

INDIA-SAMOA BILATERAL RELATIONS

India has always had cordial relations with Samoa. The two countries are bound together by membership of the Commonwealth as well as cooperation in different international fora. Some Indian professionals working with multilateral agencies and a few teachers on bilateral contract are working in Samoa. Government of India is also providing regular economic and technical assistance to Samoa. As per available information, about 25 PIOs are settled in Samoa. Like last year with the assistance of Government of Samoa, High Commission of India organized Yoga demonstration on the occasion of the International Day of Yoga in Apia, Samoa on 18 June 2016.

Recent visits:

2. At the invitation of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Samoan PM Hon Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, led a 5-member delegation to the 2nd Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation (FIPIC), held at Jaipur on August 21, 2015. One journalist from Samoa visited India from August 17-24, 2015, as part of the familiarization trip organized by XP Division, MEA, during the 2nd FIPIC Summit. A four-member delegation led by the Prime Minister of Samoa Hon Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi also attended the First Pacific Leaders Summit on 19 November 2014 held at Suva, Fiji along with thirteen other Head of Governments, or designated political representatives of the Pacific island countries.

3. Samoan Prime Minister Hon Tuilaepa Lufesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, accompanied by Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Mr. Aiono Mose P. Sua and, Chief Executive officer for Finance, Central Bank, Mr. Iulai Lavea, visited India for the Asia Leadership Programme on Sustainable Development and Climate Change. The event, coordinated by the Asia Development Bank, was held at New Delhi from 2-5 February 2013.

3. **SIDS conference:** Samoa hosted the third SIDS (Small Islands Developing States) conference in Apia from 1-4 September 2014. India contributed US\$250000/- to the UN Trust Fund to support the Conference. Most of the SIDS (39) were represented at the level of Head of State/Government. The 3rd SIDS Conference was an effort to assess the progress of the SIDS countries and Millennium Development programme. A high-level Indian delegation also participated in the SIDS Conference and reiterated India's commitment towards development of Pacific countries.

4. The 5th Commonwealth Youth Games were held in Apia, Samoa from 5th to 11th September 2015. A 33-member contingent from India participated in eight sports disciplines. The athletes were in the age group of 14 – 18 years.

5. Hon'ble Faumuina Tiatia Faaolatane Liuga, Minister of Finance, led the Samoan delegation to the 46th Annual meeting of the Board of Governors of ADB, at New Delhi from 2-5 May 2013.

6. At the invitation of Ms. Krishna Tirath, Hon'ble Minister of State (IC), MOW&CD, Hon. Gatoloaifaana Amataga Gidlow, Associate Minister for Women,

Community and Social Development, represented Samoa at the Second High Level Meeting on South- South Cooperation for Child Rights in Asia and the Pacific held in New Delhi in October 2013.

7. Indian State Assembly delegations visited Samoa for participation in the 23rd Commonwealth Parliamentary Seminar in Apia from 24 to 30 May 2012. Samoan Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Agriculture Store Cooperation visited India in July 2012 for the 45th COCOTECH APCC meeting, held at Cochin. Appreciating the developments in our coconut sector, especially advancements in processing technology by Coconut Development Board, the Minister expressed a keen desire to forge a close relationship between the two countries in this area and to avail of the technologies in plant protection and processing from India. The Samoan Agriculture Minister again visited Kochi from 2-5 February 2015 to attend the Ministerial Meeting of the 51st Asian & Pacific Coconut Community.

8. The Indian Naval training ship, INS Tarangini, visited Samoa in January 2004.

Indian assistance to Samoa:

9. Samoa depends substantially on overseas assistance/aid. Compared to other major donor countries, Indian assistance has been modest, however, following the Pacific Leaders Summit convened by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India in Fiji in November 2014, it has been decided to increase the annual Grant-in-Aid for Samoa to US\$200,000.

10. Three Dialysis Machines were supplied to Samoa at a cost of NZ\$ 122669.71 in September 2006 under bilateral assistance. The Samoan government had requested for donation of three more machines in 2007 which were delivered in March 2008 (at a cost of NZ\$ 66316.74 (US\$ 50785.90) out of the grant-in-aid of 2006). Samoa has also requested for replacement of 3 dialysis machines every two years. An amount of NZ\$ 65029.60 was provided to Samoa as grant-in-aid in 2009 for funding the purchase of six portable reverse Osmosis systems for the National Kidney Foundation. Three dialysis machines, one blood volume monitor and one temperature monitor were supplied to Samoa in May 2011 at a cost of NZ\$ 80,120. As of 2016-17, an amount of US\$ 1,308,108.65 was available as unutilized Grant-in-aid, as no tangible development project proposals have been submitted by Samoa.

11. **ITEC:** Samoa keenly participates in training programmes under ITEC, including in the field of Information Technology, small scale enterprises, financial management, and other areas of mutual interest. One of their officials has been trained at the National Institute of Small Industry Extension Training (NISIET), Hyderabad in 2007. Two of their officials also attended the TERI workshop on sustainable development conducted for the Pacific Island Countries (PIC) in Fiji in 2007. Four Samoan diplomats have so far been trained at Professional Courses for Foreign Diplomats at FSI, in 2003, 2006, 2007 and 2013 respectively. Two officers from the Samoan Foreign Office attended a short-term Course for Diplomats of PIC organized by FSI at Nadi in January 2011. A Samoan diplomat attended the FSI's special training programme for Commonwealth diplomats in New Delhi in March 2011. Two officers from the Samoan Foreign Office attended a short-term Course for Diplomats of PIC organized by FSI at Nadi from 4 to 8 May 2015.

12. During 2012-13, nine out of fifteen slots allotted to Samoa under the ITEC programme were utilised while during 2013-14, only five out of sixteen ITEC slots were utilized by Samoa. For the year 2014-15, India has again earmarked 16 ITEC slots and 08 slots were utilized by Samoa. Ministry has allocated 16 slots for Samoa for the year 2015-16, of which seven slots were utilized, in 2016-17, 16 ITEC slots have been allotted and out of that 9 have already been utilized and rest are under process.

Economic and Commercial opportunities:

13. Although there are no immediate business prospects in Samoa, the possibility of strengthening India's business and commercial presence in this small island country in infrastructure, public health and tourism sectors could be considered. That Samoa is an active member of the Small Island Group of Pacific Countries and has been extending support for India's candidates in international fora and also at the UN on issues of concern to us, vindicates our continued support and assistance for this country.

14. Hon'ble PM announced the opening of the FIPIC Trade Office in FICCI premises at New Delhi in his speech during the 2nd FIPIC Summit. The Trade Office, named 'FIPIC Business Accelerator' was formally launched on September 7, 2015. The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has also set up an exclusive department for promoting trade with Pacific Island Countries, at its headquarters in New Delhi.

15. Consequent to the decisions taken at the two FIPIC Summits, Government of India has approved grant of gratis e-TV to nationals of 14 Pacific Islands Countries including Niue. Other proposals which are currently being pursued for implementation are: deputation of ITEC experts, setting up of Tele-medicine centre, and supply of medicines by Indian Pharma PSUs directly to PICs subject to relaxed regulatory approvals. Samoa has agreed to establish Centre of Excellence in IT (CEIT) with the assistance of India at the National University of Samoa.

Future prospects:

16. Mission has been continuously pursuing cooperation in various areas such as telemedicine, e-education, sourcing of pharmaceuticals from India, and also regarding stepping up of mutual cooperation in agriculture, disaster management and climate change.

(December 2016)