



THIRD ATOA O SAMOA EXECUTIVE MEETING
American Samoa Community College Multipurpose Center, American Samoa
April 12-13th 2023

OUTCOMES

The third Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting was held in Malaeimi, American Samoa from 12 to 13 April 2023. The Meeting was attended by the Governor of American Samoa, Honorable Lemanu Palepoi Sialega Mauga; the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, Honorable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa and their respective delegations; Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa, Honorable Talauega Eleasalo Va'alele Ale; President of the Senate, Honorable Tuaolo M. Fruean; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honorable Savali T. Ale and their respective legislators. The opening prayer was delivered by Reverend Elder Dr. Aumalesulu Tuifalefa.

2. The co-chairs, Honorable Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga, and Honorable Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mataafa reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation between the two Samoas and forging relations to improve mutually beneficial partnerships. Copies of their respective introductory statements are attached.

3. The Meeting considered and approved by acclamation the Minutes of the Two Samoa Executive Meeting that took place in Samoa on the 13th and 14th of October 2022.

AREAS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION

4. The Meeting welcomed the utility of site visits first initiated by the Samoa government in 2022 and repeated in 2023 including discussions with counterpart Departments, Agencies and key development sectors of American Samoa on Tuesday, the 11th of April 2023. The Meeting noted that existing conversations between the two governments' relevant sectors will continue at the Taskforce level, directed and informed further by mechanisms to be agreed to by the agencies concerned that would contribute to enhanced collaboration and better partnerships. The Meeting further discussed areas of mutual cooperation between the two governments, as follows:

Trade

5. The Meeting agreed, as in prior discussions, on the necessity of developing and promoting trade between Samoa and American Samoa. The Meeting re-emphasized the

possibility of holding trade shows once a year to further promote locally-made goods and services between the two countries, as well as opportunities for mutual investment and expansion. The meeting discussed the need to look into taxation policies that affect pricing of products where appropriate for both American Samoa and Samoa.

6. Labor mobility issues were raised around the discussions on direct recruitment of workers by the Starkist company and that the public ought to be aware of the specific conditions for recruitment of workers from Samoa for the Starkist operations. Emphasis was placed on ensuring that the safety and rights of workers must be prioritized. It is widely acknowledged that people are attracted to the higher wage rates in American Samoa. It is not unusual to find that there is often a diversity of skills sets amongst those that are recruited such as electricians, and mechanics who are then placed in appropriate jobs within the company and not necessarily on the cannery floor. An estimated 1600 workers are employed by Starkist. Often when workers want to switch employment, they are advised to retain their sponsors and notify the Immigration Board. Requests for more workers are anticipated in the near future but must follow the endorsed procedures for recruitment through both governments.

7. For immigration processes, both sides agreed that these must be simplified in order to facilitate and expedite interisland travel.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Trade shows will be an annual event of the Atoa o Samoa meeting and will provide the opportunity for both countries to conduct trade between participating businesses and discuss investment opportunities.

8. The meeting recognizes the need to streamline processes for both countries' commercial activities. Business process optimization reduces redundancies and maximizes resource use. Streamlining processes is the best way to boost efficiency and profits.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Streamline the Process for Commercial Activities.
 - Import one business process (AS)
 - Federal process to enter the U.S. via A.S.
- Business Exploratory Mission - Reference for business stakeholders
Matching process (Business listing)
- Proposed Tax or Incentive on Products of Origin. Support and encourage economic trade especially local manufacturing

9. Acknowledging the importance of tourism in the development of both countries, the two Governments reflected on the need for collaborative marketing opportunities to promote the two Samoas in global tourist markets.

Samoa indicated that their Visitors Bureau Samoa Tourism Authority had already extended invitations to the American Samoa Visitors Bureau to participate in the:

- Samoa Tourism Exchange 2023 (April 25-27)
- Samoa Tourism NZ Roadshow 2023 (May 15-18)
- Samoa Tourism Australia Roadshow 2023 (August 15-17)

10. The Meeting recognized the significance of human capital development specifically for both countries through capacity building and professional development initiatives.

Samoa indicated that its educational institutions such as the National University and the University of the South Pacific have begun preparations for accreditation of possible students from American Samoa to study there in some of their new courses in the fields of IT, Science courses and a Bachelor of Engineering. A joint working group to review these courses will have equal country representation and there is a June 2023 deadline for its establishment

Labor Mobility (Immigration, Border Security, and Financial, Banking, Auditing Services)

Immigration

11. The Meeting was informed of the 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. Likewise Samoa informed the meeting of its 30 and 90 days visas issued on arrival. Access to capacity development via the Pacific Fusion Centre was highlighted as with an attachment secured by Samoa for a Ministry of Customs and Revenues official.

