



**FIFTH ATOA O SAMOA EXECUTIVE MEETING**  
American Samoa Community College Multipurpose Center, American Samoa  
**May 8th – 9th, 2024**

**OUTCOMES**

1. The Fifth Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting was held in Pago Pago, American Samoa on the 8th and 9th of May 2024. The Meeting was attended by the Governor of American Samoa, Honourable Lemanu Palepoi Sialega Mauga and the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa and their respective delegations. The opening prayer was delivered by Reverend Elder Eleasalo Fa'ata'a.
2. The Honourable Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga welcomed the Prime Minister and her delegation to American Samoa. In his remarks he emphasized that the friendship between both Samoas has grown and strengthened over the past three years, and that he hoped it would be evident in some tangible outcomes from the exchange of experiences.
3. Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, the Honorable Fiame Naomi Mataafa reaffirmed Samoa's commitment to the Atoa o Samoa (AoS) Partnership. She urged both Samoas to assess progress, achievements, and address challenges more cohesively.
4. As there were no issues or matters arising, the Meeting approved by acclamation of the Savaii Outcomes, of the Fourth Executive Meeting in October 2023.

**AREAS OF MUTUAL COOPERATION**

5. Across the sectors, there was general agreement to the value-add of the site visits to the program of Atoa o Samoa. The Meeting further discussed areas of mutual cooperation between the two governments, as follows:

***Trade***

6. The objective of the sector has been about strengthening exports and expanding manufacturing in and between the two Samoas. The meeting noted that Trade encompassed more than just goods and services; that it involves the movement of people, transportation and shipment, expos showcasing commercial transaction opportunities, and much more.
7. Businesses from Samoa are now eligible to submit proposals for business opportunities to market in American Samoa as a result of the first Trade Show under the auspices of Atoa o Samoa hosted by American Samoa in 2023. The Government of Samoa (GoS) will partner with its Chamber and private sector organizations to lead the next Trade Show in Apia, 2025.
8. A seven months progress report by the joint agencies also covered the completion of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) workshop for both Samoas in 2023 to further facilitate ongoing discussions on import requirements into the United States.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

- A suggested Atoa o Samoa Trade Agreement and Policy to guide the trade relations between the two countries is planned, with a draft Concept Note by Samoa to be shared with American Samoa at the next AoS meeting.
- Strengthen Collaboration between both Trade and Commerce agencies.

***Labour Mobility & Immigration***

9. The progress report addressed a variety of issues, notably, the March 2024 request from SKS for an additional 500 guest workers from Samoa that was approved in May 2024. As of April 20, 2024 there are 1,222 guest workers at SKS, with an additional permit approved on April 26, 2024 for 119 from Samoa.

10. Since the start of the program to re-assess permits to ease intra-Samoa travel, from 10/19/23 until 3/31/24, ASG has approved 870 Samoan citizens to travel to American Samoa under the 7-day entry permit waiver program. From October 2023 to April 2024, Samoa recorded 1,371 'ok boards' for U.S. Nationals to travel to Samoa without entry permits for a variety of activities. Both governments agreed in the May 8-9 2024 Atoa o Samoa meeting to modify the entry permit waiver programs for stays up to ten days.

11. The GoS provided an update on its participation in Labour Mobility schemes, which focuses largely on the Australian and New Zealand market under its programs PALM and RSE. The nuances arising from the schemes has led to a government review of its Labour Policy, maintaining at the top of the list worker welfare and work conditions. These elements could potentially guide what can be an arrangement for the two Samoa's in the future.

12. Ongoing collaboration between the Department of Legal Affairs and the Samoa Consul General and government officials has resulted in the repatriation of Tafuna Correctional Facility inmates ordered by the Court to return to Samoa, with 19 inmates returned in 2023 and at least 20 inmates returned to Samoa from January to April 2024.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

- The American Samoa Government (ASG) has requested SKS to start building in 2024 appropriate accommodation to house the Samoa guest workers. It is also anticipated that there will be a better defined cooperation in terms of roles and responsibilities for the two governments and SKS.
- Proposal by Samoa to have a representative from the AS Immigration Office to work at the Samoa Immigration Office to handle American Samoa immigration related matters.

***Border Security***

13. Welfare and safety of citizens is paramount in any national setting, which premised the discussions on border security. Priority K9 training opportunities have been offered to Samoa's Customs K9 handlers, especially as Samoa is hosting the upcoming CHOGM meeting in October 2024. The meeting noted that ASG would not be using the ASYCUDA system however other cooperation such as vessel operations remain.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Engage in discussions to formalize technical MOU for joint operational work, information exchange and intelligence sharing for Border Security.

