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Pacific Regional Seminar on the Implementation of the Second
International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism:
Priorities for the remainder of the Decade

Bandung, Indonesia

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(American Samoa)

DISCUSSION PAPER

DEPARTMENT OF PARLIAMENTS

STATEMENT
BEFORE THE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE CITIZENSHIP

AND THE

FRANCHISE ACTS

DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF

INDONESIA

TO

COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

Tufele Li'amatua's Statement
Before the
Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the
Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples
General Assembly – United Nations

This once in a life time opportunity to participate in the Special Committee on the
Independence of French Polynesia and the
people of the Territory of American Samoa acknowledges with much appreciation the

Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism and

given issues of unique circumstances which might not fit the ultimate envisioned product
of decolonization. For example, the recently completed report of the 2006 American
Samoa Political Status Study Commission issued last year recommended the
reaffirmation of our current political status and relationship with the United States in the
form of an "unorganized and unincorporated" Territory. This recommendation will be
placed before the people of American Samoa for a decision. There is an additional caveat

United States with the intention that an organized political status will be the
one will operate. This issue will be addressed further.

American Samoa

American Samoa is an "unorganized and unincorporated" Territory of the United States
located at 14 degrees south latitude and about 170 degrees west longitude. The Territory
consists of seven (7) tropical islands and is the only U.S. soil located south of the equator.
American Samoa comprises the eastern islands of the Samoan group. American Samoa is
about 2,300 miles southwest of Hawaii, over 4,100 miles southwest of San Francisco and
about 1,600 miles northeast of New Zealand.

Seven (7) American Samoa islands are dispersed over 130 miles of water. The capital
of American Samoa is Pago Pago, located on Tutuila, the main island of the group.
Tutuila has a land area of approximately 56 square miles and is home to over 85 percent

best protected in the South Pacific. The total land area for all the islands is 76 square

Tutuila, the Manu'a Islands, consisting of Ofu, Olapaga, and Tolu and located about 60

hundred miles north of Tutuila.

The location of these islands in the path of the trade winds which bring in about 60 percent during most of the year. Average annual rainfall is 200 inches, the heaviest rains occurring between December and March.

The mountainous terrain of American Samoa, along with the heavy annual rainfall, has an impact on agriculture and the food supply. The main determinant of land use is topography and only about one third of the land in American Samoa is level or nearly level, with only tough jungle vegetation.

American Samoa's Social Structure

Hawaiians, Maoris, Toggans, and Tahitians. Despite the strong influence of Western industrial culture, the Samoans are generally more conscious in holding on to our traditions and culture. American Samoans still have the idea of extended family as the basic unit of society. The family is the center of all life and all of the and fraternal bonds members contribute to the well-being of the group. Each individual has duties to perform from the infant through to the senior citizen. The most elementary tasks carried out by the children. The family group also owns land, and it is estimated that about 94% of the total land acreage in American Samoa is communal family land.

American Samoa's Political Structure

In 1900 the people of Tutuila and American Samoa entered into a formal treaty of cession with the United States. In 1904, King Tuimano'a Eleasa of Manu'a executed a treaty of cession

...the governments of the Manu Islands to the United States. The U.S. Navy
...operations. In 1951, administrative responsibility was transferred by Executive Order to

...because not all provisions of the U.S. Constitution apply to the Territory. It is
unorganized because the U.S. Congress has not provided the territory with an "organic
act" which would create a representative government. Instead, the
U.S. Congress gave plenary authority over the territory to the President of the United
States who has delegated the authority to the Department of the Interior. The Department of
the Interior allowed American Samoa to draft our own constitution under which our
government now functions.

American Samoans are not United States Citizens but are classified as United States
Samoans can serve in the Armed Forces of the United States. However, American
Samoans cannot vote for the President of the United States.

It has been said that the Territory of American Samoa was never ceded to its
inciner possessions because its acquisition was not a product of negotiation or from the
distribution of the spoils of war. It is well documented in the history books that the chief
representative commission to the United States, 1871, sent a declaration to the United States
distribution of the Samoan islands was determined by the Washington Convention Treaty
signed by the United States and Great Britain in 1899. The two treaties orchestrated by
the outcome of the Washington Convention, and the inherent belief that the islands were
incorporation in see that the aspirations of the people of American Samoa are fully realized.

