

DISCLAIMER

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Day 22
9:30

Thursday 18th February 2021

I. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Hon Prime Minister – Clarification

The Hon PM began by acknowledging the Chair and all present in the Chamber. He indirectly noted the absence of the independent Members from the Chamber and asserted that the Oath made before God during Members' swearing in ceremony is an Oath which stated that the Member will be faithful in carrying out their duties as a Member of Parliament; these duties include being present during parliamentary proceedings.

The Hon PM spoke on the relationship of Ministers and their Ministries to the decisions of Cabinet. Hon TUILAIPA mentioned the PK – Pepa mo le Kapeneta; a document which specifies what respective Ministries are seeking-what the request is about, whether a new appointment, a new legislation, an amendment to an existing legislation, or seeking funds for certain projects, or otherwise. These requests are put forward by responsible Ministers for Cabinet's decision.

The Hon Prime Minister noted that Cabinet meets once a week, or urgently when critical issues arise, such as the measles outbreak, the covid19 pandemic, NEOC progress, climate change issues, and urgent medical referrals to overseas hospitals. In regards to medical referrals, the Cabinet cannot make a decision without medical clearance from the Ministry of Health (this is the interdependency of Cabinet decisions to the advice of respective Ministries/Offices). The Hon PM quashed claims and false

statements made by FAST Members that the Prime Minister solely makes decisions on all matters. Hon PM asserted, it is Cabinet's collective responsibility to manage all affairs of Samoa; finance matters are handled by the Minister of Finance and himself, while Agricultural matters will be dealt with by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, while development projects is handled by the Minister for Works, Transport and Infrastructure, etc.

Hon PM addressed Mr Speaker and stated that under his PM portfolio is the Executive Council. He recalled the time when Hon Tofilau was leader of the HRPP there was only one meeting held with the late Hon Malietoa Tanumafili II, when the former Ao o le Malo was seated, Hon Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, this Executive Council met twice while he was Prime Minister. Hon TUILAEPA noted the relationship between the Office of the Ao o le Malo and the Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Hon PM concluded with elaborating the important role and function of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade specifically with the signing, monitoring and satisfying requirements for any agreement or treaty Samoa is a signatory too. The paramount aim of negotiations and agreements discussed and signed is to ensure that trading with our overseas partners progress well; furthermore, ensure that new markets are secured for the exportation of local produce. Hon PM noted that trade opens borders to the outside world. The Ministry is also responsible to ensure the independent state of Samoa and her sovereignty is not compromised.

The Prime Minister stated that in order to garner foreign investment, and foreign markets for trade, Samoa must be a nation that holds the confidence of its people and overseas partners. The Hon PM spoke on the importance of trade with foreign partners as this contributes greatly to Samoa's economy. He accentuated the need to maintain good working relations with overseas partners and portray Samoa as a trustworthy partner. The Hon PM furthered by noting the treaties which Samoa signed in 2019, such as the EU and ACP, PACERPlus, Bilateral Free Trade Agreement with China and trading agreement with Australia and New Zealand.

Hon PM recalled the past 5 years and the milestone achievements made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

1. Samoa's foreign relations with her trading partners has provided positive feedback, as Samoa successfully hosted numerous Meetings and Forums. Hon TUILAEPA asserted that the selection of Samoa as hosts is a living testament of the stability of her Government and the high recognition of Samoa by foreign nations.
2. The recent establishment of the British Embassy in Samoa since its closure in 2013.
3. PACER PLUS Office established – the Office which handles trade agreements

4. *Opening of the Pacific Centre Headquarters for the development of sports for the Pacific region.*
5. *Embassies for the Government representatives for China, New Zealand, America, Japan, Australia in Samoa.*

The Hon PM recalled the 50th Pacific's Island Forum which was held in Tuvalu in 2019, whereby issued the Kainaki II Declaration for urgent climate change actions. Hon PM stated that it was during this meeting that the Pacific Islands endorsed the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent to securing the future of the Pacific. The Hon PM recalled a meeting of the Pacific Forum which was held on 11 December 2020 to discuss the global issue of climate change, Hon PM noted the importance of discussions made to ensure the Pacific stand together to develop mechanisms to protect its Blue economy.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:55am

Proceedings resumed at 11:45am

Hon Prime Minister – Clarification

The Hon PM continued his speech, and spoke on environment issues; he highlighted the establishment of the SPREP, Meteorology Office, and the SROS in Samoa to conserve and protect the environment, and to ensure local produce could be developed into marketable goods.

