

DISCLAIMER

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9:28am

I. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

1 Annual Report presented in Parliament (Annual Report for the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology)

II. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY - Reading of Bills

1. Supplementary Appropriation Bill (No.1) 2022/2023 – debate on second reading (cont.)

The member began by acknowledging his fellow parliamentarians and Samoa listening in to the proceedings of Parliament. The Member then spoke generally on the following issues:

i. Tofa Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers-Ah Kau, Gagaifomauga 1 (cont.)

The Member continued her address by greeting her fellow Parliamentarians, all of Samoa working and listening in. She then acknowledged her constituency for their continuous support and spoke on the following issues:

- Public Service Commission

The Hon member stated that its time to increase pay for the public servants instead of ceasing all recruitment process for certain positions.

- Minister of Works Transport and Infrastructure

Hon FAIMALOTOA noted the landslide in her constituency and conveyed appreciation on the allocation of \$10 million from World Bank to repair this. The Member asserted this area is dangerous especially during morning or heavy rainfalls, she also urged the Minister to consider looking at the status of this project. The Member asked if there is a possibility to hasten the process in regards to this project as this has been an issue for her people especially during torrential rain.

She made further requests for guardrails for roads near the coast to avoid accidents in this area; she further requested for street lights and sought clarification on the process of filling a request or proposal for such developments needed in her constituency.

- She mentioned the need for sufficient access and supply of clean water in Manase as there are several beach resorts in this area. Hon FAIMALOTOA reiterated the importance of having Samoa's airline to enable our people to have control over the airfares as she recalled the Samoa Airways offered low airfares between 600-800 thus her push to have an aircraft belonging to Samoa to assist our people travelling to and from; asserting that this is one of her constituency's main request.

- In regards to the 1 million district project; the Hon Member highlighted that her constituency complied with all the requirements of the project except one matter which was regarding the composition of Committee members, to which the Member clarified that she is but a mere voice for her constituency. Therefore if the Village Council have agreed on one thing, it is difficult to persuade them otherwise. Hon Member further asserts that even though she is the elected representative for her constituency with the authority, she will follow the will of her people for they are the ones who supported and provided her this opportunity to be their elected representative in Parliament. The Hon Member elaborated that because the Committee has not complied with such conditions, they are willing to forego this million tala project.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi, Minister for MAF

The Hon Minister clarified that the government of the day has no authority or intention to interfere with the internal affairs and decisions of respective Village Councils; however it is imperative for him to clarify the situation as all other constituencies and people are listening in on the proceedings of Parliament, and may be misled with the statements made by the Hon Member. The Hon Minister clarified to the Member that the Government sets its conditions and appropriate guidelines to follow for the benefit of all people, not just a group of people within the constituency. Thus the importance of the MP's role to deliver Government's intentions in such a way that is easily accepted by the Village leaders.

Tofa Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers-Ah Kau, Gagaifomauga 1 (cont.)

The Member continued and clarified that her constituency follows what the government of the day is initiating regarding the project for the benefit of her constituency, she is merely informing the House the stance of her constituency on this project, specifically with the selection of committee members.

Mr Speaker – Point of Order

The Member was advised by the Hon Speaker to wrap up her address and to refrain from speaking on the matter as this is an internal matter between her constituency and the relevant Minister

Tofa Hon FAIMALOTOA Kika Stowers-Ah Kau, Gagaifomauga 1 (cont.)

The Member acknowledged the Minister of Finance for the preparation of the Supplementary Bill and was pleased to note from the Minister's response that there is enough funds for the Government to implement developments for the benefit of our people. The Hon Member was satisfied with the affirmations by the Hon Minister then queried, if there is sufficient funds for the Government then why have new recruitments been put on hold, why are there no paid overtime for certain employees, while the cost of living continues to increase. The Hon Member requested for an update on their district project fund as it has been 3 months since the committee has been paid.

Afioga Hon TUALA Tevaga Ponifasio - Deputy Prime Minister - Clarification

The Hon Deputy PM stood to respond and clarify on the queries and issues raised by Members regarding the increase on the salaries for public servants and the hold of recruitment process and the inability to pay allowances, overtime and bonuses; as well as recent graduates still looking for work. The Hon Minister emphasized that the Hon. Prime Minister prioritizes the public servants, however the government is undergoing complete overhaul of Government policies and processes.

The Deputy PM stated that we are all servants, here to serve our people and our nation. He urged the public to be grateful for whatever means of compensation received; whether it be an allowance for a trip or a bonus that is more than what others have. The Hon Member continued by noting the amount within each budget to cater for personnel costs, thus increase in vacancies will also require an increase in the budget allocation.

