



PRESS RELEASE

American Samoa Delegation Visiting Samoa to Build on Customs matters from Atoa o Samoa Talks

The Ministry of Customs and Revenue (MCR) welcomed the delegation from American Samoa Customs this week. The visit, which was facilitated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, stemmed from the Atoa Samoa discussions held in October 2022. This was aimed at improving customs relations between the two countries and promoting open dialogue in trade facilitation, border protection, and enforcement. The objective was to discuss areas of mutual interest and explore viable solutions to common issues.

The Delegation led by the Chief of Customs in American Samoa, Mr. Elisara Elisara and comprises of five managers and officers in charge of Customs units as well as two officials from the IT team in the Treasury Department, commenced the week long visit with an introductory kick-off meeting with MCR on Monday 6th March 2023. The Delegation also attended to Parliament session of Tuesday morning, and were acknowledged by the Speaker of the fono, followed by a courtesy call with Prime Minister of Samoa, Hon. Fiamē Mataafa, and Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Tuala Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio on the same day.

From Wednesday, meetings were conducted with the Acting CEO, Management and team of MCR, Acting CEO for the Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Immigration Team and the Joint K9 Unit. The delegation had the chance to be briefed on our Immigration Border Management System and the level of coordination of Border Agencies in a number of committees, units and working groups, such as the Transnational Crimes Unit, the National Security Committee and others.

Site Visits were also carried out on passenger and cargo clearance processes at both Faleolo International Airport and Matautu International Wharf, and the team had the opportunity to visit the Joint K9 Facility at Tuanaimato, and be introduced to the newest member of the Unit, Officer Euro, our Customs K9 dog. The K9 operations was one of the key focus areas of the visit in view of the emerging border risks on smuggling narcotics and illicit substances, money laundering and counterfeit goods.

During the site visit to the Faleolo International Airport, the delegation had a walk through and first hand involvement in the passenger and cargo clearance of the Air New Zealand flight which arrived on Thursday afternoon. The in-depth discussions held during this week further substantiates the fact that illicit drugs and substances, false declaration and undervaluation of goods, increased trade of counterfeit goods and medicine, are areas of concern and more stringent and cohesive relationship is needed to ensure both countries address this concern effectively.

The Ministry and delegation is grateful to Prime Minister, Hon. Fiamē Naomi Mataafa and Deputy Prime Minister, Hon. Tuala Tevaga Iosefo Ponifasio, for the availing their valuable time to meet with the delegation. A huge faafetai tele to the Speaker of the Fono, Afioga Papalii Li'o Taeu Masepau, Cabinet and Parliament of Samoa, for permitting the team to attend our Parliament session and for the warm acknowledgement made. To the CEO and Acting CEO of the Ministry of Prime of Minister, the ACEO and team from Immigration, CEO and team from Samoa Shipping Corporation, faafetai tele for the opportunity to visit your respective offices and be briefed on your systems processes as the border.

Faafetai Faafetai Tele Lava.

