Government of Samoa

Official National Statement for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference

by H.E Tuitama Dr. Leao Talalelei Tuitama
Minister for Women, Community and Social Development

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[Madam/Mr]Chair,

Distinguished Delegates

Ladies and Gentleman

I have the privilege to present Samoa’s statement to the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on the Beijing+25 Platform for Action Review. We wish to associate our statement with the statement by the Pacific Island Forum which will be delivered later on. Samoa reaffirms its commitment to advance gender
equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, as stipulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

As a party to the Beijing Declaration, Samoa continues to strive for positive socio-economic outcomes for its people, as we continue to implement our commitments to related international treaties to progress human rights such as; the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) & the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Our efforts in achieving the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Human Rights conventions are linked to the human rights approach that we emphasise in meeting our Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 1 and 5 on Poverty Reduction and Gender Equality.

As a Small Island Developing State, the strength of our economy is drawn from the contributions of our people as our greatest asset. We therefore see it right and just to invest in
improving the wellbeing of our communities as Government continues its sector-wide and inclusive approach to development. Ensuring universal access to basic necessities and essential services as a means to reduce poverty gaps and improve social protection is key. The maintenance of peace and harmony across the country is reliant upon mutual understandings and partnerships between the State and our Village-Based systems of community leadership. This is fundamental to our Constitution and instrumental in the delivery of Government initiatives to strengthen gender responsive interventions to; eradicate violence from our homes, remove discrimination and stereotypical behaviours, foster positive environments for our children, empower our women and girls as well as ensuring that persons with disabilities are included in discussions pertinent to their wellbeing and personal development as equal human beings.

Madam/Mr Chair, in pursuit of equality for our people particularly those most vulnerable, Government in
collaboration with our network of male & female Village Representatives, Civil Society Organizations, Non-Government Organizations, Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, National Council for Churches, Government Ministries & Agencies, alongside the support of our bilateral and multilateral development partners Samoa has made significant strides as follows.

One, Developing and aligning national planning mechanisms, policies, strategies and legislations to key requirements of CEDAW, CRC & CRPD where relevant to Samoan context which resulted in the development of the Family Safety Act 2013; establishment of the Family Court of Samoa (2014); establishment of the Drug and Alcohol Court in (2015); establishment of the Community Law Centre (2015); and the finalisation of the National Gender Equality Policy 2016-2020, National Family Safety Policy & Strategy and the National Community Economic Development Policy & Strategy.
Two, Designing national programs that are consultative and responsive to the needs of women and girls as well as persons with disabilities such as the Samoa Women Shaping Development Program, the Samoa Disability Program and newly initiated Samoa Disability Partnerships Program, the Samoa ONEUN YEP Program, the District Development Planning Program and the National Anti-Violence Campaigns.

Three, Samoa has invested in Data and Research to support evidence-based interventions and facilitate sustainable partnerships in-country whilst also complying with reporting obligations as expected under mechanisms such as the Beijing Declaration. For example, in 2001 and 2017 we carried out a Family Safety Survey; Samoa had its first National Inquiry on Gender-Based Violence conducted by the National Human Rights Institution, and we continue to develop our web-based tool SADATA, to cluster our human rights recommendations and keep data and record of our implementing actions to
support the work of our National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up.

Madam/Mr Chair, while we have made significant progress through our implementation efforts for the Beijing Platform for Action, much more still needs to be done and many challenges remain. Samoa is currently fighting a measles epidemic affecting particularly our women & children, which speaks volumes about the level of vulnerability our women and our children have to such unfortunate events. Samoa is grateful to the positive and helpful response of our partners and the international community to assist us during these trying times. The same vulnerable groups are also most affected by natural disasters such as tropical cyclones, flooding and tsunamis as we had seen in our recent past. With the worsening impacts of climate change on our small islands, these add to the ongoing challenges we have to factor in as we try and implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
Let me conclude Madam/Sir Chair, by reiterating Samoa’s commitment to uphold its responsibility and continue to invest efforts and resources to attaining fair and equitable social and economic outcomes for all its people, especially those with disabilities, our women and dear children.

Faafetai Lava & Thank you for your attention.