

# SAMOA



**STATEMENT BY**

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MINISTER FOR WOMEN, COMMUNITY  
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

**AT THE**

**FIFTY-SEVENTH SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

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***Please check against delivery***

Madam Chair, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is an honour for me to address the 57<sup>th</sup> Session on the Commission for the Status of Women in my capacity as the Minister for Women, Community & Social Development in Samoa.

At the outset, I wish to reaffirm that the Government of Samoa remains committed to the empowerment of women and girls and improving gender equality, in line with our global and regional gender equality commitments.

We welcome this year's priority theme on the Elimination and Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls; and we appreciate the Secretary General's Reports as it will assist in our efforts to eliminate and prevent violence against women and girls.

Samoa was the first Pacific Island country to have completed a prevalence study on violence against women and this study confirmed that one out of three women who were surveyed suffer some form of violence. Recommendations from this study led to the development of a domestic violence legislation – the Family Safety Bill which has gone through second reading in Parliament. The development of a new Crimes Bill which includes protection provisions for marital rape and sexual harassment has also gone through first and second reading in Parliament. In addition, a Child Care and Protection Bill is in the early stages of development. All these developments have great potential to mobilize relevant services for children who suffer any form of violence.

The Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls is one of the priority areas for the National Policy for Women and National Plan of Action 2010-2015. This document provides for the first time, a Framework for the work on the empowerment of women and girls at all levels, bringing Samoa closer to

realizing its ultimate goal encompassed in the vision of the Strategy for the Development of Samoa 2008-2012 and 2012-2016, which is Improved Quality of Life for All.

Our advocacy and educational programs continue to be delivered in partnership with our non government organizations, our village leaders and community based networks. As a result of our outreach programs, a Men Against Violence Advocacy Group has been established. In recognition of the important role of traditional leaders in engaging men and young untitled men, the role of this group is to facilitate orientation and sensitization of our village leaders towards the need for stronger protection of women and girls from violence and to promote violence free homes and communities.

Madam Chair,

Despite our commitment and progress made to date, we **continue to face** challenges in our work. Like our other Pacific neighbors, limited financial and human resources remains a hindrance in our efforts to have in place adequate services to cater for the needs of women and girls as victims of violence. In this regard, we call on the technical and financial assistance of our development partners. We also seek the support of the UN Family in ensuring that the UN Offices for Women in Samoa and the region are adequately resourced to support work at the national level to enhance the empowerment of women and girls at all levels.

Madam Chair,

The vulnerability of Samoa to climatic conditions has been felt with the number of natural disasters we have experienced in the last decade and women and girls are highly vulnerable in such environments. In this regard, we call on the relevant UN Agencies to provide relevant technical and financial support

towards mainstreaming gender across Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management initiatives. An emphasis on the economic empowerment of women to enhance their resilience to natural disasters would also reduce their vulnerability and support from the donor community will assist in this regard.

Madam Chair,

In view of the ongoing challenges facing women and girls, we urge that the Post 2015 development agenda needs to reflect ongoing commitment to gender equality. Our Government will also continue to work with our stakeholders at all levels to deliver on our gender equality commitments. More importantly, we will continue to advocate for enhanced engagement at the global level which sets the policy direction for the implementation of our global commitments on gender equality. To this end, we note our support for the recommendation from the Pacific Island Forum Countries with regards to a representative from the Pacific Region for the Commission on the status of Women in the upcoming elections.

Madam Chair,

In closing we wish to acknowledge the work of our civil society organizations including our traditional and faith based leaders; and all the development partners that have assisted us in our efforts to empower women and girls to date. We thank the Commission and UN Women in facilitating the global dialogue to advance ~~the~~ status of women including the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls.

Thank you Madam Chair.