

DISCLAIMER

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**Day 8
09:35am**

I. OTHER ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Mr Speaker greeted the House and acknowledged Samoa in all her honorific salutations. He then announced that Friday is usually a short sitting day; therefore, proceedings will adjourn at 12pm.

II. PRESENTATION OF PAPERS

A total of two papers were tabled: 1 Annual Report and 1 Delegation Report.

III. ORDERS OF THE DAY – Consideration of Parliamentary Committee Reports and Government Responses (cont.)

1. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 91, Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Officers Committee Report on the P.P. 2020/2021 No. 69 & P.P. 2021/2022 No. 12, Parliamentary Pension Scheme Annual Reports for Financial Years 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 33, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 91

2. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 151, Report of the Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 130, Parliamentary Pension Scheme Annual Report 2021/2022.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 74, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 151

3. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 1, Report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 71, Samoa Senior Citizen Benefit Fund Annual Report 2021/2022.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 76, Government Responses on P.P. 2023/2024 No. 1

4. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 2, Report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 88, Samoa National Provident Fund Annual Report 2021/2022.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 77, Government Responses on P.P. 2023/2024 No. 2.

(1) Susuga Hon TUILAEPFA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Lepa.

The Leader of the Opposition raised concerns about pensions during a parliamentary term, as he did not have the chance to address it yesterday. He acknowledged the Committees' recommendations regarding the National Provident Fund (NPF), particularly for the Members Pension Scheme and highlighted its historical significance as it was primarily intended as a benefit for Members of Parliament (MPs) who may not be re-elected. He further argued that MPs should receive returns on their NPF contributions, akin to other public servants and refuted claims that MPs and judges are under the same policy, noting disparities in benefits. The Member then moved to discuss the Government's investment in NPF, indicating that only a portion of the investment is directed towards the NPF, resulting in income for the Government. The Member also stressed the importance of the policy for young MPs who are re-elected, enabling them to save for the future, as well as providing financial security for MPs to support their families and prepare for old age.

(2) Afioga LUPEMATASILA Galumalemana Tologata Tofia Tile, Member for Falelatai & Samatau.

The Member began by greeting the Speaker and fellow Members present in the House. He then emphasized the significance of the report regarding senior pensions, and conveyed concerns raised by elderly people from his constituency claiming that their pensions are insufficient to meet their needs. He further asserted that some elders perceived that their pensions have been ceased, leaving them struggling to cover expenses such as medication and hospital check-ups. For instance, seniors are not entitled to receive their pension when they leave Samoa for medical reasons overseas; therefore, he urged the Government to reconsider the requirements to claim pension so that pension entitlement should be accessible to elders even when they are abroad, ensuring they have financial support upon their return. The Member also suggested leveraging the pension scheme to provide medicinal needs through partnerships with private pharmaceutical companies.

(3) Afioga FUAAVA Suluimalo Amataga, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Luga.

The Member raised concern with the Government's plan to discontinue pension for our elders who travel overseas for medical check-ups. He further stressed that the Government should reconsider this and allow the flow of pension funds even when they travel overseas as most old people rely on these funds when they return home.

Afioga AUUAPAAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola, Chairperson for Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee.

The Chairperson acknowledged the input from various members on the report, clarifying that there were four distinct viewpoints expressed by members regarding pension matters. He then referenced the Annual Reports for the FY 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 where it highlights that pension rates had increased to 15%, with some members suggesting a further increase to 20%. In response to specific concerns raised by members, such as the need to increase pensions, he highlighted recommendations made in the 2020/2021 report, which suggested an increase to 17.3% based on advice from a specialist counselor. Regarding the issue of member signatures, he reiterated the provisions outlined in S.O 166 clarify that footnotes would only be included if any member rejected a statement in the report.

- **Susuga Hon TUILAEPFA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Lepa – interruption on a point of order.**

The Leader of the Opposition urged the Deputy Speaker to exercise common sense and recognize that there was still time to discuss the report. He further emphasized that it is the responsibility of all Committee members to sign their reports to indicate they respect the Assembly and were committed to deliberate on papers presented to the House.

