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Lt. Governor of American Samoa Laapui Talauega Ale and Lt. Governor of Guam Josh Tenorio Attend Pacific Islands Forum Officials Committee Meeting and Forum Ministers Meeting in Suva

Suva, Fiji – The Lt. Governor of American Samoa, Laapui Talauega Ale, and the Lt. Governor of Guam, Josh Tenorio, are pleased to announce their attendance at the Forum Officials Committee (FOC) Meeting and the Forum Ministers Meeting (FMM) held in Suva, Fiji this week. Both leaders are participating in high-level discussions that will lead up to the Forum Leaders Meeting scheduled to take place in Tonga from August 26-30, 2024.

American Samoa and Guam have each submitted formal applications to the Pacific Islands Forum requesting Associate Membership, and elevate their current Observer status. The issue of their Associate Membership application is being thoroughly discussed at these critical meetings. Lt. Governor Ale and Lt. Governor Tenorio are advocating for greater integration and representation within the Forum to ensure that the voices and concerns of their respective territories are heard and addressed.

In his remarks at the FOC yesterday, Lt. Governor Ale stated that “American Samoa shares in the common challenges that face our region...By becoming an Associate Member of the Pacific Islands Forum, we aim to contribute more effectively to the region's sustainable development, while also benefiting from the collective wisdom and resources of the Forum's member states. A reality of our history is the undeniable truth of our shared origins as Pacific people. We are Pacific Islanders. We are Samoans. Our ancestors are kin, aiga, - we traversed the vast Blue Pacific together, shared the same alia, drua, vaka. Our ancestors overcame the uncertainty before them, and shared in the resulting opportunity.”

Lt. Governor Josh Tenorio echoed these sentiments, stating, "Despite the current realities of geopolitics and political status, the people and island of Guam, remain an important part of the Pacific. We are the center of transportation, communications and economics for the Micronesian Region and we are not immune from the environmental and socio-economic challenges that are

being experienced throughout the Pacific. The 2050 Blue Pacific Continent Strategy adopted by the Pacific Islands Forum embraces the effectiveness of regionalism and equity as keys to improving the quality of life for all Pacific peoples. It is in this spirit that Guam has empowered itself through the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the establishment of the Guam Green Growth to measure our progress. Guam and American Samoa cannot be left out of the critical collective discussions at PIF. Guam, like American Samoa, is ready to assume our place in the room and at the table as Associate Members of PIF.”

The Forum Officials Committee Meeting in Suva has provided a platform for both Lt. Governors to engage with other Pacific leaders, share their perspectives, and discuss the critical issues facing the region. Their participation underscores the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing the unique challenges and opportunities within the Pacific community.

Both Lt. Governor Ale and Lt. Governor Tenorio are optimistic about the outcomes of these discussions and look forward to the continued dialogue and discussion of their Associate Membership applications at the upcoming Forum Foreign Ministers Meeting on Friday August 9, 2024.

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