

## **Minister of Finance - Remarks for the DFA Signing with DFAT**

Your Excellency Ms Emily Luck, High Commissioner of Australia to Samoa.

Firstly, allow me your Excellency to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for his never ending love and protection on Samoa during these challenging times as COVID-19 cases continue to escalate and spread in the community. Our Lord our Saviour is our refuge and strength, and is always ready to help our people in times of trouble.

I am pleased to represent the Government of Samoa on this virtual grant agreement signing ceremony for the “Samoa Fiscal Resilience Program and the COVID19 Support Package Assistance”. The grant of up to AUD\$20million will greatly assist the Government’s efforts towards health preparedness as part of its COVID19 response as well as incentivise policy reforms (working in partnership with other development partners) to support recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic focusing on the most vulnerable and building our economic, fiscal and resilience capacity going forward. The funding has already been reflected in the government’s current budget.

I wish to acknowledge Australia’s contribution and its continuous support to the sustainable development of Samoa over the last 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

I acknowledge the alignment of the key objectives of the program to those for the Pathway for the Development of Samoa with the theme of “*Empowering communities, building resilience and inspiring growth*” and are reflected under the Strategic Outcomes of “*Improved social development*” and “*diversified and sustainable economy*”.

No doubt the assistance of the Government of Australia as well as that of all our development partners will go a long way in enhancing our resilience and help us in determining our pathway to recovery. The reprioritisation of our development goals and resultant reforms will lead to strengthened systems and institutions that will enable us to adapt to the uncertainty of the pandemic as well as the many other challenges we face such as adverse climate change impacts.

We must also capitalise on opportunities that the pandemic provides to ensure that we remain on a build back better recovery.

The general budget support will contribute significantly to the operational costs of our COVID response approach while the JPAM reform policies will lead to enabled responsive systems and processes to emergencies as well as long term resilient recovery. Part of the funding will go towards the funding of vulnerability and economic focused grants to NGO and civil society organisations already earmarked by the Government and included in its current budget.

Excellency, we look forward to the support from the DFAT team at post to facilitate access to this financing and providing any technical support to the government when required for program implementation.

I acknowledge the support of our entire country and communities. We also acknowledge with thanks the full commitment of all the people involved in the management and operations of our COVID 19 preparation and response, in particular our front liners who have been working tirelessly since the health pandemic surfaced globally for the safety and health of Samoa.

Excellency, the Government looks forward to the ongoing engagement and partnership with Australia as one of its key development partner and friend to

Samoa. I have no doubt Australia's support together with other development partners, our Government will achieve its development priorities as set out in its Pathway for the Development of Samoa.

Thank you and God Bless.