***Health***

14. On Health, the overarching objective is to formalize commitments through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two Samoas to maximize the benefits of collaborative efforts in health and medicine, including the exchange of specialised medical personnel and services and sharing health information.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Samoa requested a medical insurance plan for Starkist workers from Samoa due to the high costs of medication and access to healthcare.
- A copy of the Department of Health (DOH) clinic floor and site plan to be shared with Samoa MOH to facilitate similar planning and development for its future clinics and hospitals given the demonstrable ease of work flow.

***Education***

15. The meeting noted the pending approval of American Samoa Department of Education's (ASDOE) education standards by the Samoa Qualifications Authority (SQA). The meeting noted that the objective of the sector is to formalize commitments through a MOU between the ASDOE and Samoa's Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and Ministry of Sports to maximize the benefits of collaborative efforts in education and sports including connecting people.

***Infrastructure & Transportation***

16. Progress has been noted on projects in the sector. The meeting acknowledged the successful completion of the Aircraft Rescue Fire Fighting (ARFF) training attended by representatives from Samoa. Discussions are ongoing in the shipping sector regarding the allocation of land/space for an office for Samoa Shipping Corporation (SSC) to handle operational issues upon the vessel's arrival in American Samoa. The meeting also noted the continuing professional exchange programs in the various sub sectors.

17. Samoa is in negotiations with Digicel regarding the utilization of its second-hand antennas. Similar to other sectors, efforts are underway to plan and implement capacity-building and exchange programs aimed at enhancing staff development.

**Anticipated Outcomes:**

- McConnell Dowell offers geotechnical testing services, and Samoa will explore the possibility of also utilizing this service instead of solely relying on providers in New Zealand and Australia. MNRE has two drill rigs for geo-tech testing. American Samoa currently contracts an overseas company for testing, which brings its own drilling equipment. Additionally, there's a testing laboratory in American Samoa that Samoa could potentially use. Furthermore, drill rigs can be rented from Samoa for a fee.
- For Shipping and Transportation, finalize identification of land for Samoa vessel operation in American Samoa.

- For Air Traffic Support, ASG will submit an FCC application for approval, while GoS will assess the functionality of Aleipata and determine any necessary steps to ensure its operational readiness, if required and feasible.
- Samoa to determine if the NUS has the capability to offer certifications (ranging from 2 to 6 or 8 weeks) in Seaman Ordinary, Seaman Able, and other relevant training for vessel crew members.
- Both Samoas to develop the professional exchange program for human capital and equipment.

### ***Information & Communication Technology***

18. Collaboration between the ASG and GoS, facilitated by the NUS, has led to the upskilling of students and specialists in the ICT sector. This includes the successful completion of the NUS capacity building program and the certification and training of ASG employees. Additionally, collaboration between the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority (ASTCA) and the Regulator's Office of Samoa has successfully resolved the radio interference issue with Vodafone Samoa.

#### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- The GoS has expressed interest in Hawaiki's wholesale capacity, but the availability of IP Transport to Samoa is crucial for this to materialize.
- American Samoa is seeking assistance from Samoa to ensure a fair and equal opportunity to interconnect at the Samoa Submarine Cable Company (SSCC) cable landing site.
- Expand the NUS Capacity Building program into new areas.
- Review Pacific Connect Project and the possibility of an Inter-Island Cable to leverage (lower) costs for both Samoas.
- Discuss cable requirements and landing with MCIT and SSCC for the construction of the ASG Cable Landing Station (CLS) at the Taumeasina ASG land compound.

### ***Environment & Climate Change***

19. Capacity building for both Samoa's environmental sectors has commenced through training and sharing experiences, including participation in Samoa's National Environment Week. Bilateral cooperation has facilitated mutual assistance with water quality standards programs, used oil collection and disposal, e-waste recycling, environmental sustainability, and climate and disaster resilience initiatives.

20. The ASG has agreed to assist Samoa with the 'pepe a'e' project, focusing on the translocation of the Swallowtail Butterfly. Ongoing engagement with Scientific Research Organisation of Samoa (SROS) is in progress regarding laboratory testing and analysis.

#### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Engage in discussions to formalize technical MOU for targeted environment and climate change sector areas.
- Continue collaboration and attendance in capacity building programs covering all areas wherever available. To include finalizing arrangements to hold HAZWOPER certification training in Samoa hosted by USEPA.

## ***Agriculture & Fisheries***

21. Sector discussions covered a range of issues, with a primary focus on food security and safety for both Samoas. Statistics reveal significant growth in exports and imports from both Samoa and American Samoa over the last quarter. Regarding biosecurity and food security, the ASG, through the Department of Agriculture (DOA), has collaborated with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) with the resultant issuance of compliance certificates for eggs and some meat, enabling access into American Samoa.

22. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations have presented significant challenges for the meat and poultry industry. A virtual meeting with the USDA is scheduled for Thursday, 9th May, to explore the potential certification of meat products/livestock from Samoa. On the USDA Waiver, discussions are ongoing with agencies looking at commercial consignments of eggs / meat-products. These discussions hold the potential to shape future arrangements between the two Samoas, facilitating entry and compliance.

23. Regarding access to land or acreage for cattle, Samoa emphasized that any proposal must be submitted via Cabinet for assessment. The Prime Minister reiterated during the meeting, supported by the Governor, that it is not the government's role to establish a commercial farm; rather, such initiatives should be left to the private sector. The overarching objective is to build livestock numbers for distribution to villages and communities who will in turn foster cattle growth and breeding for sustainability.

### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Continue discussions on the development of a framework to ensure and guarantee food security in both countries particularly in the area of livestock production taking into consideration land availability, stock levels and financing. A feasibility study on the proposed Joint Cattle Farm initiative including land options should be done ahead of the acquisition of 500 breeding cattle.
- Continue discussions and finalize MOU between the two Samoas.

24. Under Fisheries, the overarching objective of sustainable food security is at the forefront. The Meeting underscored the importance of the fisheries sector to both countries' food security and economic development and agreed for the two governments to continue to work collaboratively at the regional and global levels on the sustainable management and conservation of fisheries.

25. The Department of Marine Wildlife Resources acknowledged the consignment of *faisua* received from GoS. The ASG expressed appreciation for Samoa's support regarding its proposal presented at the recent meeting of the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission in December 2023 in the Cook Islands. Discussions highlighted the declining fish stocks in the Pacific region, despite having one of the largest collective Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Donation of tilapia from Samoa to grow aquaculture in American Samoa provided the necessary infrastructure is established prior.
- Continue discussions and collaboration and partnerships towards food security.
- Encouraged the support for continued improvement and expansion of local (*alia*) longline fleets in the two Samoas.

- Support concerted joint efforts to expand oysters (*faisua*) and seaweed grapes (*limu fuafua*) in American Samoa as a natural filter and improve water overloaded with nutrients.
- Both Samoas work collaboratively to further strengthen their respective and joint responses to maritime security concerns, as well as to provide mutual support as needed.
- Both Samoas agreed on the importance of capacity building for agriculture and fisheries staff, and will endeavour to seek opportunities for continued collaboration, training (workshops, staff exchanges, etc) and technical support.

### ***Cultural & Social Development - Youth & Women***

26. The meeting reaffirmed the significance of the contribution of women and youth to the sustainable economic development efforts of both countries. Further emphasized was the importance of Samoan culture, traditions and christian values as the foundation of livelihoods and economic development in the two Samoas.

#### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Establishment and collaboration under the Atoa o Samoa Empowerment Alliance Hub
- Continue discussions on an MOU between the two Samoas to maximize the benefits of collaborative efforts for the Social Development of Youth & Women.
- *Lalaga/Weaver Training and Capacity Building*: Samoan weavers will train women's committees in two different villages in American Samoa, focusing on advanced weaving techniques. Additional training in business management, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship to enhance the economic potential and self-sufficiency of participants.
- *Annual Cultural Exhibition Event*: A prominent showcase of Samoan fine mats and *siapo*, positioning these traditional crafts within broader trade and economic frameworks to promote regional arts and stimulate economic interest.
- *Youth Engagement App*: A collaborative twinning project between the National Youth Councils of Samoa and American Samoa. This initiative will foster dialogue on youth challenges and co-develop a comprehensive youth app, designed to provide wrap-around support

### ***Security Services and other organizations***

27. The meeting supported the decision to move away from the term 'veteran' as Samoa does not have a military service. However, Samoa recognizes the contributions of its security services, police and related organizations to peacekeeping internationally and internally. Furthermore, the meeting emphasized the importance of including Security services and related organizations, such as Police and Fire services, in future discussions.

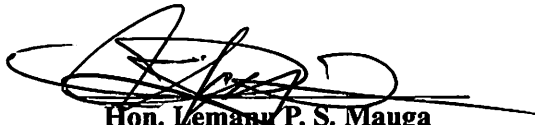
#### **Anticipated Outcomes:**

- Proposed for a joint meeting between the two Samoas to discuss and map out future engagement.

**Next Meeting**

28. The Office of the Governor and Samoa Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade are tasked with the responsibility of assessing the direction of the Atoa o Samoa annual talks and determining what could be a potential structure for the talks and how it could work including the implementation of and measurement of the Outcomes. The next Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting will be held in Apia in 2025, an exact date to be confirmed.

29. The above is a true and accurate record of the discussion that transpired at the Atoa o Samoa Executive Meeting held on the 8th and 9th of May 2024, American Samoa.



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



**Hon. Fiame Naomi Mataafa**  
Prime Minister  
Government of Samoa