

DISCLAIMER

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Day 21
9:30

Wednesday 17th February 2021

I. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman 2019/2020

II. PRESENTATION OF PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORTS

A total of 2 Committee Reports were tabled:

1. Committee Report of the Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee on the Operations of the Audit Office; and
2. Report of the Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee on the Audit Office Report of Irregularities 2018/2019.

III. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

1. SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION BILL (NO.1) 2020/2021- second reading & Debate on the Bill (cont.)

- i. ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau - Member for Alataua West and Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee cont.**

The Committee Chairperson greeted the House and presented the revenues collected during the parliamentary term.

2016/2017-	578 million
2018-	625 million
2019-	626 million
2020-	646 million
2021-	593 million

Grants

2016/2017-	242 million
2018-	256 million
2019-	223 million
2020-	179 million
2021-	255 million

The Member noted the queries raised by her fellow parliamentarian regarding the budget support and stated that there are policies in place to guide the implementation of projects. The Chairperson stated that budget support is under the Ministry of Finance as this is the Ministry responsible for distributing funds to respective ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, Electric Power Corporation, Samoa Water Authority, and others for the overall development of essential services in Samoa. The Chairperson noted the in-kind donations during the parliamentary term.

2016/2017-	54.6 million
2018	288 million
2019	115.3 million
2020	77 million
2021	135.5 million

The Member mentioned that some of the major projects developed using in-kind donations from development partners include:

- Establishing the new Pacific Climate Change Centre
- Police Academy (temporarily on hold due to covid restrictions)
- EPC projects
- Tui internet cable
- Water Sanitation Program (SWA)
- Vaisigano Bridge
- Friendship Park
- Wharf
- Ports Development Project
- Samoa Tourism Growth Partnership
- Road Maintenance
- Economic and Social Program
- Scholarships programs
- Purchase of new vessel for travelling between Apia and Tutuila
- Bridge at Maliolio
- Bridge at Loto Samasoni

Afioga ALIIMALEMANU noted the importance of the Police Academy for the upskilling of locals in enforcing law and order, upholding peace in the communities and ensuring a safer Samoa.

Hon Prime Minister - Clarification

The Hon Prime Minister spoke on the importance of grants from foreign donors and the reporting of each allocation for development projects. The Hon Prime Minister mentioned the Cabinet Development Committee (CDC) which meets once every 2 months, with the aim of monitoring the progress of different projects which are sourced from the budget support. The Hon PM mentioned that the Governor of the Central Bank opens the CDC meeting with a presentation of Samoa's current financials – all CEO's are present and are afforded the opportunity to understand different figures, including how much revenues have been collected, how much debt Samoa has, determine the debt service ration, also identifies the GDP, and other important figures.

The Hon PM further noted the importance of the Governor's presentation, as it also identifies other measures in place which determine Samoa's financial position, as well as how much money is generated within the economy. Furthermore, the surplus and deficit ratio is also provided in the Governor's presentation specifically for the exportation and importation of goods and services of Samoa, as well as determining the standard of living of the Samoan people. After the Governor's address, the Cabinet calls upon the presentation from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to inform the Committee of the developments involving the global crisis 'climate change' and Samoa's adaptation strategies in place. The Hon PM mentioned the impacts of natural disasters to any nation and asserted that it is vital for Samoa to promote environment friendly developments as we should also consider protecting our blue economy (ocean) as they interrelate to the development of Samoa. Hon PM noted that with progress, challenges and setbacks are inevitable; however, the Government strives to implement long-term sustainable projects for the betterment of the nation.

At the end of the CDC meeting, the Chairperson gives his closing statement, which include acknowledgment and encouragement to the Executives and those responsible for the implementation and monitoring of different development projects. The Hon Prime Minister stated that the Chairperson also urges the Executives to promptly respond to queries raised by those who lack understanding, hence why the Executives and their representatives are often on the media to clarify and elaborate on any issue. The Hon PM accentuated that it is Government's intention that all matters pertaining to the development of Samoa is made transparent to the people. However, the Hon PM noted that there have been numerous instances whereby the media does not only

report what the Government officials have provided but also become opinionated on their published articles.

Hon TUILAEPa noted the decrease of the economy from 1979-1981 due to poor leadership. He accentuated that trading is vital as it influences the source of income for our people. The Prime Minister mentioned the introduction of National Development Loans during past leadership as a means to counter the challenges of a deteriorated economy; Hon PM exclaimed that this Loan option ceased to exist once HRPP took the reins.

The Hon PM recalled past hardships that Samoa endured and noted that the late PM, Hon Tofilau Eti Alesana upon taking leadership changed the laws to increase taxes. He further recalled that in 1982, HRPP came into Government under the leadership of Vaai Kolone; 5 months into the term, Hon Vaai vacated his seat due to an electoral petition. Thereafter Hon Tofilau became Prime Minister, then elected the current Prime Minister into Cabinet with the duty to revive Samoa's economy.

Hon PM mentioned an opportunity presented to him in the past to become an understudy or work as directors within the Asia Development Bank (ADB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to acquire the necessary knowledge and expertise in reading and managing finances. It was envisaged at the time, that these locals understudying in these international forums would return to Samoa and share/utilise the skills and knowledge attained from these international organisations.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:43am

Proceedings resumed at 11:41am

- **Hon AFAMASAGA Rico Tupai - Minister for Communication Information Technology**

The Hon Minister noted his disappointment with the absence of FAST Members in Chamber and urged Mr Speaker for a penalty or a ruling to ensure the dignity of the Parliament is not taken lightly by these Members. He then voiced promises made by other party Members (FAST) to increase the minimum wage, and stated that he conversed with a businessman who informed him that his business faced a redundancy due to increasing the hourly rate for his staff.

- **Hon FAUMUINA TIATIA LIUGA**

The Hon Member stated that he was once responsible in data collection for various employers for the United Nations and he noted that from all countries of the United Nations, Samoa is the only nation that uses the Government as a measure and one of the comparators to determine employee salaries, which reflects the level Samoa pays its public servants.

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Point of Clarification

The Hon Prime Minister clarified on the role of the whip in a political party. He further emphasised on transparency and accountability, hence the importance of Ministries and Offices submission of updated annual reports for parliamentary committees. The PM stated that there are false statements circulated by the FAST Party ascertaining that the Prime Minister solely decides CEO positions. Hon PM clarified that the Cabinet's role is the endorsement of the interview panels' recommendation for the most suitable candidate and not single-handed by the Prime Minister. The PM clarified that 19% of these advice are progressed and approved, while the other advices are reconsidered as the Cabinet have a better understanding of the candidates. The Prime Minister referred to the Main Budget Address before parliament and stated that all appropriations have been specified and detailed in the Address to ensure transparency and easy to understand.

ALIIMALEMANU Alofa Tuuau - Member for Alataua West and Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee (cont.)

The Chairperson expressed gratitude to the Government for the current state of Samoa, with all the developments as we have come a long way with only \$4 a week in the past.

The Member proceeded to explain the projects implemented within this parliamentary term:

- 51 projects done by SWA on installing dams and water access with an allocation of \$71.9 million
- 87 road projects which costed \$925,214 implemented by the government with the assistance of development partners.
- Grants received by overseas partners depends on mutual trust and confidence that the recipient nation follows international policies to ensure the projects progress well into completion.

The Member commended the Ministry of Finance, the Audit Office and responsible bodies on the compilation of public accounts for each financial year, more so the updating of public accounts as these clarify the grants received, actuals, expenses, revenues, etc. Furthermore, the Chairperson acknowledged the recommendations

provided in the audit reports attached for Government Ministries and SOE's annual reports. Furthermore, the Chairperson mentioned the assistance offered by Government for housing, especially for average and low-income earners, as there have been notable improvements of housing in Savaii. In regards to hotels in Savaii, the Member commended the hoteliers for providing specials to the local market and maintaining their facilities to accommodate our people.

The Member commended the initiative for the lights festival that lifted spirits of our people during the uncertainties of covid. The Member was pleased to note that Savaii also participated in the lights festival. The Member acknowledged scholarships afforded to students, and recommended that these scholarships be afforded per constituency if the students meet the required average. She further suggested the possibility of securing funds to improve the National University of Samoa as an internationally recognised/accredited University as well as to offer trainings to further build the capacity and equip lecturers for the University. The Committee Chair acknowledged and expressed gratitude to the Hon Mr Speaker for his forbearance and understanding in conducting parliamentary proceedings, further commended and acknowledged Hon Tuitama, Hon Aeau, Afioga Faasootauloa and Susuga Mulipola for their services. She then acknowledged Hon PM and his Cabinet for the developments implemented throughout this parliamentary term. The Member acknowledged the tireless efforts of all CEO's and Government Ministries and Offices. She acknowledged the Finance and Expenditure Committee Members and asserted that many hands lessens the load. Acknowledged Samoa, especially her constituency for their support and prayers which have strengthened her throughout the parliamentary term. Conveyed gratitude for her family and concluded her speech with the scripture from the Book of Isaiah 41: 8 – 11

“But you, O Israel, My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham My friend. I brought you from the ends of the earth and called you from its farthest corners. I said, ‘You are My servant.’ I have chosen and not rejected you. 10 Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be afraid, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will surely help you; I will uphold you with My right hand of righteousness.”

Hon PRIME MINISTER – Point of Clarification

The Hon Prime Minister accentuated that it is Government's collective duty to address and clarify on issues and queries raised by respective Members with the intention to elaborate and make it clear and easy to understand, as well as avoid misunderstanding or any misinterpretation on the spending or implementation of development projects. The Hon PM elaborated on government policies, whereby Cabinet provides a directive to be implemented by responsible ministries. There are

also instances when Government receive recommendations and proposals for their perusal. Despite receiving recommendations, the Hon PM accentuated that Cabinet does not wait for recommendations to be brought to Cabinet rather implement necessary action as they see fit. Hon Prime Minister stated that during the beginning of the parliamentary term, Government responses commenced with the Minister for Communication and Information Technology, however, for this final session, the privilege will be afforded to the Hon Minister for Women, Community and Social Development, Afioga TUITAMA Talalelei Tuitama who is one of the senior members of the Party. Hon PM acknowledged the work carried out by CEO's providing advice to their respective Ministers and emphasised the need for Ministers to consider the advice of their CEO's as these are the knowledgeable individuals within their respective fields. He further encouraged white collars to serve with integrity and honesty.

**Proceedings were adjourned at 1:15pm
Parliament will again reconvene on Thursday 18th February 2021 at 9am.**