1. Introduction

The Ministry of Finance is one of the key central agencies of the Government of Samoa, whose key roles include providing sound financial advice to the government, managing financial management systems to ensure accountability, maintaining macroeconomic stability, supporting and ensuring inclusive economic growth, and responding to information requests from its stakeholders.

If it is to be effective, MoF must work with a broad range of people and stakeholders. If it is to create meaningful and productive partnerships, its objectives must be clear and understood and must be seen as a results oriented institution. It must also be able to demonstrate transparency and accountability by proactively sharing information, seeking feedback from stakeholders and be able to respond to information requests particularly in the absence of a Public Information Act.

Information sharing is essential to participatory development. Seeking feedback from stakeholders through a wide consultative process encourages participatory development particularly in the development of the national strategy and the preparation of the national budget.

All staff share the responsibility for building the ministry’s external relations in order to strengthen, maintain and protect its profile and reputation.

2. Public communications and development effectiveness

Effective external relations will support the Ministry’s development effectiveness in several ways. Within the country there will be support for policies and practices advocated by the Ministry if they are well understood by development specialists, the media and civil society all of whom influence the broader public.
Samoa’s development partners must be given the assurance that their assistance is effectively and efficiently utilized and that there is a results orientation to which the public can attest.

The proactive disclosure of information is a prerequisite for effective communication and building relationships with a wide range of stakeholders. Without the provision of timely accessible and relevant information, effective consultations with the communities and public at large will not be assured.

Transparency is an important element of economic growth, financial stability and effective governance and when demonstrated through increasing access to information will strengthen integrity in public institutions and organizations. Furthermore accountability cannot be achieved without availability of information.

3. The Policy

The public communications policy aims to enhance stakeholders trust in and ability to engage with the Ministry in the execution of its core business as legally mandated. It promotes:

- Awareness and understanding of its activities, policies, strategies, objectives and results among all stakeholders including the decision making arm of the government and the general public
- Sharing and exchange of development knowledge and lessons learnt so as to provide innovative perspectives on development issues particularly to guide the national planning and budgetary processes
- Participatory development, ensuring a two way flow of information between the Ministry and its stakeholders and
- Transparency and accountability in operations

The general principles as set out above will be implemented through the strategy outlined below:

4. The Strategy

The Strategy will indicate the information the Ministry of Finance shall proactively make publicly available and indicates certain instances where information shall be made available on request or shall not be made available without the consent of the Ministry of Finance.

The strategy will comprise two separate but complementary components; external relations and disclosure of information. External relations will focus primarily on building strong external relationships with all stakeholders by making widely known what the roles and functions of the
Ministry are. Disclosure of information will aim to strengthen partnerships particularly with people and organizations with direct operational and business links with the Ministry of Finance.

5. External Relations

The Ministry of Finance is committed to transparent and timely communication with all partners and the provision of up to date information on its activities in accessible form through appropriate media. The main partners for the Ministry of Finance include: the private sector (Chamber of Commerce and Manufacturers Association), development partners, the Chief Audit Office, the Central Bank, Government Ministries, Public Bodies, the media, and Civil Society Organisations. The key areas that have been identified for improved communications are:

- Information on the budget process, budget performance reviews and budget outturn reports
- Information on budget forward estimates
- Consultation on budget planning
- SDS Monitoring of key performance measures
- Sector Planning
- Performance of Public Bodies
- Information on development partner funding
- Procurement guidelines, standard bidding templates and the award of large tenders
- Information on debt management

The Ministry will use a variety of media to improve communication with partners. The following media options will be considered depending on the target audience, the content and format of the information and the need for consultative approaches:

i. The Ministry of Finance web site will be utilized for making available the majority of key documents and for providing general information on the work and contact details for the different Divisions of the Ministry (www.mof.gov.ws)

ii. Selected key documents will be published and made available to key partners and to members of the public on request.

iii. Press releases and invitations to the media will be used to publicize important events and actions such as signing of development partner financing agreements, handover of completed projects, etc.

iv. Production of leaflets will be considered for broader dissemination of information on processes such as the budget planning cycle or public finance management reform
v. Workshops and seminars will be arranged whenever there is a need for consultation to obtain feedback from partners or the general public.

