Statement delivered by
Hon. Minister of Women, Community & Social Development
Leota Laki Lamositele Sio
at the
66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women
14 March 2022

“Women’s voice and agency: good practices towards achieving women’s full, equal and meaningful participation and decision-making in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes”

Mr Chairman,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates, and
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to deliver Samoa’s statement to the Commission on the Status of Women and wish to associate our statement with the statement delivered by Tuvalu on behalf of the Pacific Islands Forum.

I am also pleased to reaffirm Samoa’s commitment to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction, which are important in our continuing efforts to achieve inclusive and sustainable development. These are also in line with our obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 6, the Sustainable Development Goals, S.A.M.O.A Pathway, Sendai Framework 2015-2030, the Paris Agreement and relevant regional platforms.

Mr Chairman,
With the support of our partners, Samoa has made considerable strides in the pursuit of gender equality albeit much more work remains to be done. At the national level we have developed planning and policy documents that support Samoa’s sustainable development efforts, and which are linked to our human rights obligations. We would also reiterate that we continue to use rights based approach in accelerating the implementation of our sustainable development goals with emphasis on ‘Leaving No One Behind’ particularly the most vulnerable groups which include women and girls. These policies include the following:

- the **National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls 2021-2031** which aims to achieve gender equality and women empowerment by 2030. Emphasis is on the environment pillar and how we can enhance the visibility, of the contribution and engagement of women and girls in agriculture, climate change and natural resources and disaster risk management, especially those facing multiple and intersecting barriers and forms of discrimination;
- the **National Gender in Disaster Risk Management Policy** focuses on gender equity ensuring that women are involved across all phases of Disaster Risk Management;
- the **Samoa Climate Change Policy 2020** promotes a coordinated approach to ensure the interlinkages of human rights and climate change and their integration into all development sectors;
- the **National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Management 2017–2021** aims to empower communities to address their risks through capacity development and knowledge management (traditional and scientific) as well as support for stakeholder engagement in disaster risk management and implementing strategies; and
- the **National Environment Sector Plan (NESP)** integrates gender and vulnerable groups’ needs.

To give effect to these polices; relevant national programs and projects that are consultative and responsive to the needs and empowerment of women and girls as well as persons with disabilities are developed, such as the Community Disaster and Climate Risk Management Program, and the Economy Wide Adaptation to Climate Change project to name a few.
The theme of this year’s International Women’s Day speaks of the invaluable role of women in response efforts towards critical issues facing the world currently, namely the parallel crises of the pandemic and climate change affecting our environment, livelihoods and well-being. Women are providing valuable leadership, resilience and innovation in our communities. They are also contributing to health responses, improved education and economic activities. The participation of women in decision-making roles will continue to make a valuable contribution to the development of our countries and communities. The important lessons we learn in our respective and collective responses will help us build back better post-COVID-19. Samoa is grateful to our partners and the international community for their ready and valuable responses and assistance to Samoa during these challenging times.

Let me conclude by saying that the Government of Samoa has prioritised strengthened engagement and support to our communities to address the challenges of our times. Increased investment in social wellbeing is a high priority for our Government, focusing on investment in people and ensuring that these initiatives are responsive to the needs and context, and that the approach is transformative for the women and girls in Samoa.

Thank you for your attention.