



Prime Minister's intervention at the Initialing Ceremony for the new Partnership Agreement, on behalf of the Pacific region delivered by Ambassador Fatumanava Dr Pa'olelei Luteru. 15 April 2021, Brussels

**Chief Negotiators,
Honourable Ministers,
Yours Excellencies**

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of my Prime Minister, Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Aiono Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, who is unfortunately not able to join you today due to unavoidable circumstances. However, he sends his best wishes for a successful initialing ceremony.

Co-Chairs

Today marks another important step in our collective efforts to fashion and agree a practical and people-centred partnership agreement to govern our relations for the next 20 years. I therefore wish, on behalf of the Pacific region, to commend and congratulate our chief negotiators, Commissioner Jutta Urpilainen and Minister Dussey, for their leadership and commitment in guiding us to where we are today - at this initialing ceremony. It has been a long and demanding road, but this is to be expected of negotiations of this nature. The Pacific region also salutes all our technical negotiators on both sides for your hard work, dedication and commitment to our negotiations over the last 28 months.

The impact of the COVID crisis has presented us with new challenges, not only in our work methods, but it has also highlighted the critical need for us all to work together to address and overcome common challenges. I am hopeful that the new Agreement between the EU and members of the OACPS, will play a catalytic and pivotal role in our collective journey to prosperity, peace, and a safe planet for all [of mankind] to live and flourish, in the future.

The Pacific looks forward to playing its full part and to work with you Commissioner and the EU, to deliver on the ambitions and promise of our new Agreement for the benefit of all our communities especially the most vulnerable, and to leave no one behind.

In this regard, we are particularly keen to engage with the EU, before the joint programming exercise begins, so that we can be clear about modalities that will guide implementation, and to reset priorities based on existing challenges, during these unprecedented times. The aim is to ensure the speedy and timely disbursement of resources once all the legal requirements are in place.

Co-Chairs

The Pacific and EU negotiating teams have worked extremely hard to find compromise and reach agreement on all outstanding matters in the Pacific-EU regional protocol since our last meeting. As a region, we are happy with the provisions of the Regional Protocol, for the agreed language is flexible enough, in its construction, to address not only current and mid-term challenges, but also to take on board any long-term issue or priority that may arise during the life of the Agreement. I am also pleased to note that the Protocol, has at its core, the priorities of our region, and I acknowledge with appreciation the contribution of the EU in making this possible. Environmental sustainability and climate change; oceans, seas and fisheries; human and social development; sustainable economic development; and security, human rights and democracy are the central pillars to guide Pacific-EU regional cooperation under the framework of the new agreement.

Once again I extend my congratulations and sincere appreciation, on behalf of the Pacific region, to all our EU and OACP lead negotiators and their support teams, both at the political and technical levels. Thank you.

As we await the translation process to be completed, I trust we can now start the preparatory process for the signing ceremony to ensure that its hosting provides everyone with the opportunity to relax, reflect and enjoy this milestone in our EU-OACPS unique partnership. The Pacific region and Samoa in particular, therefore, look forward to hosting you all in Apia for the signing ceremony of our new Agreement towards the end of 2021. Faafetai tele lava and I thank you for your attention.

The Hon. Prime Minister of Samoa.

15 April 2021, Samoa Embassy, Brussels