The Hon PM touched upon the SPC 'Pacific Community', an organisation aimed to provide sustainable development through science, knowledge and innovation. Hon TUILAEPa noted that the SPC greatly assisted the Pacific with its knowledge and innovation in areas such as, fisheries science, public health surveillance, geoscience and conservation of plant genetic resources for food security.

Hon PM spoke on Samoa's contribution through the submission of its reports which identify the 'Blue Pacific' identity. Samoa's leading role in promoting the Blue Pacific identity, is another means of attracting foreign nations. Hon TUILAEPa asserted that Samoa's contribution is important as this also reflects Samoa's stable government. Hon PM touched upon the 'S.A.M.O.A Pathway' (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) is the document which articulates the sustainable development pathways and aspirations for SIDS over the next 10 years. Hon PM spoke on Samoa's ability to be recognised in regional and international platforms due to its stable economy and government.

The Hon PM mentioned the lengthy efforts undertaken by Samoa to be a member of the PACER Plus Agreement; talks commenced during the times of the late Hon Joachim Keil, then continued while Hon Laufo Fonotoe was the responsible Minister, to Hon Lautafi Fio Purcell whereby Samoa finally ratified the PACER Plus Agreement (being the first Pacific nation).

The Hon PM noted the query raised by the Member for Lotofaga who was seated in Cabinet for several Parliamentary terms, regarding the assurance of the continuity of the Agreements to which Samoa has signed; and asserted that there was absolutely no guarantee. As these are all dependent on the continuity of trade relations between Samoa and her trading partners; and secondly, the reputation of leadership and the Government. The establishment of a stable map/guide to ensure Samoa adheres and satisfies the terms and conditions of Agreements and international instruments it is a signatory too; is one of the functions of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Hon PM touched upon the occurrence of the pandemic, which has brought about alarming changes, even in the home environment. The pandemic has also heightened the use of telecommunication advancements, such as zoom for teleconferences, and video calls between families and their children overseas. The PM also noted pop-up businesses which have come about as a result of unemployment due to covid19. The Hon PM noted the importance of developing information and communication technologies in these uncertain times. Hon TUILAEPa noted the importance of the underground cables, which has greatly improved the quality of internet in Samoa. He further added that the development was made with good intentions, to assist our children with their studies; however, technology also has severe cons on the youth and population of Samoa.

From the outside, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade has a vast array of functions, similar to the Ministry of Finance. He further noted the correlation of various Ministries to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade; such as Agriculture and Fisheries (as the local produce are exported to foreign markets), Health (medical advancements and scientific discoveries is part and parcel of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade); in regards to Education, the MFAT deals with scholarships, and the Ministry for Finance (hence its multifunctional nature). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is Samoa's focal point to the outside world. Hon PM noted there being annual meetings for all trading nations, to identify changes to policies. Hon PM noted the different countries and their themes for trade 'Pacific Reset – New Zealand'; 'Step-Up Australia'; 'Pacific Uplift – Britain'; 'Belt and Road Initiative – China'

Hon PM noted the sensitive nature which the management of the University of the South Pacific is under, specifically with the reduction of scholarships from the Governments of Australia and New Zealand. There have been several conditions

made by donor nations, such as affording scholarships to those interested only in priority areas in the Pacific. This also affords the Government the opportunity to determine which skills and expertise are needed in this time and age. Furthermore, having the means to provide these studies/learning within Samoa, without having to travel abroad which have also brought about negative impacts of students leaving home; either they experience home-sickness or overtly abuse the freedom and result with failing studies and wasting the scholarship opportunity given to them.

In regards to extraditions, Hon PM stated that there were discussions underway to confirm boundaries between nations, such as American Samoa. Ascertaining boundaries between nations is integral not only for legal extradition as well as defining the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). Hon PM asserted that Samoa has a distinctive reputation in the Pacific for political stability. Hon PM asserted that this is the underlying reason International Organisations in the Pacific are based in Samoa such as OPEC, PACERPlus Implementation Unit, etc. The Prime Minister forecasted that Samoa may be made the Central hub for International Organisations due to its political stability.

**Proceedings were adjourned at 1:03pm
Parliament will again reconvene on Friday 19th February 2021 at 9am.**