Afioga AUUAPAAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola – Chairperson for Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee.

The Chairperson then acknowledged concerns raised by Committee members and other members regarding pension issues yesterday and emphasized that they were also addressed accordingly.

(4) Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1.

The Member for Vaimauga 1 greeted the House and expressed gratitude to the Chairperson of the Standing Order Committee for addressing his inquiries. However, he reiterated the importance of having all members of each respective Committees to sign their reports to demonstrate its full approval and respect for the House. He then suggested that if members were unable to sign, footnotes should be added to the report explaining the reasons. The Member also reiterated the importance of his proposal on writing wills by the NPF, noting that some individuals may be reluctant to do so.

SPEAKER:

Mr Speaker advised the Chairperson to consider matters raised by Members as they are essential for future proceedings.

Afioga AUUPAAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola – Chairperson for Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee.

The Chairperson emphasized that the suggestion concerning wills is only a recommendation, not an instruction. He also acknowledged members' advice regarding Committee reports to be signed by respective members and clarified that the Committee signs the report before the sitting, making it difficult to gather signatures from members who have been excused due to duty travel or illness. He then asserted that all other advice has been considered and emphasized that any decision regarding the increase in Members' NPF and other pension issues will ultimately be at the Government's discretion.

Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimae Tafua – Chairperson of the Finance and Expenditure Committee.

The Chairperson addressed concerns raised regarding the committee's reports and provided updates on the progress of investments. He also highlighted a 23% surplus in investments from government-owned companies over the past decade, as per the NPF report. In reference to issues with elders' pensions being discontinued when traveling overseas, he clarified that pensions can be claimed if the required supporting documents are provided.

Afioga LUPEMATASILA Galumalemana Tologata Tofia Tile – Member for Falelatai & Samatau.

The Member emphasized the need to reconsider the policy requiring elderly individuals to provide documentation proving their overseas travel for medical check-ups in order to continue receiving pension funds as it poses unnecessary difficulties for elderly individuals.

Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimae Tafua – Chairperson of the Finance and Expenditure Committee.

The Chairperson asserted that the request put forth by the Member for Falelatai & Samatau is noted.

Afioga Hon LAUTIMUIA Uelese Vaai, Minister of National Provident Fund

The Hon Minister extended greetings to Parliament, government officials, and Samoa in its honorific salutations as well as the work of Committee Chairpersons in compiling reports. He then addressed Members' queries on pension increases, affirming that there are ongoing negotiations for pension scheme improvements, contingent on economic conditions and

government priorities. In reference to elderly pensioners traveling overseas, the Minister assured that the Government will consider it with plans to renegotiate related policies.

In response to queries about the composition of the NPF Board, he highlighted a 2010 amendment prohibited certain officials to be a member in the Board and clarified that the rationale behind the amendment was to ensure its independence.

- **Susuga Hon TUILAEPFA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Lepa.**

The Leader of Opposition emphasized that the significance of the 2010 NPF amendment act was eliminating representatives of certain government offices from the NPF Board to preserve its independence especially from political influences. For instance, if the responsible Minister is included in the Board, it may cause potential political appointments and interests; however, he expressed support for the presence of the CEO on the NPF Board.

Tofa LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata 3

The Member commended the Minister for providing a clear explanation regarding pensions, emphasizing the need for justifications before implementing changes or amendments. He also expressed the difficulty in increasing NPF contributions by 10%, citing fairness concerns for business owners. In this regard, he supports the Minister's opinion and the report, stating that nothing can be done in this term due to contradictions among members, despite the law already being enacted.

The Member then highlighted the distinction between State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) and NPF, with SOEs serving as government finance providers and NPF specifically catering to the public. He also asserted that he remembers the Act that removed the Minister from chairing the NPF Board and therefore expressed his disapproval given the Chairperson's inability to address matters related to the office in Chamber, placing blame solely on the Minister if issues arise.

