

SAMOA



Statement by

**Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa
Minister for Women, Community and Social Development
of the
Independent State of Samoa**

at the

**Fifty-fourth Session on the
Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**

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New York

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Chairperson
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Government of Samoa, I wish to convey our compliments to the Commission for convening this 15th year Review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the tenth anniversary of the Outcome Document of the 23rd Special Session of the 2000 General Assembly.

At the onset, we want to reaffirm our commitment towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and all other Regional and International Commitments on Gender Equality as prerequisites to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We also wish to associate ourselves with the statement by the Pacific Island Forum Group as it captures the developments and issues for the Pacific including the Outcomes of the Asia Pacific Regional Review of the Beijing Platform for Action, convened in Bangkok November 2009.

Chairperson,

Let me begin by saying that in the last 15 years, several developments have taken place to advance the status of women in Samoa, as has been noted in the Statement by the Pacific Island Forum Group and the ESCAP Asia Pacific Regional Review of the Platform for Action. These developments include a focus on strengthening the legal and policy framework, as well as facilitating support for some new programmatic areas in order to make progress for women and girls.

First, we now have a draft domestic violence legislation and the Samoa Law Reform Commission has also begun the ground work

on drafting issues papers to inform law reform in order to ensure compliance with CEDAW and CRC. Work on the domestic violence legislation was made possible with support from the Pacific Prevention of Domestic Violence Project, funded by the Government of New Zealand.

Secondly, our Draft National Policy for Women is currently being reviewed further so we may have a more succinct document that speaks to the priority issues and what our outcomes would be for women and girls in Samoa for the next 5 years.

Thirdly, the work of the Men Against Violence Advocacy Group which was formed in 2008 has officially begun. Supported by the UNFPA Gender Based Violence Project, the work of this group will target men at all levels as an equal partner to women, in eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

In the area of women and health a Special Parliamentary Advocacy Committee on Health Promotion has been established through support from the Ministry of Health, UNFPA and WHO. This initiative will provide a platform at this level for in depth discussion on health concerns and why health promotion must be taken seriously to achieve health for all in Samoa. Lifestyle diseases continue to affect women's health and it therefore requires more effective and stronger health promotion and primary prevention programs, in addition to accessible quality and efficient clinical and medical services.

On the issue of climate change, Samoa, like other Pacific Island Forum countries is committed to efforts to mitigate the impact of climate change and in particular the development of disaster risk reduction and adaptation strategies.

Chairperson,

Relative to the participation of women in public life, my delegation and I would like to note the recent appointments in the Government of Samoa where more women have now taken on senior leadership positions. This is evidence of the maturity in the professional development of women across the various sectors of Government. The changes in leadership of several government ministries and corporations provides an opportunity for policy advice to Cabinet that is gender responsive and will also allow for a better integrated approach towards achieving gender equality. Further to that, we are also happy to note that although there are only four (4) women in our Parliament out of forty nine (49), three (3) of those women are Ministers of Cabinet.

While progress has been made in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, much work remains in order to ensure that the developments for women are sustained and will continue. This includes the need for a Strategic Policy Framework that is informed by gender statistics, and one which shall provide the direction for achieving gender equality in line with Samoa's National Development Plan and the regional and international instruments on gender equality. Such a focus will also bridge the gap between policy and planning, and more importantly, between planning and financing. This calls for better monitoring and evaluation and renewed and continued support from regional and international networks and development partners in line with their mandates on enhancing gender equality. It also means stronger collaboration and partnerships across all sectors and at all levels, in order for Samoa to achieve its goals for the advancement of women.

Chairperson,

In closing we wish to again emphasize the much needed financial and technical support from our regional and international partners, so that we may continue to respond to the needs of women and girls on the ground and so that we can continue to make a difference for our women. I would also like to commend the work of our government, non government, community based networks and all our regional and international partners who have all assisted in Samoa's efforts towards the practical application of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in the last 15 years.

Thank you Chairperson.