

Oceania Human Rights
Imagination Immersion Implementation
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Samoa is an important leader in the Pacific region. Samoa can prioritize human rights in its national policies and practices to improve the rights for islanders and realize basic rights. The results of such national actions would ripple across the region to also inspire other Pacific Islanders.

Samoa played a positive role in the important area of sustainable development rooted in international human rights law with a people centered focus in the Pacific. The hosting of the Small Island Developing States conference was a considerable step forward for Oceania advocates. The Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States on September 1 -4, 2014 in Apia. The conference ensured indigenous peoples could share unique and particular vulnerabilities of the Pacific. The adoption of the Small Islands Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action -- SAMOA Pathway -- is a significant sign of what is possible when Samoa and states in Oceania cooperate together to guarantee the Pacific Way guides the world in the right way to balance humanity and nature. We call on the Samoa to continue this spirit to host important meetings in the region. The Hokulea participation from Hawaii was a significant example of sharing how indigenous knowledge offers opportunity for the global agenda. Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon and former High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson visit along with heads of states allowed to see how Pacific Islanders can offer projects to promote and protect human rights in the face of climate change. Oceania HR suggests that Samoa continues this leadership role hosting a regional human rights instrument conference to assist in creating a mechanism in the last region without one. We believe an Oceania Human Rights Commission will be a positive process that will promote human rights in the region and also contribute to the global dialogue on rights sharing the Pacific Way.

Along similar lines, the hosting of the global conference should serve as a positive example of how the United Nations can add to the well-being of citizens of Samoa. Samoa should issue a standing invitation to the UN Human Rights Council special procedures. The visits of special rapporteurs, independent experts and working groups could encourage conversations among the circles of concerned citizens to review the situation of human rights in Samoa and the special procedures reports provide valuable recommendations to realize human rights.

Samoa can improve democracy in the island state by ratifying more of the core international human rights treaties. Samoa should ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities immediately. Oceania Human Rights also believes the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) should be a national priority to ensure the ESC rights are realized for youth and elders in

Samoa. We believe a national conversation can also point out how the remaining core human rights treaties will contribute to a culture of rights in Samoa. The ratification of the optional protocols for human rights treaties already ratified -- the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) particularly OP 3 and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) -- is an important start to recognize the contribution of optional protocols to a state.

Oceania Human Rights also notes the important institution of an office of Ombudsman since 1988. We applaud the action in 2013 so the Ombudsman became the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in Samoa was significant. We believe the Ombudsman office can conduct outreach to increase public awareness and also offer important role of human rights education with popular education program of basic rights guaranteed to all in Samoa in the Constitution and also in ratified international human rights instruments. We applaud the important initiative of the first ever State of Human Rights Report. The drafting of the report should inspire Samoa to continue to improve the model of consultation across Samoa to encourage greater public participation in promotion of Samoa. This is the first step for comprehensive review of human rights in Fa'a Samoa.

The human rights issues that require attention relate to violence against women and children as in many states around the world. We encourage Samoa to continue prioritizing projects to ameliorate this abuse against vulnerable segments of society.

An emerging priority that requires attention relates to climate change and human rights. There are far-reaching implications facing islanders of Fa'a Samoa. Roughly 70% of the population inhabit low-lying coastal areas and a great deal of infrastructure is also along the coast. The right of self-determination is foremost regarding climate change for the foreseeable future. However, the imminent human right to water, food and health deserve immediate initiatives from international advocacy by the diplomatic corp to island wide initiatives that protect human rights. Immediately addressing internal displacement should be a priority with a plan rooted in human rights to protect the inherent dignity of citizens of Samoa.

Human Rights Education shall be a priority in all educational institutions from elementary to the National University of Samoa. We believe comprehensive and creative education curriculum can inspire Samoans to continue to improve daily living and enrich spirit of solidarity. A national conference on human rights education will allow to assess the current best practices and also share ideas for new initiatives. We encourage creation of a certificate and move toward a degree at the National University of Samoa in human rights, peace and democracy.

Oceania Human Rights recognizes the wisdom of Ombudsman Maiava Iulai Toma noting that human rights "have roots within Samoa culture..." We believe the values and vision of Fa'a Samoa can contribute to the global conversation and coordination of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Oceania Human Rights and Hawai'i Institute for Human Rights offer cooperation to coordinate any conferences as well as assist in creation of training programs to promote human rights in Samoa.