

Permanent Mission of Samoa to the United Nations

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HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM (HLPF) 2024

10 July 2024 | 1:15-2:30 PM | Conference Room B

SIDE EVENT

Global Action for Social Development amidst Converging Crises

Opening remarks

Ms. Matilda Bartley, *Deputy Permanent Representative* on behalf of **H.E. Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Dr Pa'olelei Luteru**, *Permanent Representative* of Samoa to the United Nations and Chair of AOSIS.

Talofa lava,

I have the honour to deliver these opening remarks on behalf of H.E. Mr. Fatumanava-o-Upolu III Dr Pa'olelei Luteru, in this side-event of the High-Level Political Forum 2024 on '**Global Action for Social Development amidst Converging Crises**'.

I would like to firstly thank the Economic Analysis and Policy Division of UN DESA for co-organizing this event with us and welcome all of you to this event. The theme of this event and that of the forthcoming World Social Report 2024 has special relevance for my country Samoa, as well as for all Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

For SIDS, the particular vulnerabilities that we have in relation to our ability to respond to shocks and crises are often referred to as our "special circumstances" in relation to sustainable development. Small Islands with small populations, small economies, geographical distances which translate to high import and export costs and narrow resource bases are all attributes of the special circumstances of SIDS, and therefore must be considered when examining our development needs.

For Samoa, Climate change over the past four decades has, and is, hindering our social and economic progress. In the years in which we face disasters, over 40 per cent of the population in Samoa is affected and economic losses average 46 per cent of the gross domestic product.¹

During the Covid-19 pandemic, by March 2021, Samoa's economy had collapsed by 8.6 per cent and tourism earnings had plummeted to zero compared with over US\$ 200 million in mid-2019.² Over 70 per cent of jobs in the tourism sector alone were lost, with echoing and trickling effects across other parts of the economy.

This story is only too common across SIDS, which are far more vulnerable to external shocks compared to most other developing countries, and have limited capacities to recover.

I wish to take this moment to highlight the more recent catastrophic Hurricane Beryl as an example of how extreme weather events are becoming more frequent and intense, causing significant loss and damage to people, infrastructure, and crops. Rising temperatures are raising drought risks and freshwater scarcity in SIDS.

In many SIDS, including Samoa, social development issues such as poverty, food insecurity, gender inequality, youth unemployment, crime, and prevalence of non-communicable diseases, are exacerbated when shocks disrupt supply chains and trade flows.

Such shocks have long-lasting impacts on people's lives. And they set economies back by raising debt burdens. Given such impacts, it is not enough to go back to the "business as usual" scenario, and there is a need to build resilience to shield against shocks.

Concessional financing is necessary to build resilience to natural and economic shocks especially when they escalate our debt levels through factors we cannot control, further ratcheting up our borrowing costs.

Co-ordinated international support is essential.

The recently agreed Antigua and Barbuda Action Agenda for SIDS -or ABAS- marks a renewed declaration for resilient prosperity, setting out the sustainable development aspirations of SIDS and the support required from the international community to achieve them.

The discussions today are timely, as we collectively grapple with a substantially worsened risk landscape for our peoples and countries.

I note that the key messages of the World Social Report 2024 contain several options for both national and collective action.

Global summits and conferences over the coming months offer an opportunity to further build on the agreements such as the ABAS and advance social development for all our peoples.

I extend my best wishes for this side event and look forward to the outcomes.

I thank you for your attention.

¹ [Samoa - Vulnerability | Climate Change Knowledge Portal \(worldbank.org\)](https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/samoa/vulnerability)

² [From pandemic to economic crisis, Samoa's covid journey one year on | RNZ News](https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/364444/from-pandemic-to-economic-crisis-samoa-s-covid-journey-one-year-on)