



**Statement by the Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa
Prime Minister & Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade
of the Independent State of Samoa**

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Madam President,

May I renew to you highest consideration and my personal greetings and say that we were greatly honoured and delighted with your kind visit to our country, as then President of the International Criminal Court, on the occasion when Samoa hosted the annual Summit of the Leaders of the Pacific Islands Forum.

On that occasion you addressed Pacific Leaders on the work of the Court and the importance of State participation and support from all regions. I am particularly pleased to note that a Pacific sister State, Kiribati, became a member State of the Court last year.

Madam President,

This is also an opportunity for me as Prime Minister to renew Samoa's deep and longstanding commitment to the principles of the International Criminal Court and our fullest support for the work of the Court.

Samoa is a small country, with deep-seated faith and trust in the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute system, and the critical role that the Court now plays as part of the international rules-based order. For that reason, from the very beginnings, Samoa had sought to be directly engaged and to play a role in the development of the Rome Statute and in the establishment of the Court, and we were honoured that a citizen of our country was among the first elected Judges of the Court.

We join in offering tribute and support to all personnel and staff of the Court for their high commitment and endeavours in the course of international justice, in these very difficult times, as the COVID pandemic continues to raise formidable challenges, in all parts of our world.

We welcome the latest elections of honourable Judges of the Court and the new Prosecutor and note, that at this session we will elect two new Deputy Prosecutors. All, together, they will be the commanding new generation for the direction and leadership of the Court in its forward development.

Samoa fully supports the most highly qualified and merit-based selection processes for all these critical positions, with essential qualities to help ensure that the Court is best positioned to deliver on its core mandate and necessary reforms in the coming years. We want to put on record our appreciation to our distinguished colleagues as well as the Committee members of the Assembly who have and continue to persevere on these important matters.

Madam President,

Samoa extends its particular appreciation to the Group of Independent Experts. In our view, the Group's report on the Court and the Rome Statute system provides an essential way forward and the right momentum for the strengthening of the Court and systems as a whole. The broad-scope coverage and in-depth analysis of critical areas will undoubtedly be invaluable in the required follow-up work by the States Parties and by the Court, and by civil society and other stakeholders.

Madam President,

The Court was a creation at a critical moment in history when, as the esteemed Kofi Annan said at the birth of the Rome Statute, ***“good people spoke up on behalf of the innocent victims of horrendous crime, and in the name of international law”***. Samoa remains deeply committed to the purpose and principles of the Rome Statute.

We remain ambitious with respect to the universality of the Rome Statute and for the need to encourage growth in membership and the numbers of States Parties, in particular from our Asia-Pacific region. As I have said, Madam President, your visit to Samoa and address to Pacific Heads of State was a welcomed high-point in pro-active outreach by the Court for universality. I remember from that occasion the broad indication from the President of Kiribati for membership which, happily, has now occurred. Still, there is more room for further progress on universality, even from our own Pacific region. Indeed, we would need more initiatives for the Pacific in this connection.

Finally Madam President,

The Pacific Island Forum Leaders has reaffirmed that climate change remains the single greatest threat to the livelihoods, security and wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific, and thus our commitment to progress the implementation of the Paris Agreement. We continue to call for global action to reverse the cycle of decline our environment is facing to avoid the science predicted, devastating impacts for us all. Samoa believes in the global reach and organic growth and development of the ICC system of international criminal justice. When we look around our world today there are even more and more “innocent victims”, in particular victims of acts causing severe widespread or long-term damage to the environment, including the global climate system. We believe, respectfully, that the International Criminal Court has a necessary and critical role to play.

In our estimation there is substantive and rightful international demand for ecocidal and gross environmental acts to be carefully examined in terms of the structure and principles of the Rome Statute; and that the historical moment has come to give due attention, the matter so rightly deserves. We are aware, and we are respectful, of the competing viewpoints. On the other hand, the scientific evidence and assessments on gross environmental damage are out there in abundance, and have been so for a long time and, already, overwhelming in urgency and serious proportions.

Thank you, Madam President.