



SAMOA INTERVENTION ON AGENDA ITEM 11 **“WHO’S WORK IN HEALTH EMERGENCIES”** **Public Health Emergencies: Preparedness and** **Response**

Mr Chairman,
Honorable Ministers,
Excellences,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to give this statement on behalf of Samoa government to acknowledge with gratitude the report by the Regional Director on WHO's work in health emergencies.

We would also like to give WHO for its continuous support for Samoa, in the past years during measles epidemic and COVID-19 global pandemic, and especially during this time that Samoa health sector deals with managing and controlling dengue fever outbreak.

We are fully aware of many challenges we had faced during COVID-19 pandemic, but this cannot stop Samoa from reviewing its health systems to be more resilient to respond to future epidemics and pandemics.

Samoa is one of the most vulnerable Small Island States when it comes to natural disasters and public health emergencies given the fact, that we have a very small population. One confirmed case of contagious disease like COVID-19 for Samoa is more than enough to ruin our economic growth and social development.

The Health Security of Samoa is the core mandated function of our government through the Ministry of Health. We had experienced the effects of influenza viruses over the years, posing high risk to Samoa. In the more recent years, these have been the 2009 H1N1, disease outbreaks such as the Chikungunya in 2014, Ebola in 2015, Measles Epidemic in 2019 and COVID-19 in 2020.

The 1918 Influenza Epidemic which killed 22% of Samoa's population at the time and the measles epidemic in 2019 that killed 83 people will continue to be our reference point when it comes to public health emergency preparedness and preventive, response and recovery efforts. This is why we had responded to COVID-19 pandemic way in advance before WHO officially declared COVID-19 as global public health concern. We do not want to repeat the suffering and devastation we had experienced in 1918 and 2019.

We believe that effective public health emergency response requires a united effort; hence all sectors in Samoa are united by our commitment through multi-sectoral and integrated approach to realize our Healthy Island vision and ensuring healthy lives of our people and sustainable futures for all. Embracing the Whole-of-Country, All-of-Government and Sector-Wide Approaches is Samoa's home-grown solution to prepare and manage public health emergencies.

Samoa's response actions as of to date include:

- a) review and update of our National Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness and Response Plan
- b) ongoing public health COVID-19 community awareness and education programs
- d) ongoing monitoring of International Health Regulations implementation by relevant sector partners and
- f) improvement of health infrastructures.

These are done with the great support from our government and development partners including WHO.

While the challenges we face with our health system at the moment are significant, I know that we, as a Small Island Developing States are making progress in minimizing the risks that future pandemics like COVID-19 may pose on our health systems, and we welcome the efforts of the Director General to get our views on what WHO should do more to assist and how to tackle these challenges.

I believe that together, we can ensure healthy lives and sustainable futures for all.

I wish you all the best for this Assembly. Thank you.



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