Afioga Hon LAUTIMUIA Uelese Vaai, Minister of National Provident Fund

The Hon Minister acknowledged and conveyed his appreciation for the advice and opinions presented by the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for Faleata 3. He then concluded his response by acknowledging the NPF staff's service and encouraged them to remain persevere and work diligently despite the challenges they are facing.

Afioga AUUPAAU Mulipola Aloitafua Mulipola – Chairperson for Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee.

The Chairperson moved a motion that the Assembly approves the Committee's following Reports; seconded and approved.

- i. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 91, Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee Report on the P.P. 2020/2021 No. 69 & P.P. 2021/2022 No. 12, Parliamentary Pension Scheme Annual Reports for Financial Years 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.
- ii. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 151, Report of the Standing Orders, Electoral, Petitions and Constitutional Offices Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 130, Parliamentary Pension Scheme Annual Report 2021/2022.

Afioga Hon LAUTIMUIA Uelese Vaai, Minister of National Provident Fund

The Hon Minister moved a motion that the Assembly approves its Government Responses enlisted below:

- i. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 33, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 91
- ii. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 74, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 151

Afioga FALEOMAVAEGA Titimae Tafua – Chairperson of the Finance and Expenditure Committee.

The Chairperson moved a motion that the Assembly approves the Committee Reports enlisted below; seconded and approved.

- i. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 1, Report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 71, Samoa Senior Citizen Benefit Fund Annual Report 2021/2022.
- ii. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 2, Report of the Finance and Expenditure Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 88, Samoa National Provident Fund Annual Report 2021/2022.

Afioga Hon LAUTIMUIA Uelese Vaai, Minister of National Provident Fund

The Hon Minister moved a motion that the Assembly approves its Government Responses enlisted below:

- i. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 76, Government Responses on P.P. 2023/2024 No. 1
- ii. P.P. 2023/2024 No. 77, Government Responses on P.P. 2023/2024 No. 2

Proceedings were set aside at 10:30am and resumed at 11:00am.

MOTION TO CHANGE SITTING HOURS:

Afioga Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa - Prime Minister & Leader of the House.

The Leader of the House moved a motion to set aside Standing Order 32 to allow the House to continue its proceedings if by 12pm they have yet considered all the reports under the Orders of the Day; however, if by 1pm the House has yet considered all the reports, the Assembly will adjourn and will continue on the next Parliament Sitting; motion was seconded and approved.

5. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 105, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2022/2023 No. 26, Accident Compensation Corporation Annual Report for Financial Year 2020/2021.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 34, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 105.

Tofa ALE Vena Ale, Chairperson of the Social Sector Committee.

The Chairperson moved a motion for the Assembly to consider its Report; seconded and approved.

Afioga Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa – Minister of ACC.

The Hon Minister moved a motion for the Assembly to consider the Government Response to the Committee’s recommendations provided in its Report; seconded and approved.

Mr. Speaker opened the floor for any member who wishes to speak on the above-mentioned Reports.

(1) Susuga Hon TUILAEPA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Lepa.

The Leader of the Opposition expressed concern about the changing weather patterns and its potential impact on the population. He emphasized the significance of the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) as a vital institution holding funds to aid the public during natural disasters and emergencies. He also highlighted the resilience of certain buildings constructed using traditional methods, such as using tree branches for roofs, which have proven to withstand earthquakes compared to cement structures in other countries. The Member underscored the importance of the ACC, suggesting it as a preferable alternative to insurance due to its simpler process and greater effectiveness, particularly in cases of natural disaster-related consequences.

(2) Afioga Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Lauofo, Member for Anoamaa 2.

The Member expressed concern about the high number of deaths recorded in the report, particularly the 11 individuals who passed away during road work operations. He then suggested collaboration between the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Ministry of Health (MOH), and Emergency services to address such incidents effectively. The Member also highlighted the need for coordinated efforts among various Ministries and Offices, including the Police and Land Transport Authority (LTA), to tackle the significant issue of road accidents. He further raised concerns about the increasing number of work-related injuries and advocated for insurance coverage for affected individuals.