The United States' actions were purely motivated by its desire to lay claim on the most

naturally protected harbor in the entire Pacific. Sadly its interest, particular to improving the quality of life for the inhabitants of the islands, was not as compelling.

American Samoa's Economy

The primary economy of American Samoa consists of government activities (about one-third of the total workforce) and the remaining one-third of employed workers is in the secondary economy, which

consists mainly of retail and service enterprises. Many firms in the secondary economy provide goods and services to the canneries. The economy of the Territory has not

replicate the success of the canneries in the Territory. The continued presence of the

minimum wage escalation of 50 cents in the Territory's minimum wage which is to be continued until the U.S. minimum wage is reached. While the canneries have not made public its future plans, rumors seem to indicate that the canneries will in the short run reconfigure their operations, converting to maximum utilization of the existing loining processing technology. All of the labor intensive parts of the canning operation will be done at locations with low wages, with the final product completed in the Territory. It is

current levels. This will result economic and social losses for the people of the Territory.

This action by the U.S. Congress also handicaps the Territory from attracting foreign investment necessary for economic diversification. Moreover, the Federal Government has recalled incentive schemes which provided some level of competitive advantage to American Samoa.

The economic future of the Territory is very bleak. The absence of economic potential is in part contributive to its people's overwhelming inclination of maintaining political status quo.

Every time the question of sufficiency of our political status come up for review, in unison, the people overwhelmingly voted for status quo. The response brought no question about the fact that the territory continues to receive financial assistance from the

American Samoans could accept residence in any of the states of the United States. Except for the privilege to vote for the President of the United States, American Samoans receive the same treatment under the laws of the United States. It is natural therefore for the people of American Samoa to wish to maintain political status quo.

In spite of the overwhelming declaration by our people to maintain political status quo the make up of American Samoans which solidify and provide impetus to the desire not to pursue a different form of political status relationship with the United States. American Samoans are defined by their rich and dynamic culture which is founded on the principle

adhesive force and sustainability capacity of our culture over thousands of years is the organization to the United States, they received recognition of our desire for the

the United States Government shall acquire their lands and other property in said District, but if the said Government shall require

upon payment of a fair consideration for the land or other thing to those who may be deprived of their property on account of the desire of the Government to acquire the land

respecting the preservation of our land tenure system: "It is intended and claimed by privileges between the present residents of said Islands and citizens of the United States dwelling therein and also that the rights of the Chiefs in each village and of all people

was decided to the United States to officially accept the deeds of cessions memorialized by the passage of Title 49 of the United States Code, Sections 1661 and 1662 which provide:

"§ 1661. Islands of Tutuila, Manua, and eastern Samoa ceded to and accepted by United States Government

"(a) The cessions by certain chiefs of the islands of Tutuila and Manua and certain other islands of the Samoan group lying between the thirteenth and fifteenth degrees of latitude south of the Equator and between the one hundred and sixty-seventh and one hundred and seventy-first degrees of longitude west of Greenwich, herein referred to as the islands of eastern Samoa, are accepted, ratified and confirmed as of April 10, 1900

"(b) The public lands of the United States relative to public lands shall not apply to the islands of eastern Samoa but the Congress of the United States shall have full and complete authority over the islands of eastern Samoa. That all revenues derived from the islands of eastern Samoa shall be used solely for the benefit of the inhabitants of the islands of eastern Samoa for educational and other public purposes

"(c) Until Congress shall provide for the government of such islands, all civil, judicial such manner as the President of the United States shall direct and the President shall have power to exercise said officers and fill the vacancies as occasioned. (Feb. 20, 1900 ch 281, 45 Stat. 1253; May 22, 1929 ch. 6, 46 Stat. 4.)"

The Congress of the United States in the above cited law accepted the legitimacy of our

Indians and it is our common interest that our citizens, the Citizens to purchase land as is the case in all States of the Union.

It is the universal belief among Samoans that if this land tenure system is altered in any fashion, their culture will begin to dissipate. There is real fear therefore that if the

States has been... the current protection for land

because it will violate the basic democratic principle of equal rights. As long as there is this uncertainty, the American Samoans will continue to choose status quo. It is unlikely that the Territory of American Samoa will aggressively pursue an alternative political status. While American Samoans have acclaimed their status as Americans, they equally celebrate their uniqueness defined by its culture. This dilemma has faced the Territory of

Issues such as establishing the federal court system in American Samoa automatic U.S.

citizenship for American Samoans, allowing Samoans to register to vote, to name a few.

