



**Statement
by
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Samoa's High Commissioner to Fiji
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[as delivered]

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I want to place on record Samoa's gratitude to the Royal Thai Government for being generous and gracious hosts of our 80th Commission session this week.

In the same vein, Samoa is appreciative to ESCAP for providing the platform so that the members of our Asia and Pacific region, Big and Small, Developed and Developing, Resilient and Vulnerable, can come together as a collective to consider problems, challenges and obstacles that confront us, including opportunities, and find solutions that can help address these challenges and pave the way forward.

True, as a region, we are so diverse in our realities and uniqueness, but no one country or sub-region, has a total monopoly on good ideas, on what works, and what doesn't - Hence why Samoa and our Pacific countries value our ESCAP memberships so that we can navigate our way, based on others experience and best practice, to ensure we achieve the same, if not better results. After all, we all learn from borrowed knowledge, adapted, moulded and tailored to suit our national needs and special circumstances.

Importantly still, there is so much innovative and successful initiatives within our Asia Pacific region at different level and stages of developments that we don't need to look outside our group for solutions, as most, if not all, can be found here. It's the same with some of our trusted development partners who are either members of our region, or have continuously been engaged and supported ESCAP or our members through the lows and highs of our journey. We

need genuine partners to help implement our region's digital plans as we cannot achieve these on our own.

Which leads me, Mr. Chairman, to respectfully raise with the Executive Secretary of ESCAP, the need, if not currently happening, perhaps to facilitate opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and possible work attachments in the Asia group especially for our Pacific people, so that there is capacity building by seeing, doing and learning on the job, from our other members – creating lasting circle of friends,- and perhaps we can term such an initiative as a true “**Asia - Pacific cooperation**”.

Mr. Chairman,

Samoa as a Small Island developing state comes with its share of challenges, natural and manmade including

1. **Geographical Isolation:**.
2. **Limited Infrastructure:**.
3. **Cost Constraints:**
4. **Climate Vulnerability:**
5. **Cultural and Linguistic Context:**
6. **Cybersecurity Challenges:**

Thus, in the context of our session's theme “**Leveraging digital innovation for sustainable development**”, Samoa views digital technology, if utilized ethically, smartly and funded and supported by trusted and genuine partnerships, will be nothing short of a catalyst, a facilitator and an equalizer that can help Samoa to gradually realize its peoples' aspirations for sustainable development. It can also provide a level playing field allowing some committed members to leap-frog others in achieving the SDGs.

Mr. Chairman,

In our “Pathway for the Development of Samoa FY 2021/22 – FY 2025/26” some expected outcomes include,

- Affordable access to internet usage in whole of Samoa,
- Improved business performance through use of ICT sectors.'
- more efficient delivery of health, education, and business services,
- timely disaster response, management and reconstruction efforts,

Some notable progress in **Samoa's digital journey** so far, include the

- **National Digital ID Project:** Aims to provide secure digital identification for Samoan citizens.
- **Digital Government Platform Project:** Enhances government services through digital channels.

- **National Digital Library:** Facilitates access to digital resources.
- **Tech Start-ups Support:** with investment and resources crucial for digital transformation
- **Online Registration for the 2026 General Election for Samoan leaving overseas:** which commenced this month

These initiatives demonstrate Samoa's commitment to bridging the digital divide and fostering a well-connected society

Mr. Chairman,

Aligning digital initiatives with SDGs, especially those related to education, health, and economic growth, requires careful planning.

Despite these challenges, Samoa's commitment to digital transformation remains strong. Collaborative efforts, international partnerships, and community involvement will play a pivotal role in overcoming obstacles and achieving a well-connected future for Samoa. The full implementation of the Samoa National Cyber-Security Strategy will allow us to better guarantee a modern cyber-safe digital economy, address cybercrime and promote appropriate use of technology.

Finally, in the Pacific regional context Samoa's digital policies also align well with the 9th Thematic Area of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent "**Technology and Connectivity**" where the level of ambition is and I quote, "All Pacific people benefit from access to affordable, safe and reliable land, air and sea transport and ICT infrastructure systems and operations while ensuring culturally sensitive user-protection and cyber security"

Fa'afetai and Thank you.