

**DISCLAIMER**

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**Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**9:34am**

- I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY – Reading of Bills (DAY 4)**
- 1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.2) 2021/2022 – debate on second reading**
- 2. APPROPRIATION BILL 2022/2023 – debate on second reading**

**1. Susuga MAULOLO Tavita Aмоса – Member for Sagaga 2**

The Member greeted Mr. Speaker, his fellow Parliamentarians and the Opposition leader listening in. He then addressed Samoa in all her honorific salutations, and acknowledged his constituency.

MAULOLO commended the government, particularly the Minister for Finance and her ministry in the preparation of the tabled budget. He was pleased to note that the budget reflected the Government’s approach in prioritising the social institutions with the development of villages and respective constituencies. The member touched upon the importance of the public service to the development of Samoa, and requested an increase in salary by 7%-10% to assist the public with the increasing cost of living as well as preventing Samoa from the impacts of ‘brain drain’. The Member commented on customary land and asserted that constituencies should utilise the million tala fund to develop these lands.

On the issue of increasing of cost of living, the Member requested for a reduction in VAGST from 15% - 5%. He then urged Government to consider other means to reduce the price of fuel. The Member referred to a statement made by Frank Zappa which states “You can’t be a real country unless you have a beer and an airline”; and therefore emphasized the importance of having a beer and an airline for our people. The Member noted that Samoa has a national beer (Vailima and Taula) and we need a national carrier.

**Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai - Interjection:**

The Hon Minister reminded the Member for Sagaga 2 that Samoa has a national airline which operates between Upolu and Savaii.

**Susuga MAULOLO Tavita Aмоса – Member for Sagaga 2 (cont.)**

The Member asserted that a national identity through such product (beer) and service (airline) will attract more tourists to our country. Furthermore, the borders will be opening soon, hence the need to have an airline to cater for the travelling public and tourists, as well as to have some sense of control on the prices and airfares for our people. Susuga MAULOLO mentioned the EFKS and Methodist conferences held in Samoa who also bring hundreds of families to Samoa, he also mentioned the long waiting list of passengers waiting for an opening to come home and visit families and friends.

The member concluded by highlighting the areas he mentioned in his speech:

1. Increase workers' salaries by at least 10%;
2. Decrease tax on basic food items by at least 10%; and
3. Reconsider a national airline.

**2. Afioga Hon. TAPUNUU Niko Lee Hang – Member for Vaimauga 3**

Hon TAPUNUU addressed Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He then praised God for his direction and provision upon Samoa and carrying us through many challenges and hurdles. He also addressed the Head of State and his good lady, Council of Deputies, the Judiciary and all respective Ministries. He further acknowledged all different denominations and those listening in

The member stressed that upon his analysis of the budget, he noticed that 28million could not be collected from revenue for 2021/22 even though this FY is still on-going. The member noted that this is an issue considering that the upcoming FY22/23 has an estimated deficit of 89million. Putting this into perspective the member highlighted that the loss of 28m in revenue and 89m deficit equates to 117.2million which the Government will need to finance the upcoming FY22/23 and other following FY. Therefore, the member queried the Minister of Finance on the government's plan in obtaining another Budget Support Funding for FY22/23 since the global economy and our development partners are experiencing a decline during challenging times. Hon Member queried the 117.2million needed for the current budget and upcoming financial year. The Hon Member queried the Government on a contingency plan in place as well as the status of foreign reserves.

**Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai - Interjection:**

The Hon Minister reminded the Member that he is the Deputy Chairperson for the Finance and Expenditure Committee, and should have the answers to his questions as he had the time to raise these queries and concerns to the Ministry during consideration.

**Chairperson Finance and Expenditure Committee: Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimaea Tafua – Point of Clarification**

The Chairman highlighted that the issues raised by the Member for Vaimauga 3 are his own views which were not considered during budget deliberations, which he has a right to voice.

**Proceedings set aside at 10:38am and resumed at 11:03am**

**Afioga Hon. TAPUNUU Niko Lee Hang – Member for Vaimauga 3**

The Member queried the foreign reserves and sought clarification from the Government whether the funds are sufficient to cater for essential supplies for the people.

- Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure

The Hon member queried the Minister on the status of the Cross-Island road, as well as Phase 3 of the west side main road project (from Malua to Faleolo) noting that funds have been disbursed, and yet it has not been complete. The Member queried the status of the road at Loto Samasoni towards Faatoia as well as the status for the Alaoa Dam. The Member asserted that his concern is due to funding assigned for such important projects and if not utilised we may risk losing the funds, and most especially since there are residents living nearby Vaisigano and Matautu-Uta who are vulnerable during times of torrential rain and flooding. The Hon Member then requested the Government for possible solutions for constituencies who do not have enough lands to develop utilising the 1 million fund.

- Minister for Customs and Revenue:

The Hon Member queried the need to bring in an aircraft for Samoa, echoing sentiments by previous members on the increasing fuel prices which will be felt by our people.

Hon TAPUNUU suggested the continuation of the Vaiusu wharf project as it will contribute to providing employment opportunities and provide ease of transportation. The member further emphasized the point raised by the member for Faasaleleaga 4 regarding the complex travelling requirements for Tutuila. Requesting to the government to review these processes as he noticed that people wanting to travel from Tutuila to Samoa go through simpler process.

