

INDIA - SAMOA BILATERAL BRIEF

India and Samoa enjoy friendly and cordial relations. India established diplomatic relations with Samoa in June 1970 and was the second country to do so after New Zealand. The two countries are bound together by membership of the Commonwealth as well as cooperation in different international fora. Some Indian professionals working with multilateral agencies and a few teachers on bilateral contract are working in Samoa. Government of India is also providing regular economic and technical assistance to Samoa. As per available information, about 25 PIOs are settled in Samoa.

High Commission of India, Wellington is concurrently accredited to Samoa. In case of Samoa, its Ambassador in Tokyo is concurrently accredited to India.

Recent visits / developments:

1. **1st India-Samoa Foreign Ministry Consultations were held in Apia on 21 August 2023. Co-chaired by Secy (East) Mr. Saurabh Kumar and Ms. Peseta Noumea Simi, CEO, MFAT.** Both discussed development partnership including in areas of ICT, health, SME and capacity building and followed up on FIPIC III Summit announcements. Other points discussed were regional & global issues, and cooperation in the framework of PIF, Commonwealth and UN. Both sides agreed to hold FOC on a regular basis. During the visit Secretary (East) Mr. Saurabh Kumar also called on Hon'ble PM Fiamē Mata'afa.

2. **The Forum for India-Pacific Island Countries Summit (FIPIC-III):** The 3rd Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation Summit was held in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on May 22, 2023. It was co-chaired by Indian Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister James Marape and attended by 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Samoa's Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa led the 4 member delegation for the Summit in which a 12-point development programme in areas of healthcare, cyberspace, clean energy, water and small and medium enterprises in PIC was unveiled by India.

3. **Voice of Global South Summit:** The Voice of South Summit was held virtually on 12-13 January 2023, with 10 sessions in total. PM Narendra Modi hosted the first session and inaugurated the summit. This was followed by sessions at Ministerial level, each dedicated to address and find solutions to the most pressing concerns of the developing world. Samoan Health Minister Valasi Luapitofanua To'ogamaga Tafito Selesele participated in the Summit and spoke in the session 'Cooperation to Build Resilient Healthcare Systems' on 13 January 2023. The main topics of discussion were 'building capacities in healthcare, sharing of best practices and digital public goods in health, ensuring holistic human development, traditional medicine, creation of regional hubs for healthcare.'

4. **PM Shri Modi hosted the India-Pacific Small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) Meeting** on 24 September 2019 in New York on the side lines of UNGA. Prime Minister of Samoa Hon'ble Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, represented Samoa at the meeting. The leaders deliberated on a wide range of issues including sharing developmental experiences for attainment of SDGs, enhancing cooperation in renewable energy, joining the newly launched Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, capacity building, implementation of projects under the India-UN Development Partnership Fund and roadmap for future India-PSIDS cooperation. PM Shri Modi reiterated India's commitment to tackling climate change and for increasing the share of renewable energy for which he announced a concessional Line of Credit of US \$ 150 million for undertaking solar, renewable energy and climate related projects. He also announced allocation of US \$ 1 million to each PSIDS towards implementation of a high impact development project in the area of their

choice. He also announced a 'Distinguished Visitors Programme' under which eminent persons from these countries can visit India. PM also reaffirmed his commitment for providing developmental assistance for capacity building by deputing technical experts to provide training and through special courses under the ITEC programme. Leaders of PSIDS, including Samoa, welcomed these initiatives.

5. **Visit of MOS for Tribal Affairs:** Union Minister of State for Tribal Affairs, Hon. Jaswantsinh Bhabhor visited Samoa from 20 to 23 May 2018. The Minister held discussions of bilateral importance with Samoa's Head of State, His Highness Tuimalealiifano Vaaletoa Sualauvi II, and with Samoan Acting PM and Minister of Communications & Information Technology Hon. Afamasaga Rico Tupa'i. The Minister also met the Samoan Health Minister Afioga Tuitama Dr. Leao Talalelei Tuitama, and toured Samoan health facilities.

6. **Sustainable Development Summit:** A Samoan delegation led by Deputy PM of Samoa Ms Fiame Naomi Mataafa attended the *India-Pacific Islands Sustainable Development Conference* held in Suva, Fiji, from 25-26 May 2017. The inaugural session of the conference was addressed by Gen. Dr V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India. India and Samoa signed an MOU for establishing a Centre of Excellence in IT in the Samoan capital Apia.

7. **2nd FIPIC Summit:** The Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi led a 5-member delegation to the 2nd Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), held at Jaipur on August 21, 2015. One journalist from Samoa visited India from August 17-24, 2015, as part of the familiarization trip organized by XP Division, MEA, during the 2nd FIPIC Summit.

8. **1stFIPIC Summit:** A four-member delegation led by the Prime Minister of Samoa Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi attended the Pacific Leaders' Summit on 19 November 2014 held at Suva, Fiji along with thirteen other Head of Governments, or designated political representatives of the Pacific island countries.

