



OMBUDSMAN
— NHRI SAMOA

OMBUDSMAN OPENING REMARKS

Apia, 7 November 2018 – *SFA UPR FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP*

Talofa and welcome everyone!

FIRSTLY, let me thank the President of SFA, Alex Su'a and the Association for hosting yet another very important and timely event on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) reporting cycle.

I applaud the proactive approach by SFA in carrying out this UPR mid-term review not only to highlight their important work in response to recommendations by the UN Equality and Non-discrimination Committee but also to understand and seek guidance from its partners in preparation for Samoa's 3rd UPR Reporting Cycle in 2020-2021. This workshop is also very important as it will greatly contribute to Samoa's National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

UPR is unique process which involves a periodic peer review of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The ultimate goal of the UPR is the improvement of the human rights situation in every country with significant consequences for people around the globe. It is designed to prompt, support, and expand the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground. To achieve this, the UPR involves assessing States' human rights records and addressing human rights violations wherever they occur. Today's workshop is therefore an important initiative by SFA to review and discuss recommendations (specifically those relating to the rights of the SFA community) by the Human Rights Council in response to Samoa's UPR Report submitted in 2016, which will ultimately contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation of the Samoa and the SFA community.

The SFA community have been human rights champions for a long time and it is important to acknowledge this history. They are a legitimate group of our society in which NHRI Samoa has a genuine interest to promote and to protect their human rights. We as human beings and as Samoans are ALL entitled to such rights.

SFA has always taken a cautious approach with its advocacy work where it has kept a firm eye on local context and ensured that its work is consistent and upholds the cultural and religious values of Samoa. Such approach has been very successful for the group allowing for greater tolerance and a consolidation of their acceptance by society. This approach is one of an effective best practice which we as well as the world can learn from.

As we engage in discussions today, I strongly encourage that we all contribute and share our views to assist and guide SFA in its work to further promote and protect the rights of the SFA community.

LASTLY, NHRI Samoa through the kind assistance of the Asia Pacific Forum for NHRIs (APF) is happy to work in partnership with SFA and support this important workshop. I have no doubt that the outcome of today's gathering will be of great benefit and use not only to the work of SFA, but also it will greatly assist the overall development of Samoa in its protection and promotion of human rights.

Faafetai ma ia manuia le fonotaga!