



EUROPEAN UNION



Initiative on Empowerment  
of Civil Society in  
Democratic Samoa

## Joint Press Release

### International IDEA, SUNGO, and WIBDI Launch IOE SAMOA Project

### Funded by the European Union

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Apia, Samoa, 20 June 2024** – Today, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), in collaboration with project partners Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) and Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI), proudly launched the ***Initiative on Empowerment of Civil Society in Democratic Samoa*** (IOE SAMOA project). This initiative, generously funded (EUR 415 000) by the European Union, aims at supporting civil society organisations as actors of development and governance in the Pacific Island Countries.

The launch took place at the Millenia Hotel in Apia, Samoa, with the keynote speech delivered by the Ambassador of the European Union to the Pacific, Her Excellency Barbara Plinkert.

“The Civil Society Organizations are integral partners of the European Union in the Pacific that work on shared values and visions such as human development, peace and security. As such, we are proud to be able to support their work. Also under the Samoa Agreement, which is the newly signed Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, the signatories have agreed to cooperate towards the realization of human rights in the Pacific Region, including the strengthening of an enabling and safe environment for the active engagement of civil society thorough their capacity building. Therefore, the launch of the IOE SAMOA project today is a step in the right direction and I wish the partners a successful implementation”, Ambassador Plinkert said.

Representing International IDEA, Leena Rikkilä Tamang, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted the project's aims to support Samoan civil society in advancing human rights, influencing policy and decision-making processes.

"The IOE SAMOA project is a testament to our commitment to supporting democratic resilience and sustainable development in Samoa. By empowering civil society, we are laying the foundation for sustainable development and democratic resilience. We are grateful for the European Union's generous support, rewarding and believing in this proposal and look forward to working closely with our partners, SUNGO and WIBDI, to achieve our shared goals," said Tamang

SUNGO Executive Council member, Afioga Funemalafai Ono Fuatai and WIBDI's Senior Programme Manager, Taaloga Apa expressed their support for the project, noting the potential for

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significant positive impact on local communities. "The IOE SAMOA project aligns perfectly with our mission to support grassroots development and empower local leaders. We are excited to partner with International IDEA and the European Union to bring this vision to life," they said in a joint statement.

The IOE SAMOA project will focus on capacity-building workshops, community engagement programs, and policy advocacy. These efforts aim to strengthen the democratic process, enhance transparency, and promote inclusive decision-making at all levels of government in Samoa.

For more information about the IOE SAMOA project, please contact:

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#### **About International IDEA:**

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. With a global network, International IDEA provides knowledge, policy development, and advocacy to enhance democratic governance.

#### **About SUNGO:**

The Samoa Umbrella for Non-Governmental Organisations (SUNGO) is dedicated to strengthening the capacity of NGOs in Samoa, promoting effective governance, and supporting community development initiatives.

#### **About WIBDI:**

Women in Business Development Inc. (WIBDI) works to empower women and families in Samoa through sustainable business development, with a focus on organic agriculture and fair trade practices.

#### **About the European Union:**

The European Union is a political and economic union of 27 member states that are located primarily in Europe. The EU is committed to promoting peace, its values, and the well-being of its citizens. It supports democracy, human rights, and sustainable development worldwide.

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