The Hon member then concluded by commending the Minister of Finance and her ministry for their hard work in compiling the Budget for 22/23, and Supplementary Budget 21/22.

### 3. Tofa Hon LAUOFO FOnotoe Nuafesili Pierre Lauofo - Member for Anoamaa 2

The Hon Member greeted the house and Samoa in all her honorific salutations, he then acknowledged the challenges which the global economy is experiencing and have been over the years as a result of the pandemic and climate change which saw the revenues from tourism declining drastically.

The Member referred to a graph provided in the Budget and noted the gap between the estimated revenue and deficit. He then noted the delays on one of the major projects during their time as government such as the central cross island road and the Alaoa project. Hon LAUOFO also noted reservoir at Alaoa and clarified that there was a fund of 1.3million from ADB, through EPC for this project, and requested for an update on the status of this project. He queried the 643million of revenue, he is concerned that the amount is not realistic. He also made known his concern with the decrease in the allocation for tourism sector but commended the plan to open borders. He noted that not all tourists will come at once, thus the difficulty to balance the expenses and revenues.

In regards to opening of borders, the Member heeded the Government to be vigilant with precautionary and monitoring measures at the borders, in the event that other variants make their way into Samoa, it would be beneficial to be prepared when such a time comes. Hon LAUOFO then mentioned specific figures on the budget, specifically the deficit, and asserted that if donations and financial support from donors can be used, the deficit amount can be reduced from 174,929,191 – 89,168,188.

The Member queried the reduction of grants which are a great help with funding much needed developments for Samoa. He again emphasised that revenues will not increase instantly when the borders open, it will take time to revive and reach normalcy for our tourism sector.

He further queried Government's plans to decrease our debt, noting the allocation set aside to pay debts has increased from 72 million to 104 million. The Hon member touched on the proposed increase in tax imposed on products which are detrimental to people's health or causes NCDs. The member noted that it will be the first time this will take place thus, there should be an amendment Bill to be discussed in parliament and pass providing for this new tax.

The Member also expressed concern on the down side of increasing cost for tobacco and alcohol, noting that the increase of price of cigarettes may lead the public to prefer local tobacco 'tipi' but this product is not taxed, thus losing another source of revenue, and in regards to alcohol, people may opt to make home-made brew.

The member further encouraged awareness programmes in communities and villages for NCD's, stated that this is an important initiate to educate our people on better life choices. Moreover, Hon LAUOFO noted that the awareness programs should be encouraged as imposing taxes is not

the solution for NCDs as people continue to purchase whatever they want to eat disregarding the impacts of such products on their health.

He also queried the status of the Export Authority Project.

- Samoa Tourism Authority:

The Hon Member queried the budget allocated for tourism, noting that the appropriation for marketing has been reduced, as well as the appropriation for the Teuila Festival removed from the Budget. He sought clarification from the Minister on this. He further highlighted that from his perspective the 6million in the budget under Samoa Airport Authority is for negotiations and investigations related to the aircraft which has been returned.

In regards to the 'School Connectivity' Program, the Member queried the 2million allocation in the budget with an additional \$600,000 and process for tendering of these projects, he mentioned a company already assigned for this project, yet there was no tender process involved. The member highlighted that the company has been given an order from the Office of the Regulator to show its audited financial statements.

- Minister of Education, Sports and Culture:

The Hon Member commended the minister for the developments in the education sector, he then noted the removal of funding allocated to sports such as; Paralympics, rugby, netball, etc as well as, for the reparation of sports field and facilities when these are essential part of the Education sector and for students. Sports is another opportunity and probable career for students.

The member further acknowledged the Rugby Sevens Team who have returned home with an improvement in overall standing. Also queried on the utilisation of the 1 million allocated for independence and sought clarification from the responsible Minister

- Minister of Police:

The Member commended the allocation for the construction of the Police Academy, noting its importance.

**Chairperson Finance and Expenditure Committee: Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimaea Tafua – Point of Clarification**

The Chairman clarified that there is 2million appropriated for sports.

### 3. LAUOFO Fonotoe

The Member clarified that the 2million he mentioned was always appropriated under MESC but there are none mentioned in the budget. He further commended the project from Tanugamanono road to Siumu and stated there was no allocation for domestic violence project and NCDs, he sought clarification from the minister for the rationale of the removal of funds.

The Member further queried the removal of appropriation for overseas trips usually for Government Leaders in Europe for the CHOGM - (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting) - highlighted Samoa was scheduled to host these conferences. He the queried how these conferences were conducted, face to face or virtual through zoom. The intention of his queries is that this indicates the need to repair our hotels, etc...

The member also highlighted the funds appropriated for the separation of the Judiciary which is not reflected in the budget. However, for OCLA its reflected in the budget Thus, queried whether this activity has been cancelled. The Member further queried the anti-corruption forensic auditor. Furthermore, spoke on the importance of having the people's say in the constitutional review project.

#### **Hon Deputy Prime Minister**

The Hon Deputy conveyed thanks and appreciation to all the Members who spoke on the Bill and raised issues and concerns.

**Proceedings adjourned at 12:12pm;  
and will reconvene at 9:30am on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> June 2022**