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Third Atoa o Samoa Opening and Executive Meeting



A customary ‘ava ceremony was held on **Wednesday, April 12, 2023**, to officially mark the opening of the third Atoa o Samoa executive meeting at the American Samoa Community College Multipurpose Center in Malaeimi. The meeting was attended by the Governor of American Samoa, Honorable Lemanu Palepoi Sialeaga Mauga; the Prime Minister of the Independent State of Samoa, Honorable Fiaame Naomi Mata’afa and their respective delegations; Lieutenant Governor of American Samoa, Honorable Talauega Eleasalo Va’alele Ale; President of the Senate, Honorable Tuaolo M. Fruean; Speaker of the House of Representatives, Honorable Savali T. Ale and their respective legislators. The opening prayer was delivered by Reverend Elder Dr. Aumalesulu Tuifalefa.

In their special remarks, co-chairs Honorable Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga, and Honorable Prime Minister Fiaame Naomi Mataafa reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening cooperation between the two Samoas and forging relations to improve mutually beneficial partnerships. “The Atoa o Samoa offers an ideal platform to chart a path forward for the mutual benefit of our island countries, ushering a new chapter in Samoan Relations. This recurring Atoa o Samoa Conference

demonstrates our commitment to fostering greater mutual trust, building consensus, expanding cooperation, and fortifying our bond,” Governor Lemanu stated in his opening remarks. He continued, “Acting on the important consensus, we continue to stand ready to collaborate to further promote high-level exchanges and expand practical cooperation in order to build a stronger shared future. We hope to maintain long-term friendly in-depth exchange of views and other issues of mutual interest that will lead to increased bilateral relations and cooperation in critical areas.”

“The intention remains clear,” Prime Minister Fiame stated in her special remarks. She continued, “We should continue to collaborate and consolidate our positions on what we will reap mutual benefits for all our people. The Atoa o Samoa framework can be a unique partnership for the benefit of all our peoples and our extensive diasporas globally. We must ensure that it works well and has sustained benefits for all - if changes are deemed necessary, let's not turn away from them.”

This third meeting reported on the progress made since Apia in 2022 as several agencies have interchanged visits and exchanged personnel, and are working towards progressing priority issues. Key issues discussed in the two-day meeting included Health, Economy, Information and Communication Technology, Immigration, Agriculture and Fisheries, Finance, Environment, Climate, Weather & Geoscience, Transportation, and Land Swap Agreement.

Progress from last Atoa o Samoa are as follows:

- The Department of Commerce, in partnership with its Samoa counterpart, the Samoa Business Hub, and the American Samoa Chamber of Commerce, hosted the first Atoa o Samoa Trade Show. In prior discussions, both Samoas agreed on the necessity of developing and promoting trade. The Atoa o Samoa Trade Show promoted locally-made goods and services between the two countries, and a platform for mutual investment and expansion.
- The American Samoa Territorial Audit Office hosted its Audit and Ethics Training conducted by the Graduate School, USA. The audit offices from Samoa and American Samoa came together to complete this three-day training session. As a result, Su’a, Pauga & Associates accounting firm can now provide accounting services in American Samoa and can register as public accountants, allowing them to sit in the US CPA for accreditation in order to become chartered accountants that can work in the private sector in American Samoa.
- A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the American Samoa Telecommunications Authority and the Samoa Ministry of Communications centered on increasing training capacity and reducing broadband costs for Samoa, securing redundancy, and providing an alternative route to New Zealand & Australia for Samoa via the Hawaiki Cable system.
- Discussion continues between the SROS, AS-EPA, and US EPA in information exchange on Laboratory services. The US EPA has responded positively and supports this initiative due to the logistical challenges to their regular engagement in American Samoa.

- The American Samoa Government is looking into (1) developing possible training opportunities with various academic institutions in Samoa pertaining to maritime engineering (2) offering training to the Samoa Airport Authority at its Hot Fire Training Facility.
- The Taumeasina Land Lease and the Tafuna Land Lease were finalized and signed by the respective parties.
- The next Atoa o Samoa executive meeting will be held in October 2023 in Savai'i. Actual dates to be confirmed at a later date.

**Note: The official Third Atoa o Samoa Outcomes is attached to include full details and anticipated outcomes.*

Immediately after the adjournment of the meeting, the two Samoas participated in an exchange of gifts to include fine mats, tuna, cocoa, fish, bananas, sausages and taros.

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