The Member then praised the progress on the Fugalei Market construction, noting its association with ACC and further discussed compensation for employees injured or deceased during employment, questioning provisions that may prevent some individuals from receiving benefits. He then raised the issue of retired members still contributing to ACC but not being eligible for benefits if they haven't experienced work-related accidents. In this regard, he urged the Corporation to address such concerns.

(3) Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1.

The Member commended the Committee for their thorough reports and raised a query regarding the purpose of insurance or ACC in preventing workplace injuries. He pondered the situation of individuals who are insured but have never been involved in a work-related accident. He also highlighted concerns from his Constituency regarding eligibility for benefits, suggesting that even those not currently employed should be able to contribute to and benefit from such programs. He further questioned the Committee's report on the operations of the Fugalei Market, specifically addressing the allocation of spots for overseas businesses. The Member concluded by urging the Government to reconsider and ensure adequate space for local vendors, particularly those selling pancakes and pork-buns.

(4) Afioga FUAAVA Suluimalo Amataga, Member for Aleipata Itupa i Luga.

The Member for Aleipata Itupa i Luga proposed releasing 10% of an employee's contributions from the ACC as a reward for maintaining safety throughout their employment tenure.

Tofa ALE Vena Ale, Chairperson of the Social Sector Committee.

The Chairperson acknowledged input from members for Lepa and Anoamaa 2. He also assured members who proposed providing benefits for retired employees without accident records that the Government is actively devising a plan to address this concern.

Afioga Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa, Minister of Accident Compensation Corporation.

The Hon Minister acknowledged the request for extending ACC benefits to retired employees and clarified that plans are underway to review the ACC Act to include members of the public. She further highlighted that this concern was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, emphasizing that ACC benefits are not exclusive to employers and eligible employees but also include all contributors. She then stressed the importance of these benefits in bolstering financial savings and addressing unforeseen emergencies. She also reassured members about ACC assistance to MOH, FESA, and Police, stating that the ACC consistently supports these Government Offices in maintaining public safety by procuring necessary equipment when requested.

Tofa ALE Vena Ale, Chairperson of the Social Sector Committee.

The Chairperson moved a motion that the Assembly approves the Committee's Report noted below; seconded and approved.

- P.P. 2022/2023 No. 105, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2022/2023 No. 26, Accident Compensation Corporation Annual Report for Financial Year 2020/2021.

Afioga Hon FIAME Naomi Mataafa, Minister of Accident Compensation Corporation.

The Hon Minister moved a motion that the Assembly approves its Government Responses:

- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 34, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 105

6. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 65, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2020/2021, No. 72 & P.P. 2021/2022 No. 59, Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority Annual Reports 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 63, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 65

Tofa ALE Vena Ale, Chairperson of the Social Sector Committee.

The Chairperson moved a motion for the Assembly to consider the Committee's Report; seconded and approved.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Jeffrey Schuster, Minister of Samoa Fire and Emergency Services.

The Hon Minister moved a motion for the Assembly to consider the Governments Response to the Committee's recommendations provided in its Report; seconded and approved.

Mr. Speaker opened the floor for any member who wishes to speak on the above-mentioned Reports.

(1) Afioga LEANA Ronnie Posini, Member for Safata 1.

The Member expressed appreciation for the continuous efforts of FESA in serving the country. He then reiterated his previous request for a Fire Service department in his Constituency to address fire accidents in the area given the distance that fire trucks have to travel to reach accidents such as past incidents where buildings couldn't be saved due to fire services being too far away. He further mentioned the availability of land for constructing a fire station in his Constituency if the opportunity arises and recommended establishing additional fire station branches in other Constituencies to expedite emergency response in rural areas.

(2) Afioga Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufofo, Member for Anoamaa 2.

The Member for Anoamaa 2 acknowledged the Authority's dedication and its round-the-clock service aimed at ensuring public safety. He further emphasized the importance of implementing fire-prevention measures and equipment in public spaces such as schools, Offices, and hospitals, and stressed the need for proactive safety measures. The Member also praised the Committee's report on the donation of fire trucks from Japan and advocated for a fire truck equipped with a tall ladder to effectively address emergencies in tall buildings within urban areas. He then highlighted FESA's request for fire trucks as part of their partnership with Japan and recommended the replacement and renewal of old fire trucks noted in the report. He further highlighted the request FESA put forth for public transportation which he finds uncertain regarding its necessity for FESA's operation but perceived that it could be considered as a potential enhancement for FESA's service.

