

**SPEECH AT THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS RECEPTION IN
PARLIAMENT 1 DECEMBER, 2020**

Prime Minister (Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern)

Mr Speaker (Rt. Hon Trevor Mallard)

Lau Afioga Vaovasamanaia, the Rt Hon Winston Peters

The Minister of Foreign Affairs

Lau Afioga Aupito William Sio

Ministers of Cabinet

Your Excellencies & Spouses

Members of Parliament

Distinguished Guests

Ladies & Gentlemen

Kia Ora & Talofa Lava!

It is always an honour and pleasure for me to speak on behalf of their Excellencies, the Ambassadors and High Commissioners.

At the outset, I want to congratulate you again (*the Rt. Hon Jacinda Ardern*) for the great victory by the Labour Party in the recent Elections. Special congratulations on your re-election as Prime Minister and also to Mr Speaker and the Ministers of your Cabinet.

This evening, however, is about the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Afioga Vaovasamanaia Uinisitone.

Sir, our Diplomatic Corps Family (and my own country Samoa) has been honoured to work together with yourself and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (under your leadership) over the past 3 years.

We thank you for your understanding and for your kind support of issues which are important to NZ as well as to the countries that we represent.

Your efforts to promote closer relations between our respective countries and Aotearoa is gratefully acknowledged.

For us in the Pacific, your strong interest in pursuing the Pacific Reset, especially as regards Climate Change issues, this is very much appreciated by our Governments and Peoples.

Last year in Tuvalu, the Pacific Forum Leaders referred (for the first time ever) to Climate Change as a '*Crisis*' facing the Pacific Region.

Sir, your Matai (or Samoan Chief) Title of Vaovasamanaia, which means "Beautiful Forests and Ocean", is very fitting, as several Island Countries struggle to save what is left of their beautiful forests and ocean.

You have been a close friend of the Pacific for a long time, for which we are grateful.

And, we believe that your knowledge and your many years of experience will continue to be useful in the global arena and, more especially, to save a number of smaller Island Countries from extinction.

Maybe you will now have the spare time to pay another visit to your village in Savai'i!

We wish you, Vaovasamanaia Uinisitone, and your family all the very best for the future.

And, our Diplomatic Corps Family looks forward to working together with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, *Honourable Nanaia Mahuta*, to promote closer relations between New Zealand and our respective countries.

Tena koutou, Tena koutou, Tena Tatou katoa!

SOIFUA MA IA MANUIA!