His being debated. Not at the end of the deliberations, the majority elects not

to do so. I am sure that American Samoans will not

sacrifice its culture and land tenure system for a change in political format which might

over 108 years and both parties seemed to tolerate the prevailing relationship defining the

relationship. Unless the land ownership

American Samoans are very concerned with its very limited economic options exacerbated by federally induced minimum wage hikes which are threatening the

direct termination of over 90% of the cannery's workforce and residual workforce

reductions in the government and the private sector. Regrettably, the demise of American Samoa's canneries is being perpetrated by federal policies. It makes very little sense that our parent country is responsible for the economic hardship that will be faced by the residents of American Samoa. Instead of improving our economic viability and long term

instability experienced by the Territory since the delegation of administrative authority to

American Samoa. The package of federal incentives which improved American Samoa's

economic development efforts. American

total land acreage is below 30 degrees slopes. These geographic attributes and lack of

with the United States despite the existing contradictions.

American Samoa Political Status Study Commission Recommendations

The 2006 American Samoa Political Status Study Commission, which I had the honor of chairing released its report on January 2, 2007. The Commission presented its main recommendation along with supporting recommendations. The main recommendation stated "American Samoa shall continue as an unorganized and unincorporated territory

Tufele Li'amatau's Statement for the Special Committee

and that a process of negotiation with the U.S. Congress for a permanent political status

1. A specially tailored Act of Congress is needed to reaffirm the special protective provisions for lands and titles in the Constitution of American Samoa.

2. Such an Act may be passed without changing the present political status

Department of the Interior, Government of the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

This... that the... status... no... satisfactory... demands of a... society

relative in the negotiation and preservation of their... security... economic considerations are... institutional... international financial institutions

international and foreign aid is not available because of the attached prohibitions being a Territory of the United States. Although there is clear acknowledgement and recognition of the insufficiency of our present political status as long as the land issue is not settled.

American Samoa will have no choice but to maintain its present political relationship with the United States. In the future, if its political journey... changes the territory's status to redefine its political status, the consent that will not be

modified or altered in the overwhelming desire of the people of American Samoa to

American Samoa's consent to its Colonial Classification

American Samoa has to be approved by the U.S. Congress before it is deemed valid. The

Department of the Interior has the absolute power over the Territory. Locally, it can annul

local elections exist, however, from the position. While the authority is given to the people to elect leaders, the federal laws have not been amended to delimit the powers of the Department of the Interior over the office of the local government. The imbalances within the internal government have not been changed to ascertain the full force of self-governing. Instead, the facade of self-governing is there, but its functionality continues to be compromised.

Irrespective of the continuing presence of these colonial attributes, which would

political status relationship with the United States. This universal acceptance of our

any political status is the degree of acceptance by the majority of the people of the area.

American Samoans are proud to be American. This pride is exhibited in every arena theater in which the United States is involved. Many American Samoans have also paid the ultimate price connected with the progression of freedoms and civil liberties enjoyed by all free countries of the world. It is therefore inevitable that American Samoans will

becoming a U.S. citizen is the status of U.S. citizens national objectives, feelings of being

listed as a continued colony of the United States. At the same time, it is by choice that we maintain our present political classification. American Samoa is a dependent country and

resource poor with limited arable land to support proper economies of scales development to become competitive in the world market or if purely to address import substitution goals. Essential investments are precluded by the cost of central cost of energy. Given these constraints, political options available to American Samoa are likewise limited.

American Samoans however, maintain its genuine appreciation to the Special Committee for been exhibited against their will. It is also our hope that the General Assembly take on

...responsibility, the development of small, essential, self-sufficient economic communities
...to later their independence, as human and economic development is total eliminated. Lack of economic

...any abuse of our human rights and civil liberties in spite claims last three years where the
Federal Bureau of Investigations handcuffed local residents and took them off the island
for assignment in defiance of local laws and jurisdictional issues.

It might be necessary for the Special Committee to recommend to the General Assembly
to provide a new definition to recognize special cases like American Samoa where the
people are fully contented and enjoying of the prevailing political status even though it

Nation's efforts towards decolonization is to ensure that all people of the world enjoy the

Thank you again for this chance to participate in this important seminar.

Afioga Tufele Li'amatua
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American Samoa