(3) Susuga Hon TUILAEPFA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi, Leader of the Opposition and Member for Lepa.

The Leader of Opposition commended the Minister and FESA for their invaluable service to the country and acknowledged the significance of fire truck donations from overseas nations, citing past fire incidents in town to underscore the importance of such assistance. He then emphasized the necessity of acquiring a specialized fire truck for urban areas, particularly for tall buildings akin to those at Faleolo Airport.

He then recalled a past incident involving oil tank fires where town-based trucks were insufficient and stressed the need for larger trucks in Apia, especially for major incidents. The Member then urged the Minister of FESA to organize fire prevention training sessions at offices and organizations to equip individuals with the knowledge to contain fires before FESA's arrival.

He also emphasized the importance of installing mini fire extinguishers at these locations for immediate use.

Furthermore, the Leader of Opposition recommended ensuring an adequate supply of Monoammonium phosphate chemical for fire extinguishers to facilitate swift responses to future emergencies. He also urged emergency vehicle drivers to exercise caution while driving and suggested safety measures such as sounding their horns to alert other drivers and for the public vehicles to yield to emergency vehicles on the road.

(4) Afioga FUAAVA Suluimalo Amataga, Member for Aleipata itupa i lalo

The Member recalled 3 fire incidents in the past years that was a major lesson for everyone. He mentioned a special chemical used to put out fire and stated that there should always be enough resources so that the Authority is able to carry out safety work during emergency situations. The Member also recommended continuing with fire drills and trainings for all Offices on how to operate a fire extinguisher and ensure that they have a safety plan in case of fire emergencies.

(5) Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauiliili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1

The Member requested to the Minister whether there is any chance a fire station can be built at his constituency specifically at the approved land in Vaialele. He also noted that it would be beneficial to have a fire station close to the Fagalii Airport noting that there is always a fire truck on stand-by at the Faleolo Airport thus, the same should be considered for the Fagalii Airport. Lastly, the Member requested insurance coverage to be paid for FESA employees given the risky nature of their job.

- **Tofa ALE Vena Ale, Chairperson for the Social Sector Committee**

The Chairperson reassured the member for Safata 1 that his request for a fire station has been noted however, this is based on Government Budget.

- **Afioga Hon. FAUALO Harry Schuster: Minister for FESA**

The Hon Minister acknowledged all members opinions and advices on the FESA report, then noted that requests for more fire trucks are currently under negotiations to ensure there is enough to service our nation. The Hon Minister asserted fire alarms and fire safety measures are enforced in all Offices and public places, inspections are also conducted by the Ministry on these to ensure safety of these places. Additionally, for gas stations that are near public places such as schools, the Minister asserted inspections are also conducted by the Ministry to determine the safety of these locations where the pumps will be placed. Moreover, the Minister reassured members requesting for fire stations at their constituencies that they are all noted. He stated that progress in on the construction of a fire station close to the Faleolo Airport area as the Fire Emergency service at Faleolo cannot cater for areas outside of the airport.

The Minister informed the member for Vaimauga 1 that the Fire Station in town should cater for his constituency too given the close proximity of the area. Thus, priority is not given for the construction of a fire station at his area as requested.

- **Tofa ALE Vena Ale Chairperson for the Social Sector Committee**

The Chairperson moved a motion for the Assembly to approve their committee reports, motion seconded and *Approved*.

P.P. 2022/2023 No. 65, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2020/2021, No. 72 & P.P. 2021/2022 No. 59, Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority Annual Reports 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.

Afioga Hon FAUALO Harry Jeffrey Schuster: Minister of SFESA

The Hon Minister moved a motion for the Assembly to approve the Government Responses for the Committee Reports, Motion was seconded and Approved

P.P. 2023/2024 No. 63, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 65

7. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 154, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 50, National University of Samoa Annual Report 2021/2022.

- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 65, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 154

8. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 106, Report of the Social Sector Committee on the P.P. 2020/2021, No. 71 & P.P. 2021/2022 No.30, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Annual Reports 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.

- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 98, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 10

9. P.P. 2022/2023 No. 156, Report of the Social Sector Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No.74, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Annual Report 2021/2022.

- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 99, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 156

- **Tofa ALE Vena Ale Chairperson for the Social Sector Committee**

The Chairperson moved a motion for the Assembly to approve their Committee Reports; motion was seconded by Member for Faasaleleaga 2 and Aana Alofi No.3, Faasaleleaga 4; Motion Approved.

- P.P. 2022/2023 No. 154, Social Sector Committee Report on the P.P. 2022/2023, No. 50, National University of Samoa Annual Report 2021/2022.
- P.P. 2022/2023 No. 106, Report of the Social Sector Committee on the P.P. 2020/2021, No. 71 & P.P. 2021/2022 No.30, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Annual Reports 2019/2020 & 2020/2021.
- P.P. 2022/2023 No. 156, Report of the Social Sector Committee on the P.P. 2022/2023, No.74, Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture Annual Report 2021/2022.

- **Afioga Hon SEUULA Ioane; Minister of MESC and NUS**

moved a motion for the House to approve Government Responses for the Committee Reports, seconded by: Minister of MAF, MCIT and MOH approved.

- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 65, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 154
- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 98, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 10
- P.P. 2023/2024 No. 99, Government Responses on P.P. 2022/2023 No. 156

Mr. Speaker opened the floor for any member who wished to speak on the above mentioned reports and Government Responses.

(1) Afioga LEAANA Ronnie Posini, Member for Safata 1

The Member acknowledged the NUS for their continual service through the provision of quality education for our students. He further reiterated the importance of the Maritime School especially as it teaches our local maritime students on International Maritime standards. He then queried the Minister whether the accumulator machine has arrived as it is important for the students at Maritime school. He also queried the Chairman on the recommendation regarding the pre-requisite for the Faculty of Education program whether it is an increase or decrease so to address the shortage of teachers issues. Furthermore, the Member also queried the quality of water supply in schools as he noted this is a major cause of sickness to students and he sought clarification which schools are using Government water supply and which are using private water supply to ensure the safety of children.

(2) Tofa Hon LAUOFO Fonotoe Nuafesili Pierre Laufo, Member for Anoamaa 2

The Member queried the funds allocated for the maritime school as he noted the school requires several maintenance works given that it is an important development and investment for the country. He then touched on the \$200 reduction from registration (enrollment fee) which has been transferred to the cost of course fees. The Member recommended if this \$200 tala is deducted then it should not be added onto another aspect of learning as it does not help alleviate the financial burden on students and their families. The Member also commended the report of MESC as it also includes the issue regarding the SchoolNet Broadband Highway and asserted the need to improve school connectivity as internet is crucial in teaching students on subjects that cannot be taught by several teachers. The member mentioned the availability of retired teachers to continue teaching as this can also assist with the shortage of teachers issue.

(3) Afioga SULAMANAIA Fetaiai Tauilili Tuivasa, Member for Vaimauga 1

The Member advised the Government to consider increasing salaries for teachers as a way to address the shortage of teachers experienced by schools. Also recommends the signing of a 'bond' between teachers and schools to ensure teachers can continue teaching for a few years before they can move or change careers. The Member requested to the Minister for NUS to consider exempting Vaimauga 1 students from being penalized if their fees are not paid by the required time, as they will eventually pay once the funds from their 1million is received. The Member also queried the Minister whether there were any changes in the relationship between a school and the Constituency Committee as he noted assistance from the Committee to schools

are essential however there have been concerns that Principals are claiming that they do not have a say in school matters.