9. **Asia Leadership Programme on Sustainable Development and Climate Change:** Samoan Prime Minister Hon Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, accompanied by Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Mr. Aiono Mose P. Sua and, Chief Executive officer for Finance, Central Bank, Mr. Iulai Lavea, visited India for the Asia Leadership Programme on Sustainable Development and Climate Change. The event, coordinated by the Asian Development Bank, was held at New Delhi from 2-5 February 2013.

10. **SIDS Conference 2014:** Samoa hosted the third SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) conference in Apia from 1-4 September 2014. India contributed US\$ 250000/- to the UN Trust Fund to support the Conference. Most of the SIDS (39) were represented at the level of Head of State/Government. The 3rd SIDS Conference was an effort to assess the progress of the SIDS countries and Millennium Development programme. A high-level Indian delegation also participated in the SIDS Conference and reiterated India's commitment towards development of Pacific countries.

11. Samoan Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Agriculture Store Cooperation visited India in July 2012 for the **45th COCOTECH APCC** meeting, held at Cochin. Appreciating the developments in our coconut sector, especially advancements in processing technology by Coconut Development Board, the Minister expressed a keen desire to forge a close relationship between the two countries in this area and to avail of the technologies in plant protection and processing from India. The Samoan Agriculture Minister again visited Kochi from 2-5 February 2015 to attend the Ministerial Meeting of the 51st Asian & Pacific Coconut Community.

12. **The 5th Commonwealth Youth Games** were held in Apia, Samoa from 5th to 11th September 2015. A 33-member contingent from India in the age group of 14-18 years participated in eight sports disciplines.

13. Hon'ble Faumuina Tiatia Faaolatane Liuga, Minister of Finance, led the Samoan delegation to the **46th Annual meeting of the Board of Governors of ADB**, at New Delhi from 2-5 May 2013.

14. At the invitation of Ms. Krishna Tirath, the then Minister of State (IC), MOW&CD, Hon'ble Gatoloaifaana Amataga Gidlow, Associate Minister for Women, Community and Social Development represented Samoa at the Second **High-Level Meeting on South-South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific** held in New Delhi in October 2013.

15. Indian State Assembly delegations visited Samoa for participation in the **23rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar** in Apia from 24 to 30 May 2012.

16. The Indian Naval training ship, **INS Tarangini**, visited Samoa in January 2004.

17. In April, 2023 Vodafone Samoa appointed Mr. Rana Bose as its new Chief Executive Officer following confirmation by the Board of the telecommunications company.

Indian assistance to Samoa:

18. Samoa depends substantially on overseas assistance/aid. Compared to other major donor countries, Indian assistance has been modest. However, following the Pacific Leaders' Summit held in Fiji in November 2014, it has been decided to **increase the annual Grant-in-Aid for Samoa to US\$ 2,00,000.**

19. **Three Dialysis Machines were supplied to Samoa** at a cost of NZ\$ 122669.71 in September 2006 under bilateral assistance. The Samoan government had requested for donation of three more machines in 2007 which were delivered in March 2008 (at a cost of NZ\$ 66316.74 (US\$ 50785.90) out of the grant-in-aid of 2006). Samoa has also requested for replacement of 3 dialysis machines every two years. An amount of NZ\$ 65029.60 was provided to Samoa as grant-in-aid in 2009 for funding the purchase of six portable reverse Osmosis systems for the National Kidney Foundation. Three dialysis machines, one blood volume monitor and one temperature monitor were supplied to Samoa in May 2011 at a cost of NZ\$ 80,120.

20. The Centre for Excellence in Information Technology (CEIT) funded by GoI was set up by C-DAC at the School of Maritime, National University of Samoa in Apia at a cost of Rs. 2.66 Cr (US\$ 3,55,000/- approx). It became functional in November, 2019 with the deployment of two personnel from C-DAC. Four master trainers from Samoa had also undergone Advanced IT training at CDAC and obtained Post Graduate Diploma in Advanced Computing (PG-DAC) & Post Graduate Diploma in IT Infrastructure, Systems and Security. The Centre was transferred to the National University of Samoa, Apia on 27 August 2021. Samoan PM Fiamē Naomi Mata'afa and the then Honorary Consul General of India in Samoa Mr. Apete Meredith attended the handing-over ceremony. Presently, the Centre is being run by the National University of Samoa.

21. **Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative Project**, supported with a grant of US \$ 1 million by India under the aegis of India-UN Development Partnership Fund has been launched on 20 December 2019. The multi-pronged Knowledge Initiative will promote knowledge based sustainable development in Samoa by ensuring ease of access to information for all Samoans.