12. Clarification was also sought regarding the departure tax applied to travelers to American Samoa only and not to other destinations. Clarification was made that the airport tax was already included in the ticket for other destinations whereas the departure tax for travel to American Samoa was not and a physical payment is made at the airport prior to travel.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Beginning April 10, 2023, Samoa citizens visiting American Samoa and not intending to reside or work in American Samoa will be exempt from providing a medical clearance. The police clearance will be valid for one year rather than being required for every 30-day entry permit trip per year;
- Travelers from American Samoa to Samoa will no longer pay departure taxes at the airport, but taxes will be incorporated into the airline ticket;
- American Samoa will trial a 7 day permit waiver which will be reciprocated by Samoa.

Border Security

13. The Meeting noted the significance of ongoing collaboration to strengthen relevant processes, including legal and regulatory processes and mutual understanding between the two governments on their respective customs processes and procedures. The Meeting encouraged opportunities for enhanced capacity building, information sharing and possible collaboration through secure networks to strengthen relevant legal and regulatory processes.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- American Samoa will share best practices and provide capacity development opportunities to Samoa on their K-9 program, identifying counterfeit goods, and the operation of their X-ray scanner.
- Samoa will provide best practices and capacity building opportunities to American Samoa on the ASYCUDA system used for Customs administration to facilitate trade, manage borders and provide statistics.

Financial, Banking, Auditing Services

14. The meeting discussed ongoing efforts to strengthen relationships through capacity building programs. The meeting discussed efforts to share resources between the two countries' Audit Offices. The TAO and SAO are working collaboratively on potential opportunities for twinning arrangements to supplement and develop capacity. The Controller and Auditor General of Samoa released two senior staff members to join American Samoa's Territorial Audit Office as a cross training opportunity and in an effort to address outcome indicators discussed in the previous Atoa o Samoa meeting in Apia. The senior officials were selected on merit.

In January 2023, American Samoa hosted its Audit and Ethics Training conducted by the Graduate School, USA. The audit offices from Samoa and American Samoa came together to complete this three-day training session. As a result, Su'a, Pauga & Associates accounting firm can now provide accounting services in American Samoa and can register as public accountants, allowing them to sit the US CPA for accreditation in order to become chartered accountants that can work in the private sector in American Samoa. There are only two local accounting firms (both foreign companies) servicing American Samoa.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- The Territorial Board of Accountancy (TBA), having the authority to grant permission for professional auditing and accounting services, welcomes an opportunity to meet with the Samoa counterparts to outline the requirements for American Samoa's auditing and accounting businesses in October 2023.
- The Samoa Audit office has agreed to include TAO in their future audit Trainings.

15. With the departure of ANZ and no private commercial bank operating in American Samoa, discussions revolved around the potential opportunity for a local private bank from Samoa to operate in the Territory. Further discussions are needed on how this can potentially be facilitated. Discussions also focused on the obstacles and challenges faced by business people due to the gap in availability of financial and banking services in American Samoa.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- American Samoa will share information requirements via the CEO Samoa Chamber of Commerce for onward sharing to the banking industry and business registration requirements will be shared with CEO MCIL and CEO Samoa Chamber of Commerce for onward dissemination to the business community.

Telecommunications (Information and Communications Technology)

16. The Meeting noted the ongoing discussions to mutually develop and improve the telecommunications industry including exchange of information technology, and all other areas of mutual interest. In respect of capacity sharing and development, the Meeting noted the possibility of certification training to be undertaken by recognized institutions including the NUS to build capacities in technical, engineering and infrastructure fields.

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority and the Samoa Ministry of Communications centered on increasing training capacity and reducing broadband costs for Samoa, securing redundancy, and providing an alternative route to New Zealand & Australia for Samoa via the Hawaiki cable system.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- By October 2023, Samoa will provide approval for the certification courses to be hosted by the National University of Samoa.
- By October 2023, American Samoa will establish a temporary redundancy line.
- Within the next 2 years, a cable will be established between Samoa and American Samoa. Implementation is subject to approvals from the Federal Cable Company.
- Within the next 2 months, Samoa and American Samoa will exchange information on frequency and compliance requirements and VHF communications will be established in Pago.

Environment and Climate Change Sector

17. The meeting noted ongoing discussions and information exchange on Laboratory services by the SROS, AS-EPA & US EPA. The US EPA has responded positively and supports this initiative due to the logistical challenges to their regular engagement in American Samoa. Both countries will hold ongoing discussions on available resources for capacity building of first response communities for effective disaster responsiveness.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- In May 2023, the US EPA certification standards will be further discussed at a meeting between SROS, AS-EPA, and US EPA.
- US EPA Region 9 Laboratory Team will be in American Samoa in July 2023 and preliminary discussions are on-going for the US EPA to visit the SROS lab in Samoa.
- More training activities to enhance government personnel capabilities with tools and resources to ensure a constant state of preparedness in the untimely events of all disasters that will take place.
- American Samoa will invite Samoa to the following in the near future:
 - Firefighting at the ASG Department of Port Administration (DPA) Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting (ARFF) Training facility
 - Hazmat training, Hazwopper, Oil spill, etc
 - September 26-29, 2023 - 2nd Annual Amerika Samoa Disaster Resilience Summit.
- Work on an Emergency Management Assistance Compact to identify details of shared resources in the aftermath of disasters as Atoa o Samoa recovers from these disasters.
- In an effort to collaborate, American Samoa will continue to engage with the Ministry of

Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) to further discuss climate change, disaster preparedness, and resilience in communities.

Transportation and Infrastructure

18. 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. The American Samoa government is looking forward to: (1) developing possible training opportunities with various academic institutions in Samoa pertaining to maritime, engineering, etc and (2) offering training to the Samoa Airport Authority at its Hot Fire Training Facility.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- By May 2023, The Samoa Traffic Control Group under the Samoa Airport Authority will travel to American Samoa to familiarize themselves with the airport layout.
- By June 2023, the Samoa Land Transport Authority and the Ministry of Works, Transport, and Infrastructure will travel to American Samoa to meet with the American Samoa Department of Public Works to finalize a framework for work exchange and coordinate with the American Samoa Department of Commerce to discuss business license requirements for Samoa contractors to get established in American Samoa.
- By July 2023, the Samoa Airport Authority will confirm the training courses that they will participate in at the American Samoa Airport Hot Fire Training Facility.
- By November 2023, the American Samoa Department of Port Administration delegates will travel to Apia to meet with the Samoa Airport Authority, Samoa Ports Authority, Ministry of Works, Transport and Infrastructure, and Samoa Shipping Corporation, to identify ways to further enhance collaboration and to review schedule of fees for the chartering of maritime resources.

Agriculture and Fisheries

19. 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. The American Samoa government has halted commercial imports until necessary framework and processes have been established.

20. The Meeting emphasized the importance of the fisheries sector to both countries' food security and economic development. The two governments continue to work collaboratively at the regional and global levels on the sustainable management and conservation of fisheries, including at the annual meetings of the WCPFC. Discussions include further International Collaboration at the Commission to be held in December 2023.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Improve and expand local (alia) longline fleets in the two Samoas.
- Expand oysters (faisua) and algae (limu) in American Samoa as a natural filter and improve water overloaded with nutrients.
- Work collaboratively to strengthen their respective responses to maritime security concerns, as well as to provide mutual support as needed.

- Meet quarterly.

Health

21. The Meeting called for further collaboration on various health areas. The Samoa government proposed the possibility of a shared electronic database for resources to identify gaps in services and where we can help fill the need in both Samoas. Meeting discussed Medical referrals to the Dialysis Clinic in Samoa. Patients are traveling from American Samoa to receive dialysis treatment without a referral or appointment and without medical records/history. This poses difficulties to accommodate walk-ins at a very busy clinic. Samoa government requests to strengthen compliance with the requirements to bring medical records and or information and set appointments beforehand to help minimize the occurrence of patients being turned away.

Anticipated Outcomes:

- Establish a framework for potential training and schooling opportunities for American Samoa medical workers at the USP.
- Create an exchange program for sharing medical specialty services between Samoa and American Samoa.
- Establish a framework to accommodate the varying pharmaceutical needs of both Samoas.
- Strengthen communicable disease control
- Improve immunization rates for school children.
- Potentially create a system to share electronic databases between Samoa and American Samoa.
- Discuss a memorandum between both governments.

Other Matters

Legal Matters

22. Both countries recognized the importance of finalizing and signing their respective land Leases. The Taumesina Land Lease and the Tafuna Land Lease were finalized and signed by their respective parties on the 13th of April 2023.

23. The Samoa government raised with American Samoa the possibility of allowing a restricted practicing license/certificate for Samoa lawyers to work in the Territory as the Samoa Law Society uses a licensing system for foreign lawyers to register and work in Samoa, using a restricted practicing license but attached to local law firms. The American Samoa government noted that the government does not deal with registration of legal practitioners as this is done by the Chief Justice.

Memorandum of Understanding

24. The Memorandum of Understanding between both governments remain in effect unless arranged otherwise by the Parties.


Next Meeting

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

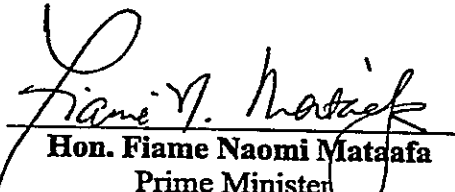
Anticipated Outcomes:

- Samoa undertook to take the Atoa o Samoa meeting to Savaii when they host it in October – actual dates to be confirmed as soon as possible.

26. The above is a true and accurate record of the discussion that transpired at the Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting held on the 12th and 13th of April 2023, American Samoa.



Hon. Lemani P. S. Mauga
Governor
American Samoa Government



Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa
Prime Minister
Government of Samoa