



**Statement
by
Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafa
Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa
at the
AOSIS LEADERS' SUMMIT
22 September 2021 (Virtual)**

Honourable Gaston Browne, Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda
and Chair of AOSIS
Heads of State and Government
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish to thank Prime Minister Browne and Antigua and Barbuda for its strong leadership since taking on the Chairmanship of AOSIS. You have Samoa's full support as you lead AOSIS during these trying times. This meeting is timely and critical. The challenges for SIDS continue to multiply, with possible irreversible damage. The COVID19 pandemic and the continuous struggle we face due to the worsening impacts of climate change; reinforce why SIDS remain a special case for sustainable development.

I also extend my sincere condolences to members of our SIDS family that have suffered loss of loved ones due to the COVID19 pandemic; and also for those that were recently devastated by natural catastrophes.

Excellencies,

The SIDS priorities and our ongoing challenges highlighted in the SAMOA pathway remain relevant to date. Despite our best efforts and those of the UN and our partners, to respond to our particular and unique vulnerabilities; we are still left in a precarious position compared to the rest of the world.

I am pleased to support the AOSIS Leaders' Declaration which highlights the most pressing challenges, key priorities and suggested solutions tailored to address SIDS needs. Despite the grim realities ahead of us, our resilience will help us build pathways critical to our survival. Let us invest in our home grown solutions; benefit from more SIDS-SIDS cooperation and ensure simplified access to the needed and promised financial and technical support to SIDS. While our mitigation efforts can have little impact on total global emissions, we should continue to show leadership through our more ambitious climate action. United as SIDS, we must not tire from demanding urgent and ambitious climate action, especially from the biggest emitters. This is about our survival as nations, and as a people.

Samoa stresses that as SIDS, our priority is to ensure the world meets the promise of the Paris Agreement, to limit warming to 1.5°C. Exceeding this will be catastrophic for us. This remains the guiding goal that influences our approach and decisions as we continue to engage in the climate change negotiations. COVID19 provides serious barriers to the COP26 attendance for some of us. We need to factor this into our strategy, as we prepare to defend our positions at the upcoming COP26 in Glasgow.

Excellencies,

Multilateral systems, partners and institutions need to heed the continued call for tailored and SIDS specific solutions to our unique vulnerabilities. This is required to support SIDS in meeting their sustainable development goals and supporting our COVID19 recovery. Vaccinations are an important part of the build back better equation. The readiness of our partners in particular the COVAX facility and our efforts to find early opportunities have ensured we have sufficient vaccines to cover the eligible population. Tomorrow, Samoa will go into a two-day lockdown, to carry out mass vaccination. In addition to vaccination protection, access to concessional finance makes all the difference for SIDS recovery. We therefore welcome the establishment of the multi-dimensional vulnerability index, which provides for a wider lens on vulnerability.

For Samoa, ocean is core and central to our way of life as SIDS. Its conservation and sustainable use remains a high priority. Implementing SDG14 is an imperative and we need a coordinated and urgent global response to end marine litter and plastic pollution.

Securing our maritime zones against the threat of climate change-related sea-level rise is key to preserving our existing rights and entitlements stemming from maritime zones. The Pacific Leaders endorsed an important "Declaration on Preserving Maritime Zones in the face of Climate-Change Related Sea Level Rise" to this end. As SIDS, we must ensure that our legal entitlements as sovereign nations are not lost nor challenged due to sea-level rise.

Samoa reaffirms its commitment to support AOSIS and all SIDS to put our issues under the global spotlight for urgent action. Thank you for your attention.

