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September 9, 2009

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**Eni F.H. Faleomavaega**  
**Chairman**

**The Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Dr. Lisa Williams (202) 225-8577

Washington, D.C.

**FALEOMAVAEGA COMMENDS PRIME MINISTER  
TUILAIPA FOR INVITING BAINIMARAMA TO SAMOA**

The Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, Rep. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, today commended Prime Minister Tuilaipa Sailele Malielegaoi for inviting Fiji's interim Prime Minister, Commodore Josaia Voreqe "Frank" Bainimarama, to visit Samoa.

"I appreciate Prime Minister Tuilaipa's initiative in inviting interim Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama to Apia. His invitation represents precisely the sort of engagement that the rest of the world – and especially the other Pacific Island countries – should offer Fiji. Instead of sanctioning Fiji, which will only end up hurting average citizens rather than the interim government, we need to talk to Fiji," said Faleomavaega.

“Just as Prime Minister Tuilaepa said, ‘Fiji’s Ratu system and Samoa’s matai system have similar foundations and social underpinnings... [Bainimarama needs] to see for himself whether there are ways that we do things in Samoa that could help resolve the current situation in Fiji.’ As Prime Minister Tuilaepa also advