

For Official Release  
PR 001-08042023  
Office of the Governor  
Utulei, American Samoa  
August 04, 2023



## **American Samoa Seeks Full Membership in Pacific Island Forum to Address Crucial Regional Issues**

*"It is time for American Samoa to have a seat at the Pacific Island Forum table and an active role in the discussions that affect our lives and the world around us."*

American Samoa's pursuit of full membership within the esteemed Pacific Island Forum (PIF) marks a significant step towards broader representation and collaborative engagement in shaping the future of the Pacific region. In a communication earlier this year to the Assistant Secretary of State - Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink, Governor Lemanu P. S. Mauga stated, "It is time for American Samoa to have a seat at the Pacific Island Forum table and an active role in the discussions that affect our lives and the world around us."

Governor Lemanu emphasized the importance of grasping the possibilities that membership in the Pacific Island Forum can unlock for American Samoa and the broader U.S. interests. While American Samoa holds observer status within the PIF, it has never had the opportunity to actively participate in the forum's meetings and decisions, despite its shared historic, cultural ties, and common challenges with its Pacific neighbors who enjoy full membership.

"As the sole U.S. Territory in the South Pacific, American Samoa holds valuable experience and relationships with neighboring island nations. Our participation as a vital PIF member would not only serve the interests of our people but contribute significantly to the advancement of the entire region," Governor Lemanu stated. Furthermore, considering the absence of a U.S. vote in the PIF, American Samoa can play a pivotal role by advocating for U.S. interests in the forum, particularly in light of growing influences in the Pacific, including from China.

Governor Lemanu underscored that other nations like France and New Zealand permit their Pacific territories to be full PIF members, aligning with the sentiment that the U.S. should extend a similar opportunity. The precedent set by allowing American Samoa to join the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) as full members supports the consistency of this approach.

In a recent virtual meeting with members of the United States State Department, Governor Lemanu expressed his anticipation for collaborating with Ambassador Reed, appointed as an envoy to the PIF, and looks forward to the prospects of constructive cooperation in this role.

In conclusion, Governor Lemanu highlighted the necessity for American Samoa to have a seat at the PIF table, enabling active contributions to discussions that shape the region and the world. Together, with the support of PIF members and collaborative efforts, the vision of a prosperous and unified Pacific community can be realized.

The Pacific Island Forum focuses on climate change and resilience, sustainable development, economic and trade growth, security, good governance, and regionalism for those in its membership.

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