

DISCLAIMER

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PART A

Tuesday 28th June 2022

9:32am

- 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**

GOVERNMENT RESPONSES (cont.)

VII. Susuga Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Ale Molioo - Minister of Finance (cont.)

The Hon Minister greeted the House and continued her response; in regards to queries made by the member for Alataua West, ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau on whether there was a link between the fiscal strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hon Minister replied, there is no relation between the fiscal strategy statement 2022/2023 and SDGs. The fiscal strategy is particular to the government budget and long term goals on the economy and this is the statement that the government focuses on for direction of the development of the economy. The Hon Minister asserted that the Ministry will look into ways to connect the fiscal strategy to the SDGs. The Hon Minister elaborated that the Pathway for the Strategy of Samoa has been formulated to reflect certain targets of the SDGs, and the government will look at ways to integrate both documents with the fiscal strategy.

The Hon Minister noted queries made by several Members, such as where the government plans to fund its various projects, considering the notable deficit. Hon Minister then clarified that we have public accounts to deliberate on the projects intended to be implemented, there are also funds set aside for the payment of debts. Hon MULIPOLA, noted that the Government will also seek

assistance from our partners for budget support for any development, this is also inclusive of the 1million project for each constituency. The Hon Minister further stated, in the event that our economy faces hardships, we can seek a loan with low interest, while the Ministry will monitor diligently and reshuffle allocations accordingly to ensure our nation does not go through such dilemma.

In reference to foreign reserves status and policies in place to monitor the increase cost of living such as increased in imported goods and high fuel prices; the Hon minister explained that 760 million foreign reserves which can cater for imported costs for almost 10 months. On the issue of the price of gas, 10.8million litres of diesel can be stored in our tanks which could be sufficient to supply for a period of 82 days or more than 2 months. 7.9million litres for fuel that could be stored in our tanks and would be sufficient to supply for a period of 70 days or more than 2 months.

The Minister made note of Ministry's plans to tender the contract as the current contract for a fuel/oil supplier for our country, as the contract draws near to an end in August. The Hon Minister noted that we signed an agreement with the current supplier Exxon Mobil from 2018 to 2023, precisely on the 31 July 2023. There will also be a review on the contract for distribution of gas when the current contract ends in 31July 2022 The Minister noted that the contract will be advertised again towards the end of this year upon the completion of the current contract and normal procurement processes will follow in the beginning on 2023. Furthermore, the Minister asserted that plans are in the pipeline to negotiate with other fuel companies to ensure we receive take the most appropriate company for our people. This will be advertised upon the completion of the current contractor which is, Petroleum Product Supplies Limited in 2024.

The Minister further responded to queries regarding the inability of the government to acquire 28million in revenue for the current FY and the recorded deficit of 89million, and how the government is planning to get funds to make up for these. The Minister clarified that the government has 'Sinking Funds' available which is not in the tabled budget. But these funds are appropriated to pay for government debts when in need. In addition, the government can further request to overseas partners for grants. However, if the government continues to be in a dire position then they can loan from places with low interest rates. The Minister further clarified the plans and initiatives that the government will take in order to garner the necessary funds.

The Minister stated that the Prime Minister is the Chairperson for the Independence Committee thus the referral of the Independence Committee fund away from the Ministry of Finance. On the issue of TVET Scholarships, the Minister confirmed that there was budget support received from New Zealand and Australia to fund the scholarships for TVET, she then noted the increase of funds for NUS from 700k to 1.4million.

The Hon Minister then touched on the GDP rate and the poverty line for Samoa; as well as informed the House on Government's efforts to improving the standard of living of our people to ensure the gap is reduced.

There was much debate over the different interpretations and clarification from both Members of the Cabinet and Members of the Opposition on their understanding of the Gross Domestic Product and Poverty Line. Amongst deliberations, the Hon Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries sternly informed the House, that records and figures provided to international authorities differ to the records and realities of Samoa. Furthermore, the Minister for Communication and Information Technology asserted that the Poverty Line can be avoided if employment opportunities are created for our people to assist them with earning a living and raising their standard of living thus bridging the gap.

- **Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo – Member for Anoamaa 2**

The Hon Member queried the 500k appropriated for the Forensic Audit, and sought clarification as to what projects needed investigation by the forensic auditors.

Susuga Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Ale Molioo - Minister of Finance (cont.)