6. Disclosure of Information and Consultation Arrangements

6.1 Economic Policy and Planning

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- The Strategy for Development of Samoa (web site, publication and summary brochure)
- Annual Fiscal Strategy Statement (web site and publication)
- Public Sector Investment Plan (web site and publication)
- Quarterly and Annual Economic Review Reports (web site and dissemination to selected partners)
- SDS Mid Term Review and Final Progress Reports (web site)
- Approved Sector Plans (web site)
- Sector Planning Guidelines and Project Planning Guidelines (web site and workshop presentations to line-Ministries)
- IMF Mission Reports (web site)
- Petroleum Monthly Prices (website)
- Energy Review Reports (website and Publication)
- Energy related Project Profiles (website and Publication)

The EPPD Division will arrange consultations with partners and the general public on the preparation of the four yearly SDS as well as on the mid-term review of progress. Workshops will also be arranged with key partners for the preparation of the Public Sector Investment Plan, which will be based on sector investment priorities. Meetings with sector coordinators will be organized by EPPD at least once every six months to allow exchange of experience on sector programming approaches.

6.2 Budget

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- Annual Budget cycle process (web site and leaflet)
• Annual Budget Estimates (web site and publication)
• Budget speech (web site and publication)
• MTEF – forward estimates (web site and publication)
• Mid-year reviews/annual out-turn reports (web site)

The Budget Division will introduce annual consultations for presentation of the budget strategy with key partners including development partners, civil society and private sector organizations. These consultations will include information on progress of major projects and sector level performance indicators.

6.3 Procurement

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

• Procurement guidelines and tender standard bidding documents (web site, help desk and training workshops for line-Ministries/Corporations and contractors)
• Advertising of tender opportunities over 50,000 SAT (web site and national newspapers)
• Award of contracts over 500,000 SAT (web site)
• Calendar of Tenders Board meetings for Public Tender Opening (web site and publication)

6.4 Public accounts

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

• Annual report on Public Accounts (web site and publication)
• Public Accounts Speech (web site and publication)
• Quarterly Reports (web site and publication)
• Service Charter (web site)
• Instructions and Accounting Policies (web site)
• Accounting Procedural Manual (web site and publications)

The Accounts Division will arrange monthly meetings of Principal Accountants from other Ministries for exchange of information on the accounting and budget functions and any constraints or changes to procedures/systems.
6.5 System Support

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- Information on Finance One System (Systems Support Unit Help Desk with contacts on web site and training session calendar for line-Ministries)
- Calendar of System Training Sessions (Website and publication)

6.6 Internal Audit

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- Publication of annual report on the Internal Audit function across Government with summary of key findings (web site)
- Annual Work plan (web site)
- Strategic Plan for the development of the internal audit function across government (web site)

The Internal Audit Division coordinates the Internal Audit Forum which all Internal auditors within Ministries and Public Bodies meet on a fortnightly basis to develop and improve their professional approach though adopting a common methodology, procedures, technology and techniques.

6.7 Aid Coordination and Debt Management

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- Aid Cooperation Policy (web site and publication)
- Medium Term Debt Strategy + annual updates (web site)
- Information on development partner funding to Samoa by sector (web site and bi-annual publication)
- Programme Reviews and Evaluations (web site)
- MDG Progress Reports (web site and publication)
- Aid Effectiveness (Paris Declaration) Evaluation Reports (web site and publication)
The Aid Coordination Division is committed to arranging quarterly coordination meetings with development partners. The Division also holds regular one on one meetings with key development partners represented in Samoa.

### 6.8 SOE Monitoring

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- SOE Policies and legislation (web site)
- SOE Reporting Guidelines (web site)
- SOE Statement of Corporate Objective, Annual Reports (web site)

### 6.9 PFM Reform/Finance Sector Plan

The following information **will be made available to partners** and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- PFM Reform Plans (web site and distribution to development partners and key stakeholders)
- PEFA Assessments (web site and distribution to development partners and key stakeholders)
- Annual Progress Reports in November each year (web site and distribution to development partners and key stakeholders)
- Annual Review Meetings on PFM and the Finance Sector Plan will be organized by the central agencies in November each year with development partners, private sector representatives, and CSOs. Annual progress reports will be issued at this meeting

### 6.10 Corporate Services

The following information will be made available to partners and to the general public using the media as indicated:

- Ministry of Finance Corporate Plan (web site and publication)
- Ministry of Finance Structure and telephone and email contact list (web site)
- Ministry of Finance Annual Report (web site and publication)
7. Institutional Arrangements

Responsibility for the Communications plan will be with Senior Management Team supported by Corporate Services and the Finance Sector Coordinator to ensure compliance.

The IT Division will be responsible for ensuring the operation and maintenance of the web site. Each Division will appoint a contact person for communications to ensure follow up on commitments.

The contact person for the media for all public relations issues is the ACEO CSSD: Faoolatane Tupai Leota – soane.leota@mof.gov.ws (tel: 34322)