



**STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, FIAME NAOMI
MATA' AFA AT 109th SESSION OF THE ACP COUNCIL OF
MINISTERS 21-22 May 2019, Brussels**

**Mr Chairman,
Honourable Ministers,
Secretary-General of the ACP Group,
Your Excellencies,**

I bring greetings from my Prime Minister, Honourable Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi. He regrets not being able to join you today but send his best wishes for a successful Council meeting.

My last Council meeting was in Lome, Togo in May last year. That was a historical occasion for it was where we approved the ACP negotiating mandate for our engagement with the EU for a post-Cotonou Agreement. I am glad I made that trip for I have heard so much about the birthplace of the Lomé Convention but never had the privilege of being in Lomé.

Today marks another significant juncture in our shared journey as the ACP family to secure for our people and communities real and sustainable development. As a Group, we pride ourselves on our unity and solidarity as principled vehicles for securing our common aspirations and objectives. We are also a family that draws our strength and visibility by recognising and embracing our diversity and the richness of our cultures.

By this decision of Council, member states of the ACP have bestowed on the Pacific region, and in particular my country Samoa, the honour and privilege to host the signing ceremony for the post-Cotonou Treaty. The Pacific region has always been conscious of its role and place within our family. We have played our part and where appropriate demonstrate our full and unconditional commitment and support of our Group.

On behalf of my Prime Minister and the people of Samoa, I therefore wish to thank all member states of the ACP family, most sincerely, for your support. The approval of Council is a clear demonstration of the unity and solidarity of our Group and augurs well for the serious business ahead as we move to conclude our negotiations with the EU.

I would also like to acknowledge with deep appreciation the decisions by the other four candidate countries to stand aside in favour of Samoa. Thank you.

Let me assure you all that Samoa will not disappoint in its preparations for the signing ceremony. I said this in the full knowledge and confidence in the undertaking made by Samoa's Prime Minister, when he appeared before the Committee of Ambassadors in April last year. We look forward to welcoming you all and for the opportunity to demonstrate Samoan hospitality for which we are known in the Pacific region.

Let me also acknowledge with gratitude the support of the Pacific member states and in particular Fiji in our collective efforts to secure the signing ceremony in the Pacific region.

I thank you - soifua.