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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written submission by the Samoa's Office of the Ombudsman*

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat of the Human Rights Council hereby transmits the communication submitted by the Samoa's Office of the Ombudsman,** reproduced below in accordance with rule 7(b) of the rules of procedures described in the annex to Council resolution 5/1, according to which participation of national human rights institutions is to be based on arrangements and practices agreed upon by the Commission on Human Rights, including resolution 2005/74 of 20 April 2005.

* National human rights institution with A status accreditation from the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

** Reproduced in the annex as received, in the language of submission only.



Annex

Submission by the Samoa's Office of the Ombudsman

Statement on family violence in Samoa and the violation of the rights of women

Mr. President,

It is an honour to present to the Human Rights Council a statement from the NHRI of Samoa. Thank you for the opportunity.

Family violence has crippled many families in the Pacific where up to 68 percent of women report experiencing physical or sexual violence by a partner in their lifetime. For Samoa, the first ever National Public Inquiry conducted by my Office in 2016 found that 86 per cent of women have experienced physical and bodily harm in their lifetime. The Inquiry into family violence points to violence in the up-bringing of children in Samoan homes as having a direct bearing on the violence women and girls face later in life and violence in general in society.

The National Inquiry sought Samoan solutions to the misery Samoan women were enduring in their own homes. It was important for solutions to emanate from those who fully understood the issues and are affected on a daily basis. Proposals that emerged include an increased role for the Village Council to prevent family violence through the setting up of family safety committees, introducing bylaws to encourage reporting and setting appropriate punishment for perpetrators. Since the publication of the Inquiry Report, about 40 per cent of villages in Samoa have made decisions on domestic violence, which is encouraging.

The State is, and always will be, an important actor to provide guidance through laws and policy. This needs however, to go hand in hand with constructive work at the grassroots level to harness and utilize elements of influence and power that exist in our communities. This is the only way Samoa can hope to effectively combat family violence. It is on this 'working together with communities' framework that the Inquiry recommendations are premised.

An approach which has been successful in delivering our human rights education and awareness, is weaving together human rights principles and cultural values that complement each other. The Fa'asamoa (our Samoan way of life) embraces in the same way as do Human Rights, inclusivity, respect, dignity, communication and peace. The two are mutually reinforcing. A framework embracing Fa'asamoa, Faith and Human Rights principles is essential to successfully drive national action against family violence.

As Samoa's National Human Rights Institution, we are urging our national government and communities to together, commit to ending unnecessary violence our women, girls and children are enduring.

Thank you.
