

SAMOA



STATEMENT BY

**THE HONOURABLE TUITAMA LEAO TALALELEI TUITAMA
MINISTER OF HEALTH
OF THE INDEPENDENT STATE OF SAMOA**

TO THE

**HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON HIV AND AIDS
OF THE SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

NEW YORK

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Mr President,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the outset I wish to firstly congratulate you for convening this very important meeting at this very critical juncture in the fight against HIV/AIDS. I would also like to commend the Secretary General for his comprehensive report, which contained important recommendations for achieving our ultimate goal of a world free of HIV and AIDS.

Mr President,

Samoa, like most Pacific Islands is facing the reality of an increasing number of HIV cases since the first case was detected in 1990. Although we consider ourselves as a low prevalence country with a total of 22 HIV cases to date, the concern remains due to the high prevalence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and its subsequent implications on the spread of HIV AIDS.

Samoa acknowledges with gratitude, the support from the International Community, in particular the Global Fund, World Health Organization, United Nations Population Fund and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, who have assisted us in achieving a greater focus on improving health systems, and moving towards a more inclusive approach to encompass all facets of Sexual and Reproductive Health.

More broadly, Samoa has invested in a Sector Wide Approach Program (SWAP) for its Health Sector. In this regard, we extend our appreciation to the Governments of New Zealand and Australia who have been working collaboratively with the World Bank to achieve clear and concise National Health Outcomes, to reflect the Millennium Development Goals within international, regional, and national strategies, and in particular, to the Government's priority of Health in its Strategy for Development of Samoa 2008-2012.

Mr President,

The Samoan Government is taking the lead in advocating for greater health consciousness for its people and one example of this is the formation of the Samoa Parliamentarian Advocacy Group for Healthy Living (SPAGHL). It highlights political commitment and support to ensure a confident and well informed response to the continuing global health challenges and where HIV/AIDS remain at the forefront.

The high level of political commitment has mandated the formation of National AIDS Coordinating Council (NACC) and its Technical Advisory Committee, to mobilize national concerted efforts in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The work of the Council has led to the development and endorsement of the National HIV/AIDS Policy and Plan of Action 2011-2016, to guide the work of the health sector and stakeholders, in the conduct of effective interventions for HIV/AIDS as the way forward.

The Technical Advisory Committee member organizations are engaged in funded activities, such as:

- The refurbishment of Voluntary Counseling and Confidential Testing (VCCT) clinics in Samoa

- Capacity building training programs for health personnel on counseling which include HIV/STI Case Management, Counseling and training for trainers for the Health Sector
- Continuous support and care for People Living with HIV/AIDS through ART treatment/therapy and counseling
- Continuous multi media campaigns targeting the youth in particular and the community at large
- The establishment of the Women In Leadership Advocacy Group (WINLA) on HIV/AIDS

Mr President,

Samoa has also made progress towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through the development of sector policies and strategic frameworks to guide and facilitate multi-sectorial efforts, in the management and control of HIV/AIDS in Samoa.

Samoa's HIV/AIDS response is supported by the Global Fund, and the Regional Strategy for Implementation Plan 11 (PRSIPS) Response Fund, for

STIs and HIV. These 2 funding mechanisms complement each other, to support STI and HIV/AIDS national activities.

While the Ministry of Health continues to progress with its mandated roles, in collaboration with sector partners and international communities in our battle against HIV/AIDS, there is still a need to strengthen and effectively engage strategic partners outside of the health sector, to break barriers in the context of social, cultural and religious beliefs.

Mr President,

To conclude, despite all the progress made thus far, more work remains to be done and from Samoa's perspective, this can be achieved through improving communication, gender power relations, overcoming traditional, cultural and religious barriers, uphold equity, maintain respect for human rights and strengthening of health systems. These are the key areas that must be prioritized, to ensure a more encompassing and engaged response.

Samoa remains committed with the hope of being the first country to eradicate HIV/AIDS, and with the assistance and support of our regional and international partners in terms of adequate resources, this is possible.

Thank you.