



Statement
by
Honourable Fiame Naomi Mataafa
Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa
at the Ninth session of the Conference of the States Parties to the United Nations
Convention against Corruption,
13 – 17 December 2021, Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.

Mr. President,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Government of Egypt for the tremendous effort to ensure this important gathering takes place.

Samoa acceded to the United Nations Convention Against Corruption in 2018, marking the culmination of years of work to strengthen our national anti-corruption systems, frameworks and internal processes. We still have a long way to go. This is particularly true, as we are faced with a myriad of inter-linked and cross-cutting sectoral challenges exacerbated by the impacts of climate change and the COVID19 pandemic.

It is a universal notion that corruption negatively affects us all. It undermines democratic values and the integrity of our institutions, rule of law and human rights. It is a threat to national security and miscarriage of justice.

Corruption is the ultimate betrayal of public trust. This was the message shared by the United Nations Secretary General António Guterres in his statement on corruption in the context of COVID19. We could not agree more. Corruption can rob governments, societies and people of the funds or resources that are vital for their development, livelihoods and survival. Thus, it also affects all that we have set out to achieve through the Sustainable Development Goals.

Samoa acknowledges that prevention, criminalization, law enforcement, asset recovery and international cooperation are key aspects of the global agenda against corruption. In light of this, I wish to briefly highlight some of the entrenched policy, legal

and institutional measures taken by Samoa to achieve effective implementation of the Convention, both pre and post accession.

National Institutional, Policy and Legislative Framework

Samoa has an extensive institutional set-up to combat corruption. We have over 10 public sector agencies¹ with parallel but mutual responsibilities, functions and powers to detect and address corruption if and when it occurs.

Prior to accession, there were already a number of existing preventive measures enforced through legislations which discourages public servants and government officials from accepting gifts or money from the public in return for the delivery of government work and services. Samoa's Crimes Act 2013 also has specific provisions that criminalize corrupt acts within the Judiciary, Cabinet, Parliament, law enforcement agencies, and any other parts of government.

The government has tasked our Audit Office to build a roadmap to establish an independent anti-corruption agency by 2024.

We continue to seek additional resources to upskill our officials, particularly in the fields of forensic accounting, specialized anti-corruption or fraud investigation, and information technology. We would also require additional support to upskill our officials in the Judiciary and the Prosecution, as well as the Ombudsman and the Public Service Commission.

I acknowledge the support that our government has received through our partnership with the United Nations Development Programme Pacific Anti-Corruption Project, through which several capacity-building programs have been made possible, not only for the public service and Parliament, but also for the private sector and civil society.

Since accession, the government has committed itself to several initiatives aimed at further strengthening our anti-corruption policy and legislative landscape. These have been clearly identified in our Public Administration Sector Plan 2020 – 2025, which is our roadmap to ensuring a trusted, citizen focused, government.

¹ Office of the Attorney General; Ministry of Police; Office of the Auditor-General; Office of the Ombudsman; Central Bank of Samoa; Public Service Commission; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Customs and Revenue; Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration; and the Office of the Electoral Commissioner,

Samoa has completed its first country review under the UNCAC Implementation Review Mechanism, and our second review is now in progress.

Regional focus and international agenda

Samoa, like other Pacific signatories to the UNCAC remain committed to fulfilling our responsibilities for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically focusing on Goal 16. This is linked to our efforts to implement the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, the SAMOA Pathway as well as the Paris Agreement amongst many other regional and global commitments. The Pacific also recognised through the Teieniwa Vision "that all of our progress and aspirations for a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous Pacific cannot be realised unless we address corruption".

Distinguished delegates, I conclude by underscoring the significance of strong political leadership that observe the standards and values of good, trusted governance, at all levels. As a small island developing State, Samoa's national vision is to have a society with equal opportunities for all. To achieve this, we must ensure there is strong political backing to drive the success of all our anti-corruption initiatives. We need to weed out corruption, so it does not deprive us of the much-needed resources to address the dual crises of the COVID19 pandemic and climate change.

Thank you and Soifua.