

DISCLAIMER

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PART C
7pm

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY
APPROPRIATION BILL 2021/2022 – debate on second reading (Cont.) Day 5

10. Susuga Hon. TUILAEPA Auelua Fatialofa Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Member for Lepa

The Hon Member gave a brief background on Samoa’s stable government for many years, which was why the Pacific Region always held Samoa in high esteem and would always give Samoa the honour to speak first in any Pacific forum or meeting and this was owed to our stable democracy. Hon Member recalled when Samoa became independent, we were categorized under Least Developing Countries (LCD), however when we were stable enough, and more developed, an increase in per capita income, Samoa moved up another category to ‘Developed Countries’. Hon TUILAEPA noted that as a nation, Samoa was not happy at this stage, mainly because our country was not able to receive funds and assistance that the least developing countries received. However, the pros of a stable economy is the assurance and guarantee to foreign investors and tourists to our shores and invest in our economy. The Hon Member accentuated we were elected to be representatives for our constituencies and everything we do is monitored and observed by overseas people; he emphasised on the importance of working together for a better future and putting aside our differences. He called upon the three arms of government to be interdependent. Therefore it was important to make the nation aware of past events to raise awareness and know what cannot and should not be done and what should continue, noting the saying that ‘history repeats itself’, therefore hoping that tomorrow brings brighter decisions. Highlighted that if we are a country that is founded on God then God is everywhere, even in this House, therefore as Parliamentarians we should do the right and just things.

The Hon Member then addressed the Minister for Police and noted that it is important that members of the Police Service do not abuse and misuse their powers as law enforcers of the land. Hon TUILAEPA recalled the incident when trying to seek an audience with the Speaker, and the police squad ran with shields and vests as if a violent protest was taking place, he further

mentioned that as they were trying to get chairs and water, they heard other officers calling out to leave them be as they will eventually get tired and leave Parliament grounds. Hon Member asserted that he has faith in the current Minister as he is aware of the rule of law given that he is a lawyer by profession and was also a Judge of the District Court.

Hon TUILAEPa spoke on the importance of good governance and accentuated that there are three main characteristics of good governance, that is; transparency, accountability and consultation. Called the Hon PM and Cabinet to be open to receive advise from independent body/committee in order to avoid biased decisions. Also encouraged the continuation of the tender process as this ensures the removal of doubt or any suspicion when making decisions. Hon Member emphasised that the most dangerous situation is when you surround yourself with people who always say 'YES' rather than providing honest and substantial advice to encourage you to do what is right- right and just decisions which gain the respect and trust of the people.

The Hon Member then raised the issue put forth by Hon LAUOFO noting that economic developments should equal social developments as they are interrelated. Hon Member further stated that social developments rely on economic developments and stated that when we talk about sports, health and education are all included under economic and social developments. He then accentuated if more emphasis is placed on one sector the other sector will fall hence it should be balanced. He then noted the overall gist of the budget as provided in the Budget address;

Receipts – \$876million
Expenditures - \$982million
Deficit - \$106 million.

The Hon Member then emphasised that there is only one loan that needs to be paid off, then clarified the reason the loan was needed and what it funded, Hon TUILAEPa mentioned 6.4million loan from China to complete the development of the airport and stated that this was paid off in 2020; highlighted the lengthy process involved during consultation stage to apply for a loan, and stressed the importance of keeping in mind that our expenses should not exceed our revenue earned, therefore, advising the new government to not spend money unnecessarily because it can also affect our relationship with our donors if we are too deep in debt and cannot pay it off

Hon Prime Minister:

The Hon PM called to add 15 more minutes to the speech of the Hon Member as it is also important for the current government to take note the advice given from the previous Prime Minister.

Susuga Hon. TUILAEP Auelua Fatialofa Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Member for Lepa (cont.)

The Hon Member noted the important of the 1million appropriation for the drainage project to curb flooding in the urban areas. The Hon Member also called for the government of the day not to cease these projects as it was not for their own benefit but it was for benefit of the country. Further stated that these projects are not funded by our money but by Grants that we can not to get back if we turn a blind eye on it. Hon Member then touched on the forensic auditor noted that in 2004 a forensic auditor was brought in from America to conduct a forensic audit on our accounts, he then noted that there are capable personnel on island with the necessary skill and knowledge to conduct this audit, to ensure our monies are not spent unwisely.

*******GOVERNMENT RESPONSES*******

1. Afioga Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa - Prime Minister and Member for Lotofaga.

The Hon PM wished to give a brief on the compilation of the budget and noted that when they were declared the government of the day, they hoped to activate Article 95 (to use 25% of the budget) of the constitution but due to the delay on declaring their place as Government they were told to refer and activate Article 105. The Attorney General advised on the pursuant of Article 105 under State of Emergency as the most relevant way for the government to conduct its daily operations until the budget is tabled and passed.

*Article 95: Expenditure in anticipation of appropriation: If an Appropriation Bill has not become law by the first day of the financial year to which it relates, the Minister responsible for finance may, with the prior approval of Cabinet, authorise such expenditure (not otherwise authorised by Act) as the Minister may consider essential for the continuance of any services, until an Appropriation Bill becomes law: PROVIDED THAT the expenditure so authorised shall not exceed an amount equal to one-fourth of the relevant vote approved in the Appropriation Act for the preceding year.

The Hon PM then spoke to address the issues raised by Members regarding the portfolio of the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment:

Hon PM emphasized that the majority of requests were on fixing of seawalls through the GEF project. The Hon PM noted that for seawalls, the government relies on assistance to fulfil these projects, further stated that they will look into funds and assistance to ensure they provide seawalls for constituencies that requested. Further stated that seawalls is one of the many important projects like roads and others that they will try and get done. The Member stated that there are only two ways that help reduce the impacts of climate change i) mitigation; and ii) adaptation which is why seawalls are built as a way to try and reduce climate change impacts.

In regards to mangrove reserves, the PM noted that mangrove reserves can help reduce impacts of climate change and assist with the emission of green-house gas, so we should start reserving our mangrove areas. The 1million tree project that is on-going, is one of the important developments that we have made an effort to revive as it helps with preserving the environment.

In regards to the Samoa Tourism Authority, the Hon PM noted the impacts this sector has faced due to COVID with no tourists. However, just like the previous government which provided programs to help keep small resort businesses afloat during the pandemic, the new government of the day has also provided programs that will assist the sector's development through the pandemic this includes on-going trainings and seminars for people in this sector that are still working and for those who are still looking for work, to help develop skills to assist them in job hunting and also in the work that they do.

Hon PM noted the question raised by the deputy leader of opposition regarding the meetings by the EU-ACP and its importance for Samoa's exposure but due to COVID19 and trying to protect our country from it, the Cabinet will consider and make right decisions and look for alternatives to host these meetings.

The Hon PM addressed the issue of forensic pathologist, the PM stated that there are 3 bodies that needs examination which is why we need to bring in a forensic pathologist. Noting that we are looking at a person from either NZ or Australia, which is closer to us, makes travelling easier. Hon PM noted that although we have a pathologist on island but does not meet criterias of a forensic pathologist. Also noted an option for them, and this is to use the person that we have now under supervision of a forensic pathologist from overseas. Hon PM also acknowledged the advice from the Leader of the Opposition, it will help them with the work that they do. She then highlighted the concern raised by members of the Opposition regarding them prioritising the Social Sector over the Economic sector instead of finding a balance for the economy. However, it is important to stress that each government or side has different indicators used to measure the economic growth of a country, as they have decided to take a different approach on the development of the economy; hence the prioritisation of the social well-being of people. She clarified further that the 1 million promised to be given out to each constituency is intended for additional development that the constituency see fits or requires for their own source of income.

2. Afioga Hon TUALA Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio - Deputy Prime Minister and Member for Gagaemauga 1.

The Hon Member acknowledged the House and all of Samoa in all her honorific glory, acknowledged the Clergy for their never ending prayers and blessings for Samoa; Acknowledged his constituency and expressed gratitude for the honour bestowed on him to represent their voices, made mention his constituency's desire for their candidate to run under the

Political Party of FAST. Hon Deputy PM paid appreciation and acknowledgment to his family, siblings and wife and children.

Proceedings were set aside at 8:39am; and resumed at 9:04pm

Afioga Hon TUALA Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio - Deputy Prime Minister and Member for Gagaemauga 1. (cont.)

The Hon Deputy then spoke on the Ministry for Customs and Revenue under his portfolio and asserted that the CEO and the Ministry are preparing and making sure the appropriate colours are well structured so it will be easily understandable by the businesses.; these include the green lane which includes border crossings, etc; the orange lane which represent medium risk cargos, and other lanes.

Hon Deputy clarified on the taxation of religious ministers and stated that this has been put forward to review and appropriate way-forward. In regards to the x-ray scanner used to scan all the imported goods and containers from overseas, the Minister clarified that it was tendered but the technical requirements were not satisfied so it had to be re-tendered. The cabinet is considering a scanner that is effective and sufficient.

In regards to the TIMS Taxation System, the Hon Member noted that the system can be advantageous if effectively implemented. it can also be a disadvantage if not implemented correctly; currently the Ministry is waiting for submission from Chamber of Commerce and other partners in regards to the TIMS system.

The Deputy PM also clarified on the 51 million as promised and stated that if the Ministry collects all its pending and outstanding revenues, there will be an increase in revenues and therefore the 51million will be realised sooner for the benefit of our constituencies.

3. Susuga Hon. LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Member for Gagaifomauga No. 3

The Hon Member greeted the Speaker, and acknowledge his work, acknowledged the hard work of his FAST Party family. He then greeted the Hon PM and Deputy PM; The Member greeted the Leader of the Opposition Party and his Party and commended the Hon Leader of Opposition for all his efforts in developing Samoa for the numerous years he was in Government. He noted that regardless of the many challenges and setbacks, it can never take away the respect for him as the longest serving Prime Minister for Samoa.

The Hon Minister noted that ever since independence in 1960, Samoa's economy was developed from 70-80% of agriculture. Emphasised that Samoa depends heavily on agriculture as we do not have resources and minerals like other countries, hence why the new government is focusing on the improvement of local farmers. He named the different images on Samoa's old coins which is a testament of the importance of agriculture to the development of our economy.

The Hon Minister thanked the previous Minister Hon Lopao, for taking up the Ministry when he resigned and noted that the priority is given to agriculture and fisheries and the government's assistance will be given directly to constituencies (setting aside normal procedures and processes). He then expressed thanks and gratitude to the previous Minister for Women, Tofa Faimalotoa Kika Stowers for the initiation and the continuation of village councils and ensured that there should be a village council that is responsible for the distribution of the allocations provided in the budget. The Hon Minister pointed out that during German administration, the WESTEC initiated the koko, popo and other agriculture developments for export which thrived, however our carelessness caused it to fail.

The Minister spoke on SROS and noted its recent developments, such as experimenting on possible cures for diseases; as well as conducting research on illegal drugs, researched on different plants, leaves as well as the improvement of our local products for export. Hon Minister was pleased to note that SROS has also developed a way to examine DNA which is useful especially for Land and Titles court in determining familial ties and relations.

The Hon Minister affirmed that there is shortage of taro to be exported, he further clarified that this is due to the farmers being independent and doing their plantations alone rather than correlating with the market and other farmers so taro availability can continue for export. Noted there being plans to establish a database for all farmers and the different crops to ensure the Ministry is aware of the different produce farmed and harvested by farmers, this will also help the Ministry manage our local products and ensure that the issue of shortage in supply is avoided.

Hon Minister expressed gratitude to China for their support in the provision of equipment such as; chemicals and fertilizers used to manage our plantations and ensure the growth of our agricultural sector. He also mentioned that 'Inter-commercial farming' is the vision planned for this ministry and mentioned plans to bring in ploughs, to plough our lands. The Hon Minister made mention SACEP and SAFPROM.

Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili pierre Laufo - Member for Anoamaa 2

Hon Member queried the status of SAFPROM; to which the Minister responded that he will look into the matter raised.

**Proceedings were adjourned at 10:05pm;
and will reconvene at 9:30 on Wednesday 22nd September 2021.**