



**Waitangi Day Speech by Nick Hurley, Acting New
Zealand High Commissioner
New Zealand's Residence in Samoa
6 February 2019**

Reverend Siasia Salesulu

Your Highnesses, the Head of State and Masiofo

The Acting Prime Minister of Samoa Hon Fiame Naomi Mata'afa

Honourable Cabinet Ministers

The Honourable Chief Justice and Members of Judiciary

The Honourable Speaker and Members of Parliament

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Distinguished Guests

Fellow New Zealanders, including our newest citizens from this morning's citizenship ceremony

Ladies and gentlemen

**E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi o te motu
Naumai, haeremai
Tena koutou katoa**

I am delighted you are all here this evening to celebrate with us Waitangi Day, New Zealand's national day. Today marks one hundred and seventy-nine years since the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, the document which founded New Zealand as a modern nation.

The Treaty provides a framework for the continuing partnership between the New Zealand Government and Maori. Waitangi Day is generally a festive time, a time to enjoy family and community events, which is why we are here this evening.

However, as you may be aware, Waitangi Day attracts debate about national identity in New Zealand. It is very much a time to reflect on our past, to celebrate shared achievements, and to look to the future we want to create together.

But the Treaty of Waitangi and its relevance is not confined to New Zealand's own life story. That sense of genuine partnership between New Zealand and Māori is reflected in New Zealand's relationship with the Pacific, and notably with Samoa with whom we have the Treaty of Friendship dating back to 1962.

One Samoan academic has even compared New Zealand's relations with Samoa under the Treaty of Friendship as similar to New Zealand's relations with Maori under the Treaty of Waitangi.

That may be taking the comparison a bit too far. But the reality today is that outside the special relationship New Zealand has with the Realm Countries, our relationship with Samoa is the closest of any of our Pacific ties.

You have only to think about the more than 140,000 Samoans living in New Zealand, and the contribution they have been making to New Zealand society, to understand how close we are entwined as peoples by history and geography.

Our shared history goes back to the spectacular voyaging that took place over thousands of years across the Pacific – well before Europeans first made their tentative voyages into Te Moananui a Kiwa.

It has continued in more recent times through the twentieth century including the transition back to independence in 1962. Some of those shared moments have been painful, as we know. But like the relationship between the Crown and Māori, it takes wisdom and courage to build partnerships and find a path through difficult issues. The closeness of our relationship enables us to deal in that way with differences that occur from time to time.

And through that relationship, both Samoa and New Zealand have been changed.

And it is not just in sporting prowess. All the world knows of the amazing achievements of your sports women and men, some of them playing for the All Blacks and for the Black Ferns.

Many of New Zealand's national and international achievements reflect the contribution of highly talented Samoans – whether in sport, the arts, literature, film-making, music, business or a host of other areas. You also have Samoan leaders in the New Zealand government. The number of iconic Samoans on the international stage is too numerous to list.

My point is that these success-stories are as much Samoan as they are New Zealand. They are real, shared achievements.

Which takes me back to the partnership principles of the Treaty of Waitangi as New Zealand's founding document, which demands principled action, respectful communication and commitment to high ideals.

The spirit of the Treaty of Waitangi we are celebrating today means a shared understanding and respect for different cultures, united by our common values.

Those same principles underpin New Zealand's relationship with Samoa — one that is exemplified by the shared history, experiences and successes that are the threads of partnership.

We see that principle of equal partnership in the way New Zealand engages with Samoa, whether it's in regional or international organisations, or through the New Zealand Aid Programme, or with the New Zealand Defence Force and Police, or with our volunteers or with the wider community groups from Aotearoa.

We share the vision of helping to make Samoa, and the Pacific region, a safer and prosperous place for us all.

It's why when there is lots talk about partnerships in the region, New Zealand can say that our partnership with Samoa is both substantive and permanent.

It is why our two Governments have been meeting in Waitangi this week to renew their commitment to partnership in all areas of our relationship.

At that meeting held yesterday between the Prime Minister of Samoa and the New Zealand Minister for Foreign Affairs, both Governments agreed a Statement of Partnership based on the Treaty of Friendship and the five key principles of the Pacific Reset, namely:

Understanding, friendship, mutual benefit, collective ambition and sustainability. They reaffirmed the shared values at the heart of our partnership and committed to build deeper connections.

Specifically, New Zealand and Samoa identified the following areas for ongoing cooperation:

Partnership — sharing our knowledge and experience

Climate Change — recognising this global issue greatly impacts the Pacific

Security — working towards a safer Pacific community

People — our people and history are closely entwined

Prosperity — fostering regional trade and resilient economies.

As that joint Statement highlights:

He waka eke noa — We are all in the waka together

'O le fogava'a e tasi — We are all the same family

Before I propose the traditional toast, I want to highlight that Deputy High Commissioner, Mike Walsh is completing his term here and is returning in a few days to Wellington after three and a half years. This has been Mike's second posting which means he has a deep understanding of Samoa and he has developed an extensive network of contacts and friends, which we have relied upon and which we will miss. So tonight is also a farewell to him and Tricia. We wish them all the best for their next assignment.

I also want to introduce Mike's replacement, Huw Thomas and his partner Sophie Kaldermis. I know you'll enjoy their company and will look after them well during their time in Samoa.

And finally, I cannot conclude without noting that Christine and I will be leaving Samoa — a second time — at the end of this month. We have had a wonderful time being back among friends in a place that has been our favourite posting. We will miss Samoa and can only hope we have another chance to come back.

I would now like to give you a toast to celebrate Waitangi Day and the relationship between New Zealand and Samoa. Please join me in raising your glasses.

To His Highness, the Head of State, and to the Government and people of the Independent State of Samoa.

May our relationship continue to thrive and prosper over the coming years.

No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa.