

# SAMOA



## STATEMENT BY

**LUAGALAU ELISA FOISAGAASINA ETEUATI SHON  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER  
MINISTRY OF WOMEN, COMMUNITY AND  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF SAMOA**

**AT THE**

**FIFTY-THIRD SESSION OF THE  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN**

**NEW YORK**

**6 MARCH 2009**

**Please check against delivery**



Mr Chairman, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

Samoa having ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child welcomes the theme for the 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on Sharing Responsibilities Between men and women including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS. In this context, Samoa would like to reiterate its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action including the Revised Pacific Platform for Action.

As a Pacific Island nation, Samoa is blessed with a unique culture that guarantees the sharing of responsibilities within families and communities to ensure that children, the elderly and persons with disabilities are taken care of. The same concepts of sharing and collective caring also forms the basis of child rearing and child care in Samoa and as a result children are often said to have many fathers and many mothers in the context of extended family, given the contribution that each member of the extended family plays in the caring of children and the young ones. The concept of sharing responsibility is also tied to one's "faasinomaga" or one's identity, a cultural concept which ensures that wherever one goes, help and support is there and guaranteed for there is sure to be blood connections and relations wherever one goes.

The unique strengths of our culture therefore very much inform policy development, programme design and interventions. The National Strategy for the Development of Samoa identifies the revival of the village economy as one of its key priority areas for the next 5 years and in this context the Community Sector Plan will focus on the how development s in the community can support

this focus in government's national development plan. Having said that, the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development has developed, used and continues to use the Community Strengths Based Model to facilitate community engagement, community participation and community responsibility thus contributing to enhanced community ownership and sustainability of efforts to address many of the issues faced by women and children today. The use of the Community Strengths Based Model is one of the best practices Samoa as a Pacific nation will continue to use given the emphasis on using local strengths and the focus on truly engaging communities in the strive for gender equality and quality life for all. This model of programme intervention is used for addressing sensitive issues such as child protection and HIV/AIDS and has recently been adopted by the Ministry of Health to promote community responsibility for their own health, through action and community based health promotion to combat the non communicable diseases which continues to be the leading cause of death in Samoa, women being mostly affected. The success of our efforts to date in addressing women's and children's issues is therefore a product of strong strategic leadership, genuine community engagement and participation and partnerships at all levels with our NGO/ CBOs including the Church Sector.

Mr Chairman,

In recognizing our strengths as a nation, we also acknowledge the challenges and issues in the context of sharing responsibilities between men and women and in particular the theme of this 53<sup>rd</sup> Session of CSW. We recognise also the fact that value systems are changing, labour migration is on the rise and urban drift is also on the increase. These have direct implications on our concept of "sharing responsibilities and collective caring" thus placing women at the lower

end of the scale with most of the responsibilities. These challenges and issues are now being addressed through the national policies for Women, Youth, Children and the National Policy on HIV/AIDS. Efforts towards law reform is under way and work has also begun with the drafting of a Domestic Violence legislation in line with the Concluding Comments of the UN CEDAW Committee as well as the CEDAW and CRC Legislative Compliance Reviews that have been completed.

Mr Chairman,

In addressing these issues and challenges at national level Samoa recognizes the need for strong partnerships and sharing of responsibilities between government, NGOs and the church sector in achieving our results for women and children. Samoa further recognises the much needed financial and technical support from regional and international partners in order for it as a nation to meet its obligations and responsibilities for women and children. Having said that, Samoa is also aware of the need for it as a nation to provide direction as to how financial and technical assistance ought to be used in line with its own cultural and environmental context. Samoa deems this the most effective way to ensure ownership and sustainability of efforts to achieve our results as a country. It requires therefore continued dialogue and communication at all levels so that support is made available for programme interventions for women and children and that such support is really making a difference in the lives of our women and children.

Mr Chairman,

To conclude this statement, Samoa would like to reiterate its commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Samoa would also like to

acknowledge the opportunity to be part of this annual global dialogue addressing the challenges we face in our struggle to achieve gender equality. We also welcome the sharing of lessons learnt, best practices and experiences as a way to revisit our own country commitments for women and children. Furthermore, we also want to acknowledge the support we have been able to receive from some of our regional and international partners in our strive to achieve gender in equality in Samoa to this day.

Thank you for your attention ladies and gentlemen.