(4) Tofa LEALAILEPULE Rimoni Aiafi, Member for Faleata 3

The Member queried the rate at which the NUS TV is being operated given that it is now being commercialized; furthermore, he commented on one of the Committee's recommendations that encouraged the development of cultural sports by stating that schools should instead focus on the development of internationally recognized sports so our local players can be recognized overseas. The Member recommended that the Compulsory Education Act should be enforced for all hours to avoid young people selling goods at night. The Member believes that this Act is currently ineffective because it only prohibits kids from selling goods during school hours while he believes the time should not be limited to school hours only.

(5) Susuga Hon. TUILAEPA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr. Sailele Malielegaoi: Leader of the Opposition

The Hon member commended the Committee and respective Minister and the CEO for their works. He then requested if the Ministry could release funds distributed to each school instantly as it is required by Church Schools as he noted these funds are only released by May or June.

The Leader of the Opposition also touched on the scholarship at NUS, as he preferred that these scholarships should have been advertised before enrolment began, as this can be a way to motivate students to study harder to reach the required marks to attain such scholarships. The Hon Member also queried the progress of the library that was planned to be built on the NUS Campus as it is essential as it will consist of technologies that will allow students to access other libraries across the globe. Furthermore, he suggested reviewing policies regarding teachers who have retired but they still have the expertise and knowledge, to allow these teachers to continue teaching so as to address the shortage of teacher's issue faced by the country. Regarding Sports, the Member commended Government with their assistance in this sector and asserted to continue with sports programs in schools at a young level so to develop the talent of the young generation so they can be selected to represent the country in the future.

• **Tofa ALE Vena Ale: Chairperson for Social Committee Sector**

The Chairperson acknowledged all members who gave opinions and feedback on their committee reports. He reassured the Member for Safata 1 that all schools have access to clean water supply. In terms of the increase in money spent on Auditing NUS Financial Statements between the reported period, the Chairperson noted that the difference is because of the workload by NUS which has also increased the task of the Audit Office.

On the issue of teacher shortage, the Chairperson stated that this is an ongoing issue faced by the country and mentioned that majority of individuals who pursue a career as a teacher tend to seek employment under the RSE scheme. The same goes to students who return after their scholarships, they tend to seek employment elsewhere. The Chairperson reassured the Member for Faleata 1 that the NUS TV continues operate under the same license and rate.

- **Afioga Hon SEUULA Ioane: Minister of MESC and NUS**

The Minister commended the Social Sector Committee for their consideration of the Annual Reports for the National University of Samoa and the Ministry of Education highlighting that their recommendations and findings are of crucial importance to improve the operations of NUS and MESC. In terms of requests to improve internet connection in schools, the Minister reassured members that the Ministry in partnership with MCIT is working towards establishing a committee that will thoroughly look into this matter.

In addition, the Minister continued to reassure members that the Ministry and PSC are working on a plan to attract students in choosing teaching as a career path. He also noted that teachers starting rate is 31k per annum, which is a good incentive to attract students to pursue this profession. The Hon Minister also touched on the matter of teachers teaching subjects which they do not have the necessary degree or knowledge, (for instance science) as mentioned by one of the Members. The Minister asserted that science was a compulsory subject throughout primary up until college therefore there is some formal basic knowledge that we have attained throughout those years. He then assured Members that the Ministry is looking at other incentives to attract students to take science.

- **Susuga Hon. TUILAEPA Fatialofa Lupesoliai Dr Sailele Malielegaoi: Leader of Opposition**

The Opposition Leader noted that the underlying cause of the teacher shortage in Samoa is due to students becoming more specialized in specific subjects towards the completion of their college years and going forward when pursuing higher education. Thus, advised teachers to focus on informing students about all subjects and pre-requisites for different fields and units to take when interested in a specific career.

- **Afioga Hon SEUULA Ioane: Minister of MESC and NUS**

The Hon Minister acknowledged the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker announced that Parliament has reached its adjournment time, and therefore stated that proceedings will reconvene next week Tuesday on the 19 March.

Proceedings were adjourned at 1:10pm and will reconvene on Tuesday 19th March, 2024 at 9:30am.