The Hon Minister clarified that the forensic audit will be conducted on projects implemented by the previous Government who were in power for 40 years. Furthermore, the Minister noted that the findings are important as the Government of the day will take this as lessons learned as well as proper direction to assist with future developments and decision making. Such projects which will be investigated is the airport at Tiavea.

- **Afioga ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Moti Momoemausu Tuuau – Member for Alataua West**

The Member touched on the importance of the Fiscal Strategy, the SDGs and the PDS linked to ensure all projects and development for our nation is also an achievement on the global front, considering that all documents are pertinent for the development and success of our nation especially in building our economy. Furthermore, Afioga ALIIMALEMANU mentioned that the GDP does not determine wealth or poverty, rather whether the nation is growing economically or going through a recession.

Susuga Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Ale Molioo - Minister of Finance (cont.)

The Hon Minister concluded her response by conveying gratitude to her Finance sector, the management and staff of the Central Bank of Samoa, SIFA, SLAC, UTOS, DBS and her policy advisors on. She conveyed appreciation and gratitude to the her ministry for their diligence

and commitment in preparing the budget as well as acknowledged the Committee Chair and Members of the Finance and Expenditure Committee for their hard work.

VIII. Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Schuster – Minister of Police and Prisons

The Hon Minister greeted Samoa in all her honorific salutations, as well as Mr Speaker and Parliament, the Chief Justice and Judiciary then proceeded to address the issues raised by members on his portfolio.

The Hon Minister addressed the issue raised by the member of Faleata 4 to establish 'campaign funds' to legalize candidates to offer financial assistance for their constituency, noting that this is inevitable, however the amount should be set. The Minister informed the House that a Commission of Inquiry is tasked with forming solutions to curb the numerous issues that arise during elections.

In regards to requests for Fire Stations, the Hon Minister informed the Members who made requests, that all have been noted and will be assessed on a priority basis, however, the Minister reminded Members to utilise the services provided near their constituencies in the meantime. Another request made by Afioga SEUAMULI which the Minister clarified that the clearance records are retrieved in Upolu and not in Savaii, as the Upolu Headquarters holds all details and records from the court and the attorney general which is noted in the police report.

In regards to issues raised by MP for Safata 1, the Minister provided details of the deceased members who were tasked with renovating the Poutasi station. Furthermore, the Minister expressed his concern in the increase in number of people using drugs in the country as well as the alarming rate of cases relating to illegal importation of drugs. The Hon Minister highlighted that the numbers are increasing as he provided the House figures from 2020 – 2022.

2020 - 6 raids that retrieve marijuana/3 raids retrieving cocaine

2021 - 7 raids that retrieve marijuana/1 raids retrieving cocaine

2022 - 12 raids, retrieving marijuana/2 raids retrieving cocaine

Proceedings set aside at 10:50am and resumed at 11:27am

Hon Deputy Prime Minister - MOTION

The Deputy PM moved a motion to set aside S.O.32 and proceed sitting until 1pm and reconvene at 6pm until the Appropriation Bill 2022/2023 and the Supplementary Appropriation Bill 2021/2022 is passed; the motion was carried.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Schuster – Minister of Police and Prisons (cont.)

The Hon Minister continued to note figures for drug related cases in Samoa:

2021 - 2 pipes were found from the raids

2022 - 7 pipes were found from the raids

He then mentioned that there were cocaine found during 2 raids, furthermore in response to queries on whether the police officers have insurance, the Hon Minister responded that the Ministry does not provide insurance cover for the staff.

- **Afioga LEAANA Ronnie Posini – Member for Safata 1**

The member stated that the reason he queried the deaths of 3 Police officers was because from his perspective the load they carried in the truck does not reflect their work or expertise. He believes that this type of work/load should've been carried out by a Professional Contractor. Moreover on the issue of illegal drugs found during raids, the Member queried why drug related cases are usually dismissed due to lack of evidence yet during raids, the evidence is found in the area.

- **Afioga LAUMATIAMANU Ringo Purcell – Member for Safata 2**

The member requested the Minister to provide some form of compensation for the families of the deceased who was unexpectedly killed while working if there is no insurance cover.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Schuster – Minister of Police and Prisons (cont.)

The Hon Minister noted the importance of insurance policies for police officers, as well as all employees in general. Furthermore, the Minister confirmed to the Member for Safata that the Ministry does carry out minor construction work such as the renovations for police outposts.

