

**Draft Statement by the Hon. Olo Afoa Fiti Vaai, Minister for Works,
Transport & Infrastructure
At the Second Global Sustainable Transport Conference**

Convened by the United Nations Secretary-General

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Theme: Sustainable Transport, Sustainable development

Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Samoa welcomes the convening of this Second United Nations Global Sustainable Transport Conference and commends the Government of the People's Republic of China for hosting.

Despite the challenges of the current COVID19 situation, I am pleased we are able to join virtually, to contribute to an issue of high priority for a Small Island Developing State like Samoa. With the current climate crisis and pandemic, we have a commitment to ensure a resilient planet and healthy people. We have a commitment to responsible and sustainable economic and social development of our respective countries. We recognize also the strengths of collectivism in highlighting our common issues and promoting innovation to find solutions to meet the challenges we face.

That is what brings us together to such forums.

Distinguished delegates, the impetus and drivers for the forum are clear. Transport, in all its modes, are a vital part of our development agendas at all levels. It enables access for trade, employment, education and health care. But at the same time, we must ensure that we follow a sustainable transportation agenda and that we are able to manage its environment footprint.

In anticipation of a forward-looking visionary statement and a call to action as an outcome of this meeting, we reiterate that there is no greater challenge confronting the global community than that of climate change caused by our greenhouse gas emissions. It is about action for survival now, not later, and we must shoulder our collective responsibilities.

In this regard, Samoa has submitted its **Second Nationally Determined Contributions** (NDCs), with clear targets for specific emissions reductions by 2030, including in the area of transport. We reiterate the call on all parties to commit to updated and more ambitious **NDCs** in order to meet the **Paris Agreement** promise.

We reiterate that **Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** remain a special case for sustainable development, in particular for sustainable transport development, due to the unique and particular vulnerabilities we face.

Samoa, as a SIDS, also strives for safety, affordability, accessibility, efficiency and resilience in the development of our transport infrastructure and services, whilst minimizing harmful emissions and environmental impacts. But too often, these basic standards and

principles for development appear as lofty unattainable aspirations, in the face of the inherent vulnerabilities we have such as, geographical isolation and diseconomies of scale which are further compounded by the disproportionate impact of emissions and climate change.

Whilst many of our Developed State parties are capitalizing on innovations in science and technology to better manage urban traffic and congestion, Samoa on the other hand, like many **SIDS**, must deal with meeting basic infrastructure that meets the transport and mobility needs of our growing population. At the same time, we must also take account for the resilience challenges brought on by climate change.

We may be at different ends of the development spectrum as our Developed partners, but no less is our determination to play our part.

We are raising our road levels and developing alternative inland routes in anticipation of population shifts away from the fast eroding coastal areas. We are rebuilding bridges to cater for more frequent, stronger and unprecedented higher water levels.

We know our highly disproportionate reliance on imports means our aviation and especially maritime transport modes are critical to our economy and livelihoods. Our focus is on upgrading our main international maritime gateway port, in response to changing sea conditions and severe breakwater damage. Similarly, our main international airport is set to undergo targeted needed improvements, to address safety and resilience to rising sea levels.

The strengthening of institutional and policy frameworks are essential, to gain the full benefits of Sustainable Transport Development in meeting our socio-economic, and environmental development needs.

Likewise, we strive for the benefits that investment in road safety, life-cycle asset management and maintenance, and in applying social and environmental safeguards in the development of transport infrastructure, can yield.

Collectively, we need to aim for more carbon neutral and eco-friendly airports, ports and conveyance vessels, whether they be aircraft, ships or cars. We must emphatically acknowledge that Developing Countries should not be the dumping ground for low cost high emitting old transport aircraft, ships, cars and parts.

Distinguished delegates, we acknowledge with appreciation the contributions by member States to climate financing and the bilateral and multilateral assistance of all our Development Partners to help us realise an ambitious **Sustainable Transport Development** agenda. Such collective cooperation ensures that we have the capacity to support the mobility needs of our societies, in a manner that would have the least damaging impacts on the environment and does not impair the mobility needs of future generations.

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