

DISCLAIMER

This Report provides a brief of the Proceedings of Parliament on **Tuesday 14th September 2021**. While all efforts have been made to provide an informative brief, this information must not be relied upon as an alternative to the official Hansard record of proceedings of Parliament. If you have any specific questions about the Proceedings of Parliament on **Tuesday 14th September 2021**, you should consult the official Hansard or seek assistance from the Office of the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.

Day 1

9:33am

Tuesday 14th September 2021

I. MESSAGE FROM O LE AO O LE MALO

Pursuant to Article 59, O le Ao o le Malo permits the introduction of the Appropriation Bill 2021/2022

II. NOTICE FROM THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 100(2), notice is hereby given to introduce the following Bill under Certificate of Urgency:

- (i) Electoral Amendment Bill (No.2) 2021

III. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

Hon Speaker, informed the Members present of the following seats vacant in the House:

- 1. Aana No.2
- 2. Aleipata itupa i lalo
- 3. Falealii No.2
- 4. Falealupo
- 5. Safata No.2
- 6. Sagaga No.2
- 7. Sagaga No.4.

Hon Mr Speaker announced that he received the court orders for the following constituencies:

- 1. Aana Alofi No.1
- 2. Aana Alofi No.2
- 3. Aana Alofi No.3
- 4. Aana Alofi no.4
- 5. Aiga ile Tai

6. Aleipata Itupa i Lalo
7. Faasaleleaga No.1
8. Faasaleleaga No.3
9. Falealili No.2
10. Falealupo
11. Falelatai and Samatau
12. Gagaemauga No.1
13. Gagaifomauga No.2
14. Lefaga ma Faleaseela
15. Palauli No.1
16. Safata No.1
17. Safata No.2
18. Sagaga No.2
19. Sagaga No.4
20. Salega No.1
21. Siumu
22. Vaimauga No.1
23. Vaimauga No.3.

Article 57 and Standing Order 34(1)

Mr Speaker stated that the quorum is met for the sitting considering that the 7 seats are vacant and therefore the total number of Members are 44 rather than 51, therefore the House may proceed with its proceedings.

IV. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

A total of 9 papers tabled, 1 Regulation; 6 Annual Reports and 2 Statement of Corporate Objectives

V. MINISTERIAL STATEMENT – Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa

The Hon PM acknowledged silent support of the HOS and also Judiciary of Samoa and all of Samoa throughout the past elections. She then acknowledged that not all territorial constituencies are represented and asserted that she did not want to revisit past challenges encountered by the Party in getting to where there are today. Hon PM noted that it was on 17th July 2021 when the new Government took over and commenced their duties and that it has been 6 weeks since then.

Furthermore, the Hon PM mentioned CEOs who were terminated due to mistrust by their Ministers such as the AG, as well as the resignation by the Chairman of the Public Service Commission, and the Police Commissioner. She then mentioned that the CEO for MOF was forced to resign not because he did not carry out his duties well but due to conflict of interest. In regards to the Clerk of the House, his termination is in progress but the decision lies with Mr Speaker. She then mentioned the importance of getting the vaccine,

as this helps deal with the pandemic and pushed for mass vaccination of the country acknowledging the MOH for their tireless efforts.

In regards to the national carrier of Samoa (Samoa Airways) the Hon PM noted that discussions are still underway to determine the most appropriate solution and way forward for the aircraft, noting that we are in challenging times due to covid.

The Hon PM noted the importance of Good Governance and wants to enforce the transparency of the three arms of government, and Government's intention to return the independency of the employees of the government under the leadership of the PSC as an independent entity, in order to maintain its independency from political affairs and to ensure they are independent from political parties affiliations and to serve the government of the day. This is in light of the impact from past elections on public servants. Hon PM noted that she does not blame that there had been blurred lines between the Executive and a political party because most of the employees had worked under the past administration for more than 30 years.

