

**DISCLAIMER**

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**Day 5**

**PART B  
3:02pm**

*Clerk of the House announced pursuant to Standing Order 18 – Powers of the Deputy Speaker, in the absence of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker may perform the duties and exercise the authority of the Speaker in relation to all proceedings of the Assembly.*

**vi. Afioga Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Pierre Laufo – Member for Anoamaa 2**

The Hon Member greeted Mr Deputy Speaker and the House and conveyed well wishes to the Deputy Speaker as this is his first time presiding over the proceedings of Parliament.

- Tourism Sector

The Hon Member reminded the house regarding the issues he raised earlier on the importance of vendors in the rural areas and around the country in selling local produce and handicrafts as this garners income for them. The Hon Member also expressed gratitude for government programs in regards to agricultural products as this is one revenue needed for the people of Samoa to cater for their daily needs, such as electricity and water bills and family faalavelaves. He expressed support for one of the members’ request to have an allocation to assist all accommodations in Samoa as they were mostly affected during the lockdown. This will help with repair and enable the purchase of more rentals to cater for tourists.

The Hon Member emphasized that the support for hotels and resorts should be prioritized and grants should be given to hotels for renovations and improvements to prepare for tourists. He further encouraged the businesses to be prepared for influx of tourists and travellers, as noticed during the holidays the hotels and rental businesses were fully booked. The Member reminded the House there was a 5 million grant to assist hotels counter the impacts of Covid and this grant was disbursed by the Development Bank of Samoa in the form of loaning scheme whereby hotels had to apply and make repayments within a timeframe.

The Member also touched on the CHOGM which would cater for about 2,000 delegates and Member asserted the importance of having security for these leaders, hotel operations as well as health. He further queried whether there was sufficient funds allocated for the preparation of this program.

He then noted on the need for an allocation for relevant bodies to prepare for the CHOGM conference in the coming year. Further stated on the need to consider setting security guards for our guest, as well as health measures to ensure the safety of Samoa. The Member enforced the preparations of our country to see whether we have enough hotels, securities, health protections and rentals so we are well prepared for the CHOGM Conference.

The Member further acknowledged and expressed gratitude for the different airlines servicing our nation, and asserted that he is generally happy that these Airlines are transporting people to and from, however, he has noticed the air fares remain expensive. He then queried the Minister of Works on the feasibility of having a temporary license with Fiji Airways regarding flights between our country and NZ and Australia in order to pose a competition with Air NZ Airlines.

***Tofa Hon. OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai – Minister of MWTI***

The Hon Minister commented on the Temporary License for Fiji Airways and clarified that he has yet to receive a request for this and asserted that he has not received a proposal from Fiji Airways.

***Afioga Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Pierre Laufo – Member for Anoamaa 2 (cont.)***

The Member asserted that we should be proactive in searching for airlines that would ensure more revenue and income for the country. The Hon Member suggested that if not Fiji Airways then we should look at other airlines that we could use under the temporary license and further emphasizing we should be proactive in looking for airlines that could cater for our people travelling especially to assist decrease the airfares to travel to Australia and NZ.

- Covid-19 [Ministry of Health]

The Member commented on the new covid variant spreading in New Zealand and Fiji and urged the government whether it is time to enforce our precautionary measures to ensure we are safe and whether there's another booster shot for our country as he recalls that other foreign countries have already had their 5th booster shot. Hon FONOTOE asserted to re-enforce the vaccination campaign/program and queried whether there are any plans to roll out another phase of this program.

- Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development - \$1 million district project

The Member stated that this program/project is essential for the country but the only issue is the delay in the release of funds. There are only 5 months of the financial year left but have not received the full million therefore, by the time for the next million it is too late to use up the remaining funds from the previous financial year, yet there are 12 months where all projects should be done as planned within the financial year. The member outlined the importance of the proposed plans for the 1million initiative however, because of the delay in releasing the funds it has generated doubt among the public. The Member urged the government to release the remaining allocation for the project so developments for each constituency may progress. Hon LAUOFO further asserted that complaints and rumours spreading across the country are due to the delay of the release of the million as well as the matter regarding freezing allowances and employment vacancies by the PSC.

Commends the policy formulated on implementing the plans for this initiative and emphasised they have followed and complied with the conditions required. Further supported the intention proposed by one Member to audit these developments as there were speculations that the construction of the office has exceeded required amount, thus his support for auditing of financials for building Fono faavae offices and requests whether the Audit and Chief controller should audit these financials for transparency

***Susuga Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Molioo - Minister of Finance***

The Hon Minister stood to clarify that the allocation of the first 200k is a test for all constituencies whether they are abiding with the policies/regulations of the project. She then posed a question why other Members are pushing for the remaining funds for the full 1million when the majority of constituencies have not met requirements for utilizing the 200k.

***Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries***

The Member stated that the Committee is planning their official visit nationwide to determine whether conditions are followed, as well as to clear any misunderstanding regarding the utilization of the 200k. The Hon Minister corrected allegations made on social media that their constituency received the full million for their office, rather that they only received 200k from government through this project the full amount of the Office was made possible from funds earned by their Constituency from a lease agreement with foreign investors which total 500,000 per year.

***Mr. Deputy Speaker - Point of Order***

*Mr. Deputy Speaker further clarified the point made by the Minister of Finance and MAF noting that the remaining funds will be released once all conditions are adhered to and when*

*the responsible committee for the 1 million initiative is satisfied with how the 200k is spent by respective constituencies.*

***Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa 2 (cont.)***

The Member commended the clarification provided by the Hon Minister for MOF and MAF but his concern and suggestion to provide an audit report for these development was simply for transparency reasons

***Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi - Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries***

*The Hon Minister again justified that two machines were cleared from customs under his Constituency's name as these belong to his constituency for their development. The Minister jested that these machines were for their constituency for the project that will be built at their constituency where their constituency receives 500k annually. The Hon Minister elaborated that he cleared certain equipment for his constituency at 3pm and at 5pm it was leaked on social media and numerous false information on the media that followed.*

***Hon Speaker - Point of Order***

*Mr. Speaker further advised the Deputy Leader of the Opposition to refrain from speaking on this matter as clarifications have already been given by the respective Ministers.*

***Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa 2 (cont.)***

The Member acknowledged the Minister for his clarification and encouraged the forensic audit to commence its investigations on all projects to determine the credibility of processes used by the previous Government. He then addressed the Deputy Prime Minister and sought clarification whether by-payments for outstanding tax (arrears) are cancelled, or whether these outstanding taxes are to be paid in full.

***Afioga Hon TUALA Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio – Deputy Prime Minister***

*The Hon Deputy PM clarified to the Member the process of renewal for business licenses is provided for in relevant legislation and regulations of the Ministry. Hon Deputy PM stated that there are records of businesses with unpaid debts that are increasing and the Ministry should be vigilant in following up to ensure these are paid. He also noted that the government looks at trying to increase their revenue from these unpaid taxes/debts but it is also the interest of the government to assist business owners, and encouraged the business community to also be mindful and assist the government. Hon Minister stated in regards to outstanding tax, this usually occurs due to dishonesty of businesses in paying their loans and licenses. Hon TUALA emphasised that the private sector has a total of 80 million debts to the government and it is in this regard, it is a reminder for the companies to ensure they pay their tax on time. Hon Deputy PM, further explained that some of the work that*

*there are numerous government projects awarded to private businesses through relevant tender process; this has benefited the private sector, yet when the Ministry goes out to collect their debts, there always seems to be a delay.*

***Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufofo, Member for Anoamaa 2 (cont.)***

The Member commended the Minister for reducing the registration fee at the National University of Samoa, then queried whether University fees will be increased from \$1900 to \$2900 and sought clarification for a policy for this increase whether there are any assistance for part payments for these fees so parents and students are able to pay. He further expressed gratitude for the recruitment of the police who is assigned for the security of the leader of opposition and has now commenced his duties. He commended Government for their hard work and wished all his fellow Parliamentarians well.

***Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimaea Tafua - Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee & Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo.***

The Chairperson greeted the Acting Speaker and all present in the House. He greeted the Ao o le Malo and his good lady, the Council of Deputy and his good lady, Chief Justice and Judiciary, President of LTC, Tutuila and Manua, Church Ministers of respective denominations and addressed his constituency.

He then made note that throughout the years of the pandemic, measles and other setbacks, the government seeks to maintain a good economy and ensure the safety of Samoa throughout uncertain times.

The Chairperson provided an overview of the Supplementary FY2022-2023;

- 8.2 million additional revenue estimated to be collected for continuation of operations within last six months of the FY2022/2023
- 6.2 million appropriated for expenditures which includes developments and operations in progress for the 8 Ministries for the last six months of the FY2022-2023
- 2 million estimate cash surplus
- 44 million grant in the first supplementary estimate which includes 36 million from Australian Government to finance budget support and 8 million from ADB
- 46 million provided in the first supplementary FY 2022-2023 to assist with reducing total deficit
- 39.9 % of the supplementary is allocated for all personal costs for all public servants

The Member asserted that the scholarships are not influenced or done dishonestly; he stated that the scholarship scheme is well monitored to meet the selection criteria, he assured that it is treated with utmost fairness and based on the scores and interviews. The Chairperson also took the opportunity to convey deepest condolences to the Lee Hang family of the passing of Hon. Tapunuu Niko Lee Hang and acknowledged his efforts in Parliament especially the Finance and Expenditure Committee.

The Member then made the following requests for his Constituency:

The member requested for assistance for the road at Tiavea as there are many tourists travelling on this road which need repair work; commended the Minister for Agriculture and informed the House that majority of families in his constituency have developed vegetable gardens. Further commended efforts of the Minister of Health and the Ministry and touched on matter raised by fellow Members regarding building a hospital in their constituency.

***Afioga Hon TUUU Anasii Leota – Member for Siumu***

The Hon Member requested that the scholarship issue he raised and requested should also be included in the Forensic Audit.

***Mr. Deputy Speaker – Point of Order***

*Mr. Speaker advised the Member that this issue will be responded to when Government provides their response.*

***PESETA Tevaga Vaifou – Member Faasaleleaga No. 5***

The Member queried how much foreign reserves was in the Budget

***Afioga FALEOMAVEGA Titimaea Tafua - Chairperson for Finance and Expenditure Committee & Member for Aleipata Itupa i Lalo.***

The Chairperson clarified assured the Member for Siumu that the scholarships follow a process and there is no corruption or influence on this selection. Further clarified that there is 785million of foreign reserves which can cover a period of 9 months.

The Chairperson offered his best wishes to Cabinet Ministers on their works and acknowledged all who have supported the work of the Committee.

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**GOVERNMENT RESPONSES**

***Afioga Hon TUALA Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio (Deputy Prime Minister)***

The Hon Deputy PM acknowledged the Chairperson and his Committee, Ministers and Associate Ministers, Government Offices for their works, efforts and assistance in regards to the supplementary. He then stated that the government response will begin with the Hon Minister for MNRE who is also the Acting Minister for MCIL.

***1. Afioga Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster (Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Acting Minister of Commerce Industry and Labour)***

The Hon Minister commended all Members for issues and concerns put forth and will respond to the following matters:

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**Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labour**

Hon Minister asserted that all issues raised have been noted

*1. High cost of living [price control]*

The Hon Minister clarified that the high cost of living emanated from the variation of prices of goods and services overseas. further stated we also passed a legislation in 2016 to control price on goods and service. He urged the public if there are any goods and services that needs to be reviewed, there is a possibility for this to occur. Hon Minister further encouraged our people to farm and develop the lands and use our local produce as these are products we can control. Hon TUALA asserted that the energy sector are looking at producing non-renewable energy within our country and look at using these non-renewable energy as an option for us in order to decrease costs for importing fuel for our consumption.

*2. Samoa Airways*

Stated that the responsible Minister clarified on the reason of not purchasing a plane for our country during deliberations on the main Budget. Mentioned the total of 100million debts for Samoa from this project. He further emphasized that it is true that Fiji Airways also has debts but they have been in the airlines industry longer than us and have bigger airplanes to cover for many passengers and repay these debts. The Minister stated before, 30-40% of those travelling from New Zealand to Samoa used Samoa Air while the rest used Air New Zealand.

*3. RSE Scheme*

Hon Minister emphasized that there is no doubt that this initiative has developed many families in our countries especially the low income earners. however, there are cons of this initiatives such as there has been a decrease in our population and no people for local development. The Minister also stated locals with various essential expertise and knowledge required by our country have applied for this scheme, as there are numerous opportunities and benefits; almost 8,000 people have left for RSE scheme off island while 6,000 number of people unemployed. Hon Minister also mentioned other disadvantages of the scheme, such as the unfair treatment and exploitation of our local people abroad; such as the salaries promised differ to that received. He then emphasized there was no policy or an MOU signed with the foreign governments to guide the conditions and terms of our people going on these schemes to ensure their safety whilst in these foreign countries. The Minister clarified that the Cabinet had quickly set up a policy to guide the scheme and to notify the employers regarding guidelines they should follow when they employ our people and to prioritize our people.

***Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment***

The Hon Minister highlighted that 20 Members made requests and concerns on his Ministry; these requests included seawalls, land, renewable energy and carbon credit which he will address. The Hon Minister highlighted the main issues raised by the Members as follows:



1. Seawalls

The government has given priority to seawalls in the urban areas and emphasized the government policy which focuses on the protection of government properties and assets, thus they will consider building seawalls that protects the main roads. The Minister also stated that there is no money appropriated for building resilience for our coastal areas and the affected lands from sea level rising which damages peoples properties, and advised constituencies that this is one important project that would make the 1 million fund worthwhile specifically for constituencies that want to protect and safeguard their lands and residents.

**Proceedings set aside at 4:48pm; and  
resumed at 5:25pm**

***Afioga Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster (Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Acting Minister of Commerce Industry and Labour)***

The Hon Minister wanted to clarify matters regarding MCIL, in regards to the Seasonal Employment Scheme, the Hon Minister clarified that the Government will include respective constituencies in the vetting process to ensure all have an equal opportunity from respective Constituencies.

***Afioga SEUAMULI Fasi Toma, Member for Gagaemauga 2***

The member commended the minister for considering his request to refer the selection process of workers for the RSE scheme to Constituency committees. This is important because the committees will be aware of applicants and can avoid the issue of those who are already well employed like teachers and others from leaving our country for the Scheme.

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

The member queried the status of the Pacific Engagement Visa, whether this is one of the reasons behind the current hold on the Labour Mobility/RSE Scheme or whether these two are implemented simultaneously. The member stressed that both schemes are very important as they can provide numerous job opportunities for our people.

***Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tuivilili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1***

The Member queried a clarification for issuing permits for foreign employers if there can be leniency in issuing these permits and acknowledged Minister for responses given in regards to seawalls but the only concern are damaged roads in his constituency.



***Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea***

Commended the Minister for the explanation regarding matters raised. He also touched on, the matters in regards to the RSE scheme and asserted that there has been 20 years of working relations with New Zealand and 10 years with Australia. Hon member explained further that there were policies in place during his time in office. Therefore, statements made by the Minister regarding no policies in place to regulate and administer the Scheme is not factual. He further stated that there are requirements through PACER Plus for labour mobility.

***Mr Deputy Speaker***

*Mr Deputy Speaker clarified that the Minister means they are just reviewing current policies, and filling in gaps which has caused complexities within families especially with partners having marital affairs while overseas.*

***Afioga Toeolesulusulu Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster (Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Acting Minister of Commerce Industry and Labour) (cont.)***

The Hon Minister clarified that the Ministry is in the process of preparing a Temporary Labour Migration Policy specifically for the RSE scheme. The Minister further clarified that they are refining and improving existing policies to deal with the challenges which aroused from the Scheme in regards to the treatment of our people overseas. The Hon Minister further stated that the MOUs [Memorandum of Understanding] signed between our country and these foreign countries are being reviewed to ensure it includes the safety and wellbeing of our people entering the Scheme as well as the vetting and recruitment process. The Minister stated priority is given to those who are unemployed then to those semi-skilled.

The Minister addressed the request for seawalls in Laulii and asserted that he understands the vulnerability of Laulii especially with the impacts of sea level rise. He again reminded the House that there is no appropriation for seawalls in the appropriation, so he makes no promises but encouraged constituencies to include seawalls as a development project in the 1million initiative with relevant and necessary assistance and support from the Ministry.

**2. Request for land**

The Hon Minister took note of the requests made by Members for land under STEC and SLC for respective constituency developments, and asserted that requests will be reviewed by the relevant authorities to identify appropriate land for constituencies to cultivate. Further stated that a Committee will be established to review and consider requests accordingly; the Committee will consist of the Ministers of STEC, MNRE, SLC. Moreover the Hon Minister informed the Members that the Ministry is also formulating a Land-Use Plan and agreement for constituencies who are requesting for land.

**3. Carbon Credit**

The Hon Minister briefly provided a background on the term Carbon Credit noting that it is a result of Climate Change which has increased greenhouse gas. The Minister noted that this is

mainly caused by developed countries, however; small Pacific nations such as Samoa are the most vulnerable. Therefore, international conventions such as UNFCCC have coined the term as a way to address the issue of greenhouse gases. Further, the Hon Minister noted that countries with high Carbon-Stock can sell them to developed countries which release a high amount of greenhouse gas. Hon Minister clarified that although Samoa does not release a huge amount of carbon in the atmosphere we are still affected by the impacts. The Minister emphasized that the more rainforests and forests we plant, the more carbon stock we have, and selling Carbon Credit to countries which release greenhouse gases can be a source of revenue for our country. Hon TOEOLESULUSULU mentioned renewable energy and elaborated on plans for the implementation of solar energy, electric vehicles and biomass to mitigate carbon release/emissions.