22. **The Samoa Digital Library (SADIL)**, funded by a grant of US \$ 1 million by India under the aegis of India-UN Development Partnership Fund was launched on 17 January 2022 at the National University of Samoa by the Education Minister of Samoa, Hon'ble Seuula loane Tua'au. High Commissioner Mr. Muktesh K Pardeshi also joined the event virtually. The Digital Library is part of the Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative and this is the first digital library created in any Pacific Island country. The multi-pronged Knowledge Initiative will promote knowledge based sustainable development in Samoa by ensuring ease of access to information for all Samoans.

23. Under the Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative (SKSI) **a mobile app - AgriTouch - has been developed** by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Government of Samoa and it was launched on 7 March 2022. The App provides farmers with access to important information and helps boost their productivity. It allows users to keep records as well as access online resources such as information on farming, trainings, and contacts for ministry officers. Among the guests at the launch were the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, La'auli Leuatea Schmidt, and the UN Resident Coordinator, Simona Marinescu. High Commissioner Shri Muktesh Pardeshi's remarks were delivered by CEO Tilafono David Hunter on his behalf.

24. Under SKSI, the **Lifelong Learning Lab** was launched on 30 June 2022. It is an inclusive innovation hub for training and collaboration that identifies and nurtures talents, mentors youths, offers accessible learning opportunities to individuals with disabilities, and equips them with the skills required to tackle the contemporary and future challenges of Samoa within the globalized economy.

25. **India gave a cash grant of US \$ 2,50,000 to Samoa** in January 2020 for relief and rehabilitation of victims of the recent measles epidemic that took of toll of 81 lives and affected 5600 others.

26. **ITEC:** Twenty ITEC Slots are being offered to Samoa and it is keenly availing of the offer in recent years, particularly in the field of Information Technology, small scale enterprises, financial management, and other areas of mutual interest. Fifteen slots were availed by Samoa in 2018-19. However, the utilisation in 2019-20 was only 8 slots because of Samoa's measles epidemic and nil in 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. On 21 August 2023, High Commission celebrated ITEC Day 2023 in Apia, Samoa. The event saw the participation of 20 ITEC Alumni, equal number of Samoan government officials and a few diaspora members. Secretary (East) Mr. Saurabh Kumar along with High Commissioner, also engaged with ITEC alumni, encouraging their participation in more future programmes.

27. **Other Training Programmes:** Two officers from the Samoan Foreign Office attended a short-term Course for Diplomats of PICs organized by FSI at Nadi in January 2011. A Samoan diplomat attended the FSI's special training programme for Commonwealth diplomats in New Delhi in March 2011. Two officers from the Samoan Foreign Office attended a short-term Course for Diplomats of PICs organized by FSI at Nadi from 4 to 8 May 2015 and one Samoan Diplomat visited New Delhi for the FSI Diplomatic Course 2017. Three nominations received from the Samoan side have been forwarded to FSI for the 3rd FSI Special Training Programme. Mr. Davina Korua, Principal Finance Officer, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Samoa participated in the 3rd Special Course for Diplomats from Pacific Island Countries held at the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service, New Delhi from 20 February – 03 March 2023.

28. **Mr Jovesa Leone Ah Kuoi from Samoa participated in the Advance Orientation Programme for International Solar Alliance (ISA)** from 17 to 25 January 2017 in India. Mr Poumulinuku Onosemo, CEO for the Samoan Ministry of Works, Transport & Infrastructure attended the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMUCHUD) in Delhi from 14-16 December 2016.

Economic and Commercial opportunities:

29. **Relationship with India:** Trade with India is currently not significant. India exported nearly US\$1.40 m worth of goods to Samoa in 2021-22 and imported US\$0.38 m from Samoa.

30. The possibility of strengthening India's business and commercial presence in this small island country of two lakh people in areas of infrastructure, public health and tourism sectors could be considered. That Samoa is an active member of the Small Island Group of Pacific Countries and has been extending support for India's candidates in international fora and also at the UN on issues of concern to us, vindicates our continued support and assistance for this country. It recently supported India's candidature at IMO.

31. Hon'ble PM announced the opening of the FIPIC Trade Office in FICCI premises at New Delhi in his speech during the 2nd FIPIC Summit. The Trade Office, named 'FIPIC Business Accelerator' was formally launched on September 7, 2015. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has also set up an exclusive department for promoting trade with Pacific Island Countries, at its headquarters in New Delhi.

32. Consequent to the decisions taken at the two FIPIC Summits, Government of India has approved grant of gratis e-Tourist Visas to nationals of 14 Pacific Islands Countries including Samoa. Other proposals which are currently being pursued for implementation are deputation of ITEC experts, setting up of Tele-medicine centre, and supply of medicines by Indian Pharma PSUs directly to PICs subject to relaxed regulatory approvals.

33. India's Apollo Hospitals Group and Fortis Hospitals has signed an MoU with the Samoan Ministry of Health.

34. An agreement on Exchange of Information on taxes has been finalised and is to be signed soon.

October 2023