The Hon Minister then responded to other concerns raised by Members on the delay of filling the Police Commissioner as there were also several management positions who were also vacant.

- **Aioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili – Member for Vaimauga 1**

The member expressed his concerns with the delay in filling vacant positions, especially CEO's as this does not reflect well on the leaders or is it appropriate for an Office to operate without its CEO. Furthermore, this raises several queries for those who applied, whether there application was successful or otherwise.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi – Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries

The Minister clarified that there are 7 CEO positions vacant and needs to be filled, furthermore, organisational restructure is ongoing for certain Offices. The Hon Minister asserted that further clarification will be provided by the Deputy Prime Minister in due time.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Schuster – Minister of Police and Prisons (cont.)

The Hon Minister commented that the relevant authorities will work together to ensure proper classification of lights for vehicles; furthermore, on the issue of the national flag, the Hon Minister informed the House that there is no provision in the Act which bans the sale of flags. In regards to the Police Academy, the Minister confirmed that this project is underway, and that there are 100 employees from China assigned to this project which will be constructed in Tafaiagata. The Hon Minister explained that the delay was owed to the New Zealand borders banning flights from China, thus no flight from China can transit in NZ.

• Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo – Member for Anoamaa 2

The Hon Member queried whether the Chinese assistance provides relevant personnel to conduct training for protection in their line of work or is it only to fund the building.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Schuster – Minister of Police and Prisons (cont.)

The Hon Minister clarified that China is only assisting the country with the construction of the Police Academy Building but there is no intention of bringing in Chinese Officials to train our police officers. The Hon Minister commended the employees of the FESA, Ministry of Police, the Minister acknowledged his constituency in all its honorific salutations then commended the Toa Samoa National Rugby League Association for their performance in the weekend against their game with Cook Island.

IX. Afioga Hon VALASI Tapitofanua - Minister of Health/ Member for Vaisigano 2

The Hon Minister greeted the House and acknowledged his Associate Minister, Afioga TEA Toola Peato. He then acknowledged all Government agencies under his ministerial portfolio. The Minister commended the different Councils, Chairman and the midwifery council, Samoa medical doctor's association, Samoa independent doctors association, nurses council, and others who are working together to give a better service for our country. He also acknowledged the work of respective district hospitals. Then emphasised that there are still people who do to abide with health precautionary measures by wearing mask.

-commend the employees for putting all their efforts in prioritizing the protection of Samoa from the spread of the disease.

He acknowledged the previous CEO for MOH for his commitment and all effort he put forth to ensure the effective operation of the Ministry's services. Furthermore, the Minister acknowledge the partners that are assisting and contributes to the provision of health assistance to the people such as METI, NKF, etc... The Minister noted that more than 30 Members spoke on the budget, however only 5 or 6 Members made queries towards his Ministry which indicates that majority of Members understand and are satisfied with the services of the Ministry. He then commended the Dep Leader and MPs of Opposition and their queries which also assist them with their work.

In regards to issues raised by the member for Siumu, the Minister noted concerns regarding the stats for those affected with COVID and the people who are already vaccinated. Then the Minister informed the House that there is a second booster shot and that the Ministry continues to provide this essential service for our people. He then urged everyone to work together and further commended efforts of the ministry, as covid entered our shores and the majority of our people had received their vaccinations. He also noted that the public continues to refuse vaccination for several reasons such as; religious reasons, disregard for the Ministry's health guidelines; and those who are ignorant and don't care. The Hon Minister noted that currently there are 29 total deaths related to Covid, then conveyed sympathies to the families of members.

The Hon Minister noted that there will be a change to the Emergency Orders, then restrictions will be slowly relaxed, especially requirements for those entering the country whether they are positive or negative cases. Hon Minister confirmed that all passengers coming into Samoa are released to their homes for self-isolation. The Minister also advised travelling passengers and those who have covid to stay isolated at home, for the safety of the public at large. He reminded the House that upon arrival into the country, it is important that they get tested after 5 days to get an accurate reading of their health status before they associate with members of the public. The Hon Minister reminded the House that the wearing of masks remains mandatory for the safety of the public.

- **Tofa Hon TUUU Anasii Leota – Member for Siumu**

The Hon Member commended the Minister for clarification and urged his to continue mandatory wearing of masks and to enforce penalties to ensure the public are encouraged to wear masks and adhere to social distancing measures for the protection of the public.