The Hon PM wanted to go on record and explain that the FAST Party was borne from Savaii, registered as a Political Party in July 2020, 51 candidates ran under its flag and 24 won seats plus 2 Independent seats which has now formed the existing Party. On the 24th May the party had sworn in their members in a tent outside the parliament house - which the court legalised. Hon PM reiterated that the swearing in of FAST members on the stipulated constitutionalized period undertaken by Notary Publics has been acknowledged and legalized by the Court.

She then mentioned that the rejection by Mr Speaker of the swearing in of HRPP Members was caused from the lack of acceptance of the HRPP leader and Party and therefore was somewhat self-inflicted. She then posed the question, who is to blame for not swearing in of HRPP members? Who is it to blame for not convening Parliament at its earliest time. Seats have been floated for a period of time because of proposed attempts of wanting to win.

She then concluded by wishing Mr. Speaker well, and long life to the Ao o le Malo and all of Samoa.

The Hon PM noted that there will be 2 Bills considered:

1. Appropriation Bill 2021/2021

2. Electoral Amendment Bill (No.2) 2021- aim to amend certain provisions as a result of previous electoral petitions and to accommodate for upcoming by-elections.

The Hon Deputy PM moved a motion to table the Ministerial Statement; motion seconded and approved.

VI. GOVERNMENT ORDERS OF THE DAY**1. APPROPRIATION BILL 2021/2022 – first reading**

The Hon Minister for Finance moved the first reading of the Appropriation Bill 2021/2022; motion seconded and approved

The Main Estimates 2021/2022 tabled

2. APPROPRIATION BILL 2021/2022 – second reading

Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Ale Molioo moved a motion for the bill to be read a second time and gave her budget address; motion seconded and approved

Budget Address 2021/2022:

The Hon Minister greeted the PM, Ministers, whole of Samoa, and Tutuila ma Manu'a as well as Samoans living abroad. She then stated that the theme for the 2021/2022 budget is:

“Recovery, building resilience and shared prosperity for all the people of Samoa”, noting that this theme has been further summarized by the Government as *“Our family, Our People, Our Nation, Our Culture and Christian values is our collective responsibility”*. Hon Minister then noted that in accordance with Standing Order 131, it is her responsibility to present to the House the first Statement on the Estimates for the fiscal year 2021/2022 on behalf of the Government.

The Hon Minister asserted that the budget aims to enhance Samoa's economy and acknowledged efforts taken by responsible authorities to ensure Samoa continues to be covid free. She also expressed gratitude to the front-liners in performing their respective duties and tasks and commended the public for getting their vaccination shot for covid19.

The Hon Minister acknowledge the support of Samoa's neighbouring countries and partners in providing vaccines for Samoa, given the shortage other countries are facing. Hon MULIPOLA mentioned the time taken to reshuffle resources so that Government spending can be directed to ensuring the social wellbeing of Samoan citizens. Hon MULIPOLA asserted that it is the firm belief of the Government of the day that this Budget will be the starting point from where a more efficient and more directed use of Government resources can be actioned to ensure social harmony and secure shared prosperity for all the people of Samoa. The Hon Minister stated that the new administration identified the following policy outcomes that will support the achievement of the vision:

- (i) Improved human development
- (ii) Sustainable economy
- (iii) Trusted governance
- (iv) Secured environment
- (v) Structured Public Works and Infrastructure

The Hon Minister asserted that the government will continue to collect revenues to ensure that the economy can generate an increase in revenue for the growth and development of Samoa. She stated that a slight increase of 2% in the economy is anticipated.

Hon MULIPOLA noted that total public debt was 40% and now stands at 50% of GDP. The Government's total public debt has reached 1.0 billion, equivalent to 50% of GDP. She noted that although unfortunate to receive such a high debt, the new Government is adamant to start reforms on governance to include public finance management and others to build adequate fiscal space for 'rainy days' over the term.

The Minister of Finance noted that a deficit of -3.2% of GDP was estimated for the fiscal year 2020/2021, however the current fiscal year predicts a deficit of -2.5% of GDP.

The new budget 2021/2022 goals include:

1. Social Well Being:

- Increase of pension from \$160 to \$200 per month,
- Disability Benefit Scheme
- Housing and Hygiene Development program
- Assistance to NGOS - (shelters for the old people and children); this assistance is part of government's priority to combat violence against women, as it has been noted that around 52.3% is recorded regarding domestic violence against women and girls.
- Assistance to NGO's as part of Government's priority to combat violence against women
- noted that just over 50% of children and adolescents (5 to 19 yrs. old) are overweight, female obesity rates tripled, and more than 55% and a quarter of adults have diabetes.

2. Strengthening Health Services:

- Meals Services for Inpatients (to include all inpatient care across the country)
- District Hospitals (continue repair and refurbishment works for all district hospitals as well as clinical staff residency to improve healthcare provided at the community level)
- District Hygiene and Health Committees (Government to ensure Committees are fully equipped to guide and lead health promotion programmes at the community level.
- Repairs, maintenance and supervision at the TTM Hospital to ensure hospital conditions are improved

3. Education:

- Teacher's Salaries – increase One Government Grant

4. Community Empowerment:

- Capacity building and support of NGO's involved in the empowerment of youth, women and spiritual development

5. Agriculture and Fisheries:

- Exports: funds have been allocated towards the revival of discussions around the establishment of a National Export Authority under the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries to assist local farmers in connecting with overseas markets. To promote local agricultural products and value added products sourced from Samoa's agricultural resources.

6. Business Innovation and Growth:

- One-off assistance to Businesses who have been affected by the border closure, emphasis will be placed on Small to Medium Sized businesses.

7. Strengthening the Tourism Industry:

- Assistance to Hotel Operators

8. Enhancing the development of communities:

- To properly prepare councils for the implementation of their District Development Plans
- Salary increase for Village Mayors

9. Strengthening Legislative Framework:

- Legislation Reviews: assist in preparation and review of the Constitution of the independent State of Samoa

10. Improving Accountability:

- Hire technical experts to conduct a full forensic audit of the Government's financial systems

11. Environment:

- An appropriation to source the replanting of all of the country's rainforest

12. Strengthening Public Utility Services:

- Price of electricity and water to be reduced by 20% effective 1 November 2021

13. Broadening the Use of Technology:

- Internet Access for Schools – pilot free internet access for select schools to assist both teachers and students academically

14. Fees and Charges of Government:

- Selected fees and charges on specific services of the Government will be reduced by 20% to assist the country during Covid19, these are:
 - (i) Registration for private vehicles;
 - (ii) Business licenses;

- (iii) National Examination Fees;
- (iv) Land and Titles Court fees and charges;
- (v) Consultation fees at the National Hospitals;
- (vi) Alia Licenses;
- (vii) Passport fees and charges; and
- (viii) Building Permits

The Hon Minister then highlighted the key components of the 2021/2022 Budget:

Receipts:

Ordinary Receipts - **\$635,147,203.03**
 External grants - **\$241,215,048.86**

Expenditures:

Statutory expenditures- **\$109,570,916.06**
 Expenditure programmes- **\$700,213,021.42**
 Unforeseen expenditures- **21,006,390.64**
 Development Expenditure- **\$151,789,801.95**

Cash (deficit/surplus)

Financed by Loans with lighter interests: **\$2,193,766.21**

Main Estimate is expected to record an overall deficit of approx. \$106.2 million. Under the Government Finance Statistics Format, this results is a deficit of \$53 million tala or 2.5% of GDP. A 3% increase in government budget for 2021/2022 is anticipated from high collections noted for taxations (yeah right) despite effects of the COVID. Non Tax Revenues expected to drop by 26% in line with plans to reduce some fees and charged of Government as already stated. Grants estimated to be 6% lower than the previous year.

Aggregate total expenditure for fiscal year 2021/22 is estimated to be \$982,580,916. A slight increase in the government's expenditure is a reflection of the government's ability to effectively reshuffle and reprioritize existing programmes.

The Hon Minister went on to outline the details of estimates for each Ministry for the fiscal year 2021/2022:

1. MAF – 14.2 million
2. SROS – 5.7million
3. MCIL – 7.8million
4. STA – 19.9million
5. MCIT - 8.8million
6. OOTR – 2. 4million
7. MESC 105.9 million

- 8. SQA – 5.7 million
- 9. SSFA – 2.5 million
- 10. NUS – 28.6 million
- 11. MOF – 101.5 million
- 12. MFAT – 23 million
- 13. MOH - \$126.8 million
- 14. NKF - \$9 million
- 15. MJCA - \$16.7 million
- 16. MNRE - \$25.9 million
- 17. MPCS - \$37.8 million
- 18. FESA- \$10.7m

Proceedings were suspended 11:01am
Proceedings resumed at 11:45am

BUDGET ADDRESS (cont.) – Afioga Hon MULIPOLA Anarosa Molioo, Minister of Finance

- 19. MPMC: \$10.1m
- 20. MCR: \$13.4m
- 21. MWCSO: \$25m
- 22. MWTI: \$21.4m
- 23. LTA: \$47m
- 24. OAG: \$5.4m
- 25. Office of the Auditor General: \$4.1m
- 26. OEC: \$3.2m
- 27. OCLA: \$7.3m
- 28. Ombudsman: \$1.5m
- 29. PSC: \$8.5m
- 30. SBS: \$6.1m
- 31. SLRC: \$1.5m
- 32. MPE: \$3.2m

Unforeseen Vote for the fiscal year 2021/22 is \$21million based on Ministries expenditure programmes.

Other Expenditure Priorities (externally financed)

The Hon Minister noted that the total externally financed projects and programmes for FY 2021/2022 is estimated to reach \$243.3million. From this amount \$241.2m comprise of cash grants.

The key focus for each sector expected to benefit from grants include:

- Finance sector: (\$81.3million)
- Transport/Infrastructure: (\$62m)
- Agriculture: (\$23.8m)
- Health Sector: (\$19.45m)
- Environment: (\$18.6m)
- Education: (\$11.95m)
- Multisector: (\$9m)
- Communication: (\$5.2m)
- Community and Development and Civil Society (\$4.8m)
- Law and Justice (\$1.97m)
- Tourism (\$1.0m)

The only soft term loan will finance the energy sector (\$2.19m).

Hon MULIPOLA noted the 25% of the budget used from July 30 - Sept 30 that the previous government approved pursuant to article 105,106 and 93 of the Constitution. The Hon Minister acknowledged the Prime Minister and Cabinet and Cabinet then moved for the Bill to be read a second time; Motion Seconded and Approved

MOTION TO SUSPEND STANDING ORDERS – Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Prime Minister

Hon PM noted that the urgency to pass the Appropriation Bill on grounds that there are important work needed to progress immediately, and therefore moved the suspension of Standing Order 133 which removes the referral to Committee stage and therefore proceed to second reading debates and progress to the Appropriation Bills' passage; *Motion seconded and approved*

APPROPRIATION BILL 2021/2022 – debate on second reading commence

1. AUUAPA'AU MULIPOLA ALOITAFUA (MP for Aiga i le Tai)

The Deputy Speaker greeted Samoa in her honorific salutations as well as the Members present in the House in their respective salutations; acknowledged different clergies in Samoa; acknowledged the CEO's present, and private organisations and businesses who are listening in. He then acknowledged his constituency. The Member also acknowledged his fellow comrades who contested with him in the previous General Election. He thanked the Minister of Finance for setting aside funds worth 250k for his Constituency to build the wharfs, and requested the Minister for additional assistance so the island has an evacuation area for the safety of his people in times of unexpected natural disasters, such as tsunami or adapt with the impacts of climate change and sea level rising.

The Member then addressed the Minister for MJCA and urged the review of the controversial laws which were recently passed during the previous Government. In regards to the Ministry of Health the Member commended the Hon Minister for continuation and ongoing vaccination initiatives and suggested a mobile vaccination within the communities and concluded his speech.

2. Tofa MANULELEUA Paletasala T.Tovale (MP for Faleata 1)

The Member greeted Samoa in all her glory and acknowledged Mr Speaker, Hon Prime Minister and Cabinet. His speech was interrupted as it was time for adjournment.

**Proceedings were adjourned at 12:56pm
Parliament will again reconvene at 9:30am on Wednesday 15th September.**