

Joint Statement from the Prime Ministers of the Independent State of Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand on the occasion of the official visit by Honourable Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa to Aotearoa New Zealand

14 June 2022: Prime Minister Ardern was honoured to welcome Hon. Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, Prime Minister of Samoa and long-time friend of Aotearoa New Zealand, in Wellington on 14 June 2022 for her first official bilateral visit since becoming Prime Minister.

The year 2022 is a significant year, recognising the whanaungatanga between Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoa as we celebrate 60 years of Samoa's independence under the theme of "Folau ma le Fa'atuatua" (Sail with Faith); and 60 years of formal diplomatic relations between our two countries. In addition, on 1 August 2022, we will also mark the 60th anniversary of the signing of the *Treaty of Friendship* between our two governments; a unique agreement underpinned by "friendship, confidence, and a mutual endeavour to obtain for our peoples fuller opportunities for social progress".

To commemorate the 60th anniversary of signing the Treaty of Friendship, the Prime Ministers announced a special fellowship in the name of the Honourable Fiame Naomi Mata'afa for deepening cultural leadership between Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so Prime Ministers Ardern and Fiame also recalled the contribution made by the Honourable Fiame Mata'afa FM II CBE, father of the current Prime Minister and Samoa's first Prime Minister.

In their first face-to-face engagement as leaders, Prime Ministers Ardern and Fiame shared a wide-ranging and frank discussion on issues of mutual interest across bilateral, regional and multilateral agendas. Working together to address the challenges posed by climate change; effectively navigating post-pandemic economic headwinds; and advancing Blue Pacific priorities through established regional practices and regional institutions remain top priorities. To this end, leaders committed to renewing, in 2023, their bilateral *Statement of Partnership*, first signed in 2019.

Prime Ministers reflected on the close cooperation of Health and Foreign Ministries throughout the pandemic and reiterated their continued commitment to ensuring Samoa has the necessary resources to manage COVID-19. The two Governments have shared their approaches to managing the pandemic and borders, and Aotearoa New Zealand has provided vaccines, health supplies and laboratory assistance, as well as economic support. The Prime Ministers appreciated the mutual support and understanding shown throughout the pandemic while borders remained closed to all but essential travel.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their support for the *Kainaki II Declaration for Urgent Climate Change Action Now*. Aotearoa New Zealand looks forward to supporting Samoa to deliver on its climate change priorities by providing climate finance towards Samoa's Nationally Determined Contribution, National Adaptation Plan of Action, and other

government efforts to address climate change, including adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Labour mobility is an important driver of economic well-being in Samoa and Samoan workers are highly valued participants in Aotearoa New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme. The Prime Ministers reaffirmed the importance of Pacific labour mobility to both economies. They also reaffirmed their commitment to exploring new labour mobility opportunities as signatories to the Labour Mobility Arrangement signed alongside PACER Plus.

The Prime Ministers reaffirmed the strong alignment between Samoa's national development plan, *The Pathway for the Development of Samoa*, and the Aotearoa New Zealand's International Development Cooperation programme, which focuses on health, economic and institutional resilience, education and scholarships, tourism and private sector growth. Leaders agreed to continue streamlining the development cooperation programme to achieve maximum impact and ownership by Samoa. They also noted the support available for public service strengthening through the Pacific Public Service Fale and for other important sectors through a number of other Pacific regional development programmes.

Prime Minister Ardern welcomed Manaaki New Zealand Scholarship recipients from Samoa whose study had been disrupted by COVID-19 to begin their studies in Aotearoa New Zealand from Semester 2 2022 or Semester 1 2023.

Aotearoa New Zealand and Samoa confirmed their mutual dedication to a peaceful, secure, prosperous and resilient region. The Pacific Islands Forum is the preeminent forum in the region for discussing and building consensus on issues of regional and global importance. Pacific regional unity is critical in the face of climate change, geostrategic competition, COVID-19 recovery and other shared challenges. The Prime Ministers reaffirmed commitment to working together as a region to meet our security needs, as set out in the *Biketawa* and *Boe Declarations*, and in light of our shared aspirations, to care for and protect Te Moana Nui a Kiwa, the Blue Pacific Continent.

Prime Minister Ardern reiterated Aotearoa New Zealand's support for Pacific partners on both domestic and transnational security issues. Noting existing programmes in place which allow for a broad range of police and law enforcement training and capability building, Prime Ministers agreed to investigate further opportunities to collaborate.

As borders reopen the Prime Ministers looked forward to our people being able to reconnect through sports. Prime Minister Ardern announced a Sports Leadership Awards programme for emerging sports leaders from Samoa. The programme will harness the skills and attributes of sports trainers and leaders by leveraging the sporting excellence and training capabilities of Sport New Zealand to enhance and influence female emerging sports leaders in Samoa.

Prime Ministers Ardern and Fiame recognise that the world has changed significantly since the establishment of our diplomatic relations in 1962. Yet Samoa and Aotearoa New Zealand continue to conduct bilateral affairs in the spirit in which our diplomatic relationship was established: guided by the principles of trust, mutual respect, collective ambition, partnership and shared aspiration for the prosperity for our peoples.

As close friends in our region, our futures are woven together, underpinned by manaakitanga and mutual respect. The theme of our Treaty of Friendship commemorations is "Uō Mamae | Lifelong Friends" – symbolic of our enduring, warm and close relationship.