Afioga Hon VALASI Tapitofanua - Minister of Health (cont.)

The Hon Minister mentioned the efforts and developments undertaken by his Ministry to ensure the appropriate care is given to members of the public. Furthermore, that the Ministry will consider using test results from overseas rather than test results carried out locally to save costs. Furthermore, the Minister iterated that the Ministry continues to look for ways to ensure Travel Advisories are not as complicated for passengers. The Hon Minister confirmed to the Member for Salega 1, that there is a generator available for his constituency, there are also abundance of medicine supply for district hospital to distribute to the sick people rather than for you to take home.

The Minister clarified that pharmaceutical supplies must be uplifted from the Ministry's warehouse, after a request is submitted to the Ministry. In regards to the query made by the member for Safata 1, the Minister clarified that the Ambulance vehicle was specifically for Saanapu, but the employee noted the unsafe environment for the vehicle, he then urged the Member to look into this. Furthermore, advised the MP to consider the lease for the land proposed for the construction of a District Hospital

- **Afioga LEANA Ronnie Posini – Member for Safata 1**

The Member commended the Minister for the clarifications towards the ambulance for their constituency. He noted his acceptance of the advice given and will meet with his constituency and report back for further discussions and solutions regarding the land lease.

- **Afioga FEPULEAI Faasavalu Faimata Sua: Member for Salega 1**

The Member commended the Minister for his response regarding their district hospital generator.

Afioga Hon VALASI Tapitofanua - Minister of Health (cont.)

The Hon Minister mentioned there was ample supply of pharmaceuticals, however the issue was the delay of orders placed by District hospitals regarding what medicine was required. He then acknowledged the advice and suggestions from the MP for Aana No2, especially regarding the Ministry's preventative measure to combat different viruses spreading around the world. The maintenance of health standards and good hygiene standards. The Minister clarified that the appropriation for doctors housing has improved in the pediatric ward and other wards within the hospital. He further commended the Member for Sagaga 2 for making a phone call, in regards to a training in prevention measures for his constituency regarding covid19.

- **Susuga MAULOLO Tavita Aмоса – Member for Sagaga 2**

The Member commended the Minister's efforts and promptness in responding to his call for medical assistance to conduct covid testing for his constituency. The Member acknowledged the training and skills from Medical Officials who were able to share their knowledge with members of his constituency to conduct RAT tests.

- **Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauilili Tuivasa – Member for Vaimauga 1**

The Member queried the cost of medicines for our people, to lower the cost of medicine so that it can be affordable especially for families that needs it more, reminded the Minister that this was his request, whats the status on this

- **Afioga FUAAVA Suluimalo Amataga – Member for Aleipata Itupa i Luga**

The Member recommended to the Minister whether it is possible or appropriate to conduct RAT tests for elders who pass-away in rural areas to determine whether their deaths were covid related. The Member expressed that his concern was owed to the number of covid deaths recorded today are 29, this number consists of only those deaths in the hospital, however, this does not include deaths in homes. Additionally, the Member reminded the minister about his request for Ambulance Drivers to carry out Ambulance-Services.

- **Susuga AIONO Tile Gafa – Member for Aana Alofi 2**

The Member commended the Minister for his detailed responses and queried clarification from the Minister if the claims that there will be food available for District hospital, such as the Leulumoega hospital as people are happily talking about it.

- **Tofa SEUAMULI Fasi Toma – Member for Gagaaemauga 2**

The Member queried the status of Vaipouli hospital as the member noted that there is no doctor assigned to this hospital. The Member requested machines (not specific) for the Vaipouli hospital, to avoid having to transfer patients to Tuasivi because of the lack of equipment.

- **Afioga MAGELE Sekati Fiaui – Member for Faasaleleaga 2**

The Member commended efforts of the National Kidney Foundation in prolonging life for our people undergoing dialysis.

- **Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Purcell - Member for Satupaitea**

The Hon Member commended the Minister of Health's clarification on all issues raised. Further put forward a request for a vehicle at his district hospital that could be used to conduct community services.

Mr Speaker called the Assembly to be upstanding for a minute of silence while he said a prayer to honor families who have lost loved ones due to COVID.

Proceedings suspended at 1:04pm and will resume at 6pm.