***Afioga FUAAVA Suluimalo Amataga, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Luga***

The Member commended the Minister for his response and clarification on the issue of carbon credit and acknowledged the effectiveness of the tree planting initiative which has now moved to 3 million trees.

***Afioga Hon TOEOLESULUSULU Cedric Pose Salesa Schuster - Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Acting Minister of Commerce Industry and Labour) cont.***

The Hon Minister stated there are Carbon Markets in which a company can sell 1 carbon stock for 100USD. He concluded his response by commending constituencies for their proposed projects to utilize the 200k fund and encouraged the Atua region to include the installation of streetlights in their 1million fund for development projects for constituencies in this region as the Electric Power Corporation does not have sufficient funds to implement this important request.

***2. Afioga Hon TOELUPE Poumulinuku Onesemo, Minister for Communication and Information Technology and Member for Falealili 1.***

The Hon Minister firstly addressed all Members in the Chamber and the OCLA for serving the Assembly. Acknowledged Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He further addressed all the denominations and clergies for their prayers, and our neighboring country American Samoa its Governor and its two Houses.

The Minister expressed gratitude to the Minister MAF for taking over duties of Minister MCIT while he was away and acknowledged his immediate response to issues raised by Members regarding the Ministry. The Hon minister reflected on their first time in Parliament as Government where there was huge pressure on ensuring internet connection for all schools around the country, it was also a burden for schools to pay internet bills, purchase technological devices as well as maintain regular maintenance of these devices. The minister highlighted that internet connectivity within schools is their main priority.

The Hon Minister emphasized that the Government is prioritizing information technology as this is the digital era, thus digital transformation is important. Furthermore, the Minister made note of plans to make internet in schools free of charge. He provided an update to the House, noting that

internet connections for schools have progressed from Stage 1 to Stage 2 - which focus on upskilling teachers on how to use and navigate internet search engines. The Minister affirmed that the problem with our national broadband has been solved as we now have the VSAT but the government will not abandon the SNBH as it connects the services of Police, FESA and hospitals. The government is trying to fix our SNBH for improvement.

In regards to the issue of coverage as raised by several Members, the Hon Minister this is not a new issue, he further mentioned that there are certain remote areas with very limited or no coverage. The Minister mentioned a Universal Access Fund however, this has not been very effective thus, the government will review and activate accordingly. He also noted that majority of the sector revenues are from spectrum and license fees, thus he is hopeful that these fees are utilized to generate its service effectively.

He addressed concerns raised by Members regarding the impacts of social media, especially the cons of internet to students. In regards to cybersecurity, the Hon Minister explained that the Ministry is collaborating effectively with the Ministry of Police to ensure the safety and security of our people online. Hon Minister also mentioned Meaningful Connectivity in regards to the proper use of the internet.

The Hon Minister addressed the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and responded to Members who raised the timeliness of process for approval of committee visits to Savaii, and clarified that the process requires Cabinet approval to avoid inappropriate spending and unnecessary visits by the Committee using government funds.

He commended the Samoa Post Office for their continuous efforts in ensuring the safe arrival and distribution of mail to members of the public.

***Afioga MASINALUPE Makesi Masinalupe, Member for Lefaga and Faleaseela***

The Member queried the 4k bill of their Office by Vodafone yet they have not used any internet; Afioga Masinalupe queried whether this is the installation cost of internet services and sought clarification from the Minister.

***Afioga Hon TOELUPE Poumulinuku Onesemo, Minister for Communication and Information Technology and Member for Falealili 1.***

The Hon Minister urged the Member to refer to the contract and read the terms and conditions and refer the matter to the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

***Afioga Hon LAUTAFI Fio Selafi Purcell, Member for Satupaitea***

The Member agreed with the coverage issue at Aleisa mentioned by the Minister which has been an issue for quite a long time.

**Mr. Deputy SPEAKER**

*The Deputy Speaker advised the Member that he did not mention this issue during his speech therefore, refrain from speaking on this and further stated that the clarification provided by the Hon Minister included all issues raised.*

***Afioga Hon TOELUPE Poumulinuku Onesemo, Minister for Communication and Information Technology and Member for Falealili 1 (cont.)***

The Hon Minister noted that the issue with poor internet connectivity at Aleisa is owed to the telecommunication companies preference as to where they will set up their posts, and these locations are usually selected based on its economic benefit for the company. The Hon Minister concluded his response by commending his Ministry for all their efforts to support and develop Samoa's telecommunication sector and acknowledged his constituency for their support.

***3. Afioga Hon SEUULA Ioane, Minister for Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) and Member for Alataua West***

The Minister acknowledged all Members for raising issues and concerns as well as providing recommendations for improvement of the Ministry and began to address and respond to issues raised.

Hon Minister iterated that the Ministry of Education is the responsibility of the nation as the Ministry provides education and improvement of learning for our people. The Hon Minister acknowledged all members who touched on the importance of Kindergarten schools and iterated on the importance of this level in the development of the child's brain.

The Hon Minister clarified on the appropriation for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and asserted that \$400/child therefore the more children enrolled in ECE, means the more money the ECE provider will receive. However, if the schools receive less than \$10,000 then it is left to the ECE on how to utilize this fund, however if income is more than 10k then 50% is allotted to the salaries of ECE teachers while the remaining 50% is allocated for school equipment.

In regards to the issue of salaries for teachers of Mission schools, whether the Ministry can carry this cost; the Hon Minister clarified that the Ministry already provides numerous financial assistance to Mission Schools, which they believe is sufficient assistance for the current time, however they will consider this when funds are sufficient to accommodate this request. The Minister also noted that the Ministry intends to distribute laptops, tablets, projectors and computers, to schools. This is an initiative to prepare Samoa and the Education sector for virtual sessions in unexpected/uncertain times. Furthermore, the Minister noted that the ministry is preparing social media platforms for educational purposes to rural villages. He further highlighted that the One-Government Grant (OGG) funds are monitored by Principals and School Committees.

In regards to internet connectivity, the Minister stated at the end of the school year, the WiFi and internet connections in schools were shut off by respective companies due to concerns for the changes in climate, as Samoa was in cyclone season and also because there are no teachers or students that would look after or take care of these assets. He further explained that the connection will be restored before school starts again. He clarified that plans are in place for principals and vice principal vacancies to be filled as soon as possible.

- National University of Samoa

The Hon Minister acknowledged the NUS Vice Chancellor and staff for continued efforts and service to the public. He elaborated that he noticed the majority of NUS graduates were female while the number of male graduates are moderately low and urged teachers and parents to encourage their sons to stay in school. Hon Minister mentioned the School at Tafaiagata and commended the former Minister of Education and Ministry for plans and establishment of this school. The Minister also noted that they want to visit the community, as they want to meet the students who will utilize this facility.

In regards to salaries, the Hon Minister noted that it is a very important topic that there is a Remuneration Tribunal tasked with the review of salaries. Furthermore, there are 5 Universities that are in partnership with our University: University of Otago, Universities in Australia as well as in the Pacific. Furthermore, the Minister also stated the partnership between NUS and APTC in terms of programs offered for students.

The Hon Minister noted that this is the 5<sup>th</sup> year since registration fees were increased and clarified that the registration fee has been reduced to \$122 from \$322. He clarified that the remaining balance is added on to the general fee of each students which will be paid by the end of each semester. The Minister highlighted that parents can negotiate with NUS on payment method to ensure the fees are paid before the end of semester. The University has given 13 weeks for the parents to pay if they do not pay by the end of semester the students will not receive their results.

***Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Lauofo, Member for Anoamaa 2***

The Hon member noted that he now understands that there is no reduction in the registration fee for NUS, Thus, the member queried the policies behind payment methods for student fees, whether instalment can be arranged for part payment options.

***Susuga MAULOLO Tavita Aмосa, Member for Sagaga 2***

The Member queried why the number of registered students have decreased, whether it is the increase of the school fees. The Member also acknowledged efforts taken by the University to be proactive and prepare for online/virtual learning and classes in the event of unexpected pandemics or circumstances in the future.

*Afioga Hon SEUULA Ioane, Minister for Education, Sports and Culture (MESC) and Member for Alataua West (cont.)*

The Minister clarified that the students registered in Semester 1-3699 while Semester 2-3039 students registered; the notable drop of registered students resulted from several reasons which the Minister highlighted. These include students failing to meet the average mark to progress to semester 2, others completed studies in semester 1, while others did not come back to school, either moved overseas or got married. Hon Minister reminded Members of the importance to conduct regular visits to their respective constituencies to observe first hand the issues or matters faced by constituencies.

**Proceedings suspended at 7:15pm and resumed at 8pm**