Fualau Talatalaga Mata’u Matafeo  
*Chief Executive Officer*  
Ministry of Communications & Information Technology

Thank you Chair,

Warm Greetings and Talofa Lava,

It is with utmost respect that I address all members of the Committee this morning, to its 3rd Session. As mentioned in a previous address, despite this meeting not being conducted in the presence of all on a face-to-face modality, the COVID-19 global pandemic has unveiled the importance of resilient infrastructure, stable connectivity and affordable internet, which has also enabled this meeting to convene as scheduled. Therefore, I would like to convey the Government of Samoa and its people’s appreciation to UNESCAP and our partners for your commitment to Samoa and the Pacific Region in ensuring that this meeting and all the work continue despite these challenging times.

Chair, bridging the digital divide is of vital importance for Samoa, especially in the outer islands. The commissioning of the Tui-Samoa submarine cable in February 2018 and the landing of the Manatua cable this year, has bridged the challenges associated with the digital divide Samoa faced in the last decade with International connectivity. The Telecom companies and private sector ICT businesses in Samoa have also invested heavily in the upgrade of terrestrial connectivity, developing digital solutions and so forth, which in a nutshell, have not only increased access but has enabled our people to appreciate the advantages brought about by technological developments and connectivity. The
numerous infrastructural developments and commitment by the Samoan Government and the private sector has significantly increased access to supersonic speed internet that is affordable and reliable for ALL.

In addition to the above, the strengthening of Government and Private Sector partnerships and collaboration has played a vital role in building a well-educated population, through the provision of providing ongoing awareness and educational programs at all Sectors of Government including Schools and community at large.

Therefore, I would like to reiterate Samoa’s appreciation to the ESCAP Secretariat for the support rendered on the implementation of the Asia-Pacific Information Superhighway in the Pacific. We attest to the fact that this work has also contributed significantly to bridging the digital divide for inclusive access.

In keeping with the momentum of developments through the support of ESCAP, Samoa co-hosted with the Internet Society and ESCAP a working group meeting on assessing the feasibility of establishing a Pacific Internet exchange point. Samoa has been proposed as one of the candidate countries due to the significant improvement on ICT infrastructure (fiber optic cables connectivity to Pacific neighbors) and access in Samoa over the last decade. As a result, Samoa continues to support the work on the implementation of the AP-IS in the Pacific. Samoa looks forward to the reviewing the next phase of the AP-IS plan and requests the Secretariat to facilitate the review process.

To end, I would like to reiterate with appreciation the support rendered by UNESCAP and all our partners in ensuring that we continue to work towards achievement of our established goals for the good of all, not only within our respective countries but across the Region. Thank You Chair.