



**Statement
by
Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa
Deputy Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa
at the
World Humanitarian Summit High Level Leaders Roundtable
"Women and Girls – catalysing action to achieve gender equality"
24 May 2016, Istanbul, Turkey.**

Moderator,
Co-chairs,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to be part of this High level discussion and want to confirm from the start Samoa's full endorsement of the five core commitments for this roundtable.

I am confident that our combined effort will mobilise the necessary political will and provide concrete commitments to meet the critical needs of women and girls in crisis settings.

Reports state disasters kill more women than men, and affect women's livelihoods hardest. They are a vulnerable group, but in order to address the issue and catalyze action, we must see women and girls as powerful agents of change in humanitarian action in their own right. They are not the problem. They should and must be an integral part of the solutions.

Samoa therefore recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment and the full realization of human rights for women and girls have a transformative and multiplier effect on sustainable development. We have in the last three decades continued to build on the solid foundation of our Samoan culture and traditions to promote the achievement of gender equality.

I am happy to share with all of you that at the second Universal Periodic Review of our human rights situation at the beginning of May, we were able to demonstrate

important strides we have made in the promotion of the empowerment of women; for example,

- There was much improved political participation of women manifested in our 2016 General elections which saw a 200 percent increase in the number of women candidates compared to the last General Election;
- 10 percent of our current Legislative Assembly are women parliamentarians, the highest so far for us;
- review and passage of relevant legislation and set up of court structures to address violence against women and children, and ensure the safety and protection of families.
- In our new Disaster management strategy, the Village Council and village organizations, including Women's Committees, are responsible for co-ordinating disaster mitigation and preparedness programmes and activities at the community level, and for co-ordinating village response activities for specific threats.
- Women now occupy 42 percent of the Chief Executive Officers positions in Samoa's public service, the highest number of women at this level ever. While we celebrate these historical achievements, we recognize that they are stepping stones towards Samoa's goal of 50:50 by 2030 which our country is fully committed to.

As a result of our Universal Periodic Review, Samoa is now committed to the ratification of the remaining human rights conventions that it is not yet party to before our next review.

We commit to support and empower all women and girls in all spheres of life to become equal partners with men for contribution to the wellbeing of our families, communities and country. We are close to finalizing our "Samoa National Policy for Gender Equality 2016-2020" which seeks to transform inequitable gender relations in order to improve women's status; to influence state policy on all areas and to identify strategies to facilitate new and equitable relations between women and men.

The priority will be to ensure peaceful families and communities; healthy Samoan women and girls; Equal opportunities for women to participate in the sustainable economic development; Advancing gender equality in leadership and political governance and Enhanced institutional mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality

As we continue our national efforts on this important agenda, Samoa commits to advocate at the regional and global level for policies that empowers women and girls

to be instrumental agents of change in humanitarian action; especially the women and girls of the Pacific as we are convinced they have a lot to offer the world as true instruments of peace for humanity.

Thank you.