in **land transport, works and infrastructure** as well as capacity building initiatives.

22. In terms of capacity building, the American Samoa government looked forward to developing possible training opportunities with the NUS in relevant maritime certificate programs. Additionally, American Samoa will be able to offer trainings to the Samoa Airport Authority at its Hot Fire Training Facility. The Meeting noted a proposal for the two governments to work on a schedule of fees for the chartering of maritime resources in addition to reviewing communications protocols between the two Samoa to further enhance relations, capacities and communication aimed at expediting the approval processes for the sharing of resources.

23. The Meeting recalled the importance of internet **connectivity** and a proposal to create

another cable connection² to Samoa to enhance connectivity between the two countries for government to government relations, business and trade, family/personal links as well as education and health work amongst others benefits. In respect of capacity sharing and development, the Meeting noted the possibility of certification training to be undertaken by recognised institutions including the NUS to build capacities in technical, engineering and infrastructure fields. The Meeting also noted that Samoa ranked as the second highest market for outwards calls in American Samoa but with high termination rates. It was important to consider reduced costs to support those that needed it the most. The Meeting noted the commencement of discussions between the two governments to further improve connectivity.

Immigration and International Relations

24. The Meeting welcomed advice that American Samoa will fully open its borders by December 2022. The Meeting also noted that use of the *Talofa Pass* as a requirement for entry into American Samoa would cease. The Meeting was informed of three types of **entry permits** for American Samoa and further welcomed the relaxation of some of its entry permit requirements including police and health clearances for applicants from Samoa.

25. On entry permits to Samoa, the Meeting noted specific requirements for entry permits for US nationals but not US citizens. Clarification was also sought regarding the departure tax applied to travellers to American Samoa only and not to other destinations. The assistance and reconsideration of these arrangements were put forward for the consideration of the Samoa government, and subsequent to noting Samoa's general entry requirements, the Taskforce was tasked to amicably consider and resolve entry issues into the two countries respectively.

26. The American Samoa government acknowledged the assistance of the Samoa government in the relocation of Samoan citizen deportees/returnees. In 2021, 26 Samoans were returned/deported *via* sea transport/Lady Samoa.

27. The Meeting was briefly apprised of updates from the recently held 5th Pacific Island Countries Leaders Meeting hosted by the PIDP/East West Centre, and noted opportunities for the two countries to engage and promote issues of common interest at the regional and global levels. The Samoa government encouraged American Samoa's government to have full membership of the Pacific Islands Forum, and stands ready to assist as required.

Other Matters

Cultural Preservation

28. The Meeting noted the establishment of the Samoan Language Commission in American Samoa in April 2022, which also established both Samoan and English as the official languages of American Samoa. There were critical concerns about language loss and noted that the American Samoa government has sought assessment/assistance from Samoa and UNESCO in this regard in addition to strengthening networks with language advocates in the US. The meeting also noted the provision of a place for American Samoa in the Samoa Language Commission.

² Additional cable as a reserve/substitute cable; note that American Samoa has access to Hawaiki Cable (HNL/AS/NZ/A) and Samoa-American Samoa (SAS) Cable; Samoa has Tui-Samoa, Manatua and SAS cables.

Land swap issue

29. The Samoa government confirmed that land leased in Avele was ready for American Samoa. The American Samoa government expressed some concerns with the said land, noting close proximity to the Chinese Embassy and sought the reconsideration of the Samoa government in that regard. The Honourable Prime Minister tasked the Samoa Minister of Environment to consider the matter further and to advise accordingly.

Memorandum of Understanding

30. The Taskforce was tasked to determine and finalise matters accordingly for endorsement by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Governor.

Next meeting

31. The Taskforce was tasked to consider arrangements and modalities of the Atoa o Samoa meeting and advise accordingly.

End