



**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, AFIOGA FIAME NAOMI MATAAFA:**

**MONDAY, 30th May 2022**

**ALERT LEVEL 2 DOWNGRADED TO ALERT LEVEL 1 WITH AMENDMENTS**



Good afternoon Samoa,

Our frontline efforts to safeguard our borders and to contain the spread of the COVID 19 virus, continue since our first confirmed community case on 17th of March, 2022. It has been over two months since the virus reached the community, however, our campaign drive through the Ministry of Health, in close collaboration with the Disaster Advisory Committee, development partners, and all districts and villages across Samoa remains robust.

The latest figures from the Ministry of Health on the status of the COVID 19 in Samoa confirmed that 13,499 people have been infected. Out of this number, 13,405 are community cases, and 94 are imported cases. Five patients are currently monitored in isolation wards, and none in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) at Moto'otua hospital. There was one (1) new death recorded recently, taking the cumulative number of deaths to 26.

As initially forecasted, the virus appears to have peaked in early May and there is now downward trending of new infections.

Our vaccination rates continue to climb steadily. For the age group 18 years plus, 93.1% have completed two doses, similarly 89.7% of the 12-17 age group have done two doses, 87.6% have done so for the 5-11 age group. Vaccination remains our best defense against severe symptoms of the virus. I would again encourage all those who have not done or completed their vaccinations, including a booster to visit the nearest hospital to do so. Our ultimate target is to achieve herd immunity for Samoa, to help protect our families and especially the young children who are currently ineligible for COVID 19 vaccines.

International travels continue to operate on requirements approved earlier this month. The number of flights to Samoa from next month will gradually shift to daily flights with the complete opening of our borders on the 1st of August. Flights between the two Samoa's will start daily operations this month, conditional on the satisfaction of health requirements.

The monitoring of home isolation for arrivals is the prelude to the full opening of our borders. We have faced challenges in the effective monitoring of health measures for home isolation as were the experience over the last two weeks. However the message from government is clear for all travelers into Samoa –compliance with health measures is surety of the safety of families and loved ones.

The gradual reopening of schools continues this week with the resumption of all primary schools. All early childhood education will resume in July as announced earlier.

In this regard, Cabinet has approved that Samoa moves to alert level 1 (yellow) for the next four (4) weeks commencing from midnight of 31st of May to the midnight of June, 28th. Under alert level one, amendments have been made to the State of Emergency Orders as follows.

1. All businesses to return to normal opening hours from Monday to Sunday.
2. Children under five (5) years old are now allowed in public places conditional on adherence to health requirements.
3. Permission for fishing boats crews' shore leave is granted upon arrival at Matautu wharf while offloading their catches, and replenishment of supplies. This is subject to satisfaction of health requirements.
4. Resumption of daily flights from American Samoa to Apia.
5. Continuation of PCR tests for all arriving passengers and the removal of home isolation conditions.
6. Continued encouragement of the wearing of facial masks, social distancing and good hygiene.

Our efforts towards achieving herd immunity for Samoa will continue to require everyone's assistance and support. Central to this, is our responsibility to keep our families and loved ones safe. We have come a long way in this campaign, and have accomplished a lot. However, let us not lose focus of the major tasks ahead of us in terms of preventing new infections and cooperation to drive our recovery.

We continue to pray for the families of those who have lost loved ones to COVID 19. May the Holy Spirit continue to comfort you.

Please stay safe as we celebrate our 60 years of independence.

God bless Samoa

SOIFUA.