The Dep PM iterated that the government will review working conditions policies, such as the conditions whether all public servants pay is in alignment with their Job descriptions, etc. further stated that there's no current allocation appropriated for our freshly graduates from overseas and locally which will also be considered in the review. Furthermore, the government plans to review the current skillset available in country and those in need, thus placing priority for scholarship students to take the needed skills. Moreover, Hon Minister stated that once the review is final, a workforce plan will be established as it is a must for the government to have a long term plan that would regulate and guide the Public service employment focusing on areas such as salaries and incentives like programs that would persuade people to work in government. The government must also further develop the skills of their employees through things such as short-term scholarships (3 months overseas) or attending seminars overseas that would improve their expertise and skills. The Hon Deputy Prime Minister continued further by informing Members that the Government has long term plans in place and will review all aspects as there should be equal opportunities for all, rather than only providing benefits for the public servants while the private sector is not considered. He spoke on the impacts of Covid on the private sector where many were laid off and unemployed, yet the public service were secure with their jobs and finance while other members of the country were highly affected.

Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili - Vaimauga No. 1

The Member expressed his disappointment with the terms used by the Deputy Prime Minister stating "e fai atu ni manatu faa-tagata" the Member was offended as the statements implied that the opinions expressed by Members were inhumane or otherwise. He further sought clarification from the Minister as to the true intentions of the review and queried why start from principal level, when it should be a complete Top-Bottom approach beginning from the CEO for fairness.

Afioga ALAIASA Moefaauouo Sepulona Moananu – Member for Anoamaa 1

The Member pose dissatisfaction to the words by the Deputy PM that they have not done any research and reiterated that they do understand on these matters as they did once work in government and the public service, while those who do not understand are those with no experience in the public service and asserted his full support for the review

Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Pierre Laufo – Deputy Opposition Leader

Hon LAUOFO asked whether we still have a salaries remuneration tribunal, as this is the sole responsibility of the tribunal to review the salaries for all public servants. He fully supports the review as it may result with the increase of salaries. The Hon Member then expressed that he believes there are only 2 reasons that warrant an increase in salaries; (i) inflation and (ii) increase in cost of living.

Susuga Hon LAAULI Leuatea Polataivao Fosi – Minister for MAF

The Hon Minister conveyed his appreciation for members who supports the intention of having a review and urged Members to support the government on its implement of new plans and processes. He then asserted that 80% of the Government's budget is for Salaries of public servants.

Afioga ALAIASA Moefaauouo Sepulona Moananu – Member for Anoamaa 1

The Member corrected the figures provided by the Minister, stating that salaries only account for 40% of the budget instead of 80% as the Minister mentioned. He apologised to Mr Speaker and asserted that it is important to correct this, as it may be misleading to the people.

ii. Susuga MAULOLO Tavita Aмоса, Member for Sagaga 2

The Member greeted Samoa and his constituency in her honorific glory then delved straight into the Bill and made the following comments:

- The member touched on the current hold in filling employment vacancies within government ministries. The member highlighted that this will create issues and might question the level of productivity at management levels.

- **Minister of Health**

Raised concern with the current spread of another covid variant, advising the minister of health whether there are strategic measures to address a second wave of covid in the country. Susuga MAULOLO further reminded the Minister of Health about their district hospital and commended the ministry for all efforts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Samoa.

- **Minister of Education, Sports and Culture:**

Commended the Minister for Education and the ministry for their continuous efforts in teaching our children. Further requested for ICT equipment for schools in his constituency to enhance access online. Furthermore, he advised the minister to look at the reasons behind the low level of foundation students enrol.

- **Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries**

The member raised concern with the rapid increase in cost of living highlighting the importance of improving our agricultural and fisheries sector as a means to provide for our essential needs.

- **Minister for Women, Community and Social Development**

The member expressed his support for the 1 million initiative, as it will help with the development of his constituency.

- **Minister of Finance**

The member through the ministry of agriculture pushed for the importance of decentralizing resources so people can develop their plantations. In this case, it can be a solution for the issue of inflation.

**Proceedings set aside at 10:46am; and
Resumed at 11:25am**

Afioga FEPULEAI Faasavalu Faimata Sua – Member for Salega 1

The Member advised Mr Speaker to remove words by the member of Vaimauga 1 towards the Deputy PM. Specifically those which implied that the Deputy Prime Minister thinks these are not people with their thoughts; motion seconded and approved.

iii. Tofa FOISALA Lilo Tuu Ioane, Member for Gagaifomauga 2

The Member greeted the Legislative Assembly, his fellow Parliamentarians and his constituency listening in. He then made the following points.

- Request for the maintenance of seawall for some coastal areas in his constituency.
- The member requested for some of their land previously under the government to be returned to the constituency, if the government has no intentions of developing these land.

- The Member briefly touched on their request for the hospital in Safotu to be well sourced with resources and doctors and nurses.
- The member raised concern with the poor conditions of access roads in Matavai and Paia, requesting the minister to consider repair works in these areas.
- The member also requested for crossroads around his constituency and Savaii as a whole as this will be convenient for the travelling public.
- Expressed his support for the supplementary Bill and acknowledged the Minister and her ministry for preparing the Bill.
- The member queried the status of national debts and how the government is paying for these debts.

iv. Afioga AUUAPAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola – Member for Aiga ile Tai

The Member addressed Mr Speaker and all who were present in the Chamber, he then addressed his Constituency and acknowledged their support for the supplementary. He then advised his constituency to be patient with the projects to develop their constituency as he does not want Cabinet to mix up their request with all other requests by other members. He then raised the following issues:

- Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure:

The member commended road reparations within his constituency, furthermore he requested to the minister to consider maintenance at their domestic wharf. In regards to the water supply, the Member noted the condition of water supply in some areas in Savaii where it raised health concerns. Thus, the member pushed the minister to encourage the testing of all water including independent water schemes, as the public is consuming these water and they should be within health standards for consumption.

- Collection of VAGST – Minister for Customs and Revenue

The member raised concern where some shops are not honest with the collection of VAGST. This reflects that they are not complying with government regulations in place to collect tax.

- The member noted his approval of the current government’s move to halt the operation of our national airline- Samoa Airways. This is because of airline complexities and running of a national carrier.
- Commended the ministers on the internet connectivity service offered for educational purposes. However, the member urged the ministers to complete rolling out this program before the start of school this year.
- The member encouraged the minister and ministry to thoroughly monitor people breaching road-rules. Furthermore, he advised the minister to install road-signs around some intersections that usually cause confusion on the road.
- Highlighted that his constituency has already constructed a committee house, and is awaiting the roll-out of the remaining funds.

Tofa Hon OLO Fiti Afoa Vaai – Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure

The Hon Minister reminded the Member that there no laws which controls the use of private water supply. The Authority cannot stop and do maintenance of the water supply for independent water schemes but they have advised to transfer all these schemes under the Samoa Water Authority. Furthermore, the Minister also noted that with independent water scheme, when it is sunny, there is limited water supply, and during heavy rainfall, the water is dirty. He also stated that there are no treatments for this water and this is why he encourages our people to go through Samoa Water Authority as they always provide clean, quality water. The Hon Minister asserted that the villages have no capacity to treat their private waters for consumption and the authority have no control to filter water. He urged villages to have their water filtered refer it to the Samoa Water Authority.

Furthermore the Minister clarified that there are signs and humps and crossing signs already in place for certain areas such as in front of schools however, the Minister believes that the drivers and also pedestrians are not using these signals that are there for a purpose, to keep us safe. The Member also noted many drivers are not adhering to these signs/crossings/humps such as when there is traffic, some vehicles would stop on top of these crossings which is illegal, drivers have to wait behind the line so there is enough space to allow pedestrian easy crossing as this is the purpose for these humps/crossings.

Afioga AUUAPAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola – Member for Aiga ile Tai (cont.)

The Member concluded by thanking Mr. Speaker for his time and also his constituency for their support and prayers.

v. Tofa LENATAI Victor Faafoi Tamapua, Member for Vaimauga 2

The Member addressed the House and Samoa in all her honorific glory, acknowledged his constituency then made the following comments to specific Ministers. He commended the Finance Minister and her ministry for preparing the supplementary, and expressed his support. He then touched on the process of issuing business licenses

The member noted his constituency's support towards the 1 million initiative and highlighted that they have already signed the 1 million contract however, they were only given 150k. Thus, the member requested for the rest of the funds to be released so they can start their development programs. In regards to the recruitment process for PSC, the Member requested to fill current vacancies which are on hold to avoid future complexities. Then concluded his address.

vi. Afioga ALAIASA Moefaaouuo Malagaitutogiai Sepulona Moananu - Anoamaa 1

The Member greeted the House he then encouraged his fellow Parliamentarians to fear not for the Lord God is with us all and keeps us all in the palm of His gracious hand. He then raised the following issues; he raised the inflation rate and requested for a status report on the inflation in Samoa. He noted the new Covid variant spreading globally and urged the Health Minister to prepare for another wave of Covid and for the Ministry to take proactive measures.

The Member then commended the minister for Women and government for the 1 million development initiative and reminded that they are awaiting for the rest of the fund. He suggested another means to combat the high cost of living was to have an ‘energy policy’ to address inflation. The Member for Anoamaa noted that the current process of visa applications have become more complex especially with the need to process them online. Urged the government to reconsider this, as some people have no visa-cards or access to internet. Furthermore made request for road maintenance around his constituency.

vii. Tofa FESOLAI Apulu Tusiupu Tuigamala, Member for Aana Alofi 1

The Member greeted the House; acknowledge the Minister MOF for the supplementary and the work done thus far then made the following requests:

- Request for road maintenance within his constituency.
- Request a national carrier specifically for agricultural exports.
- Request wheelchairs for their district hospital.

Then concluded his address by commending the Government for the 1million initiative however noted that his constituency are still waiting for the remaining funds. Furthermore, acknowledged the Minister for Communication and Minister for Education for the internet connectivity roll-out program for academic purposes.

**Proceedings adjourned at 1 pm and will reconvene on Thursday 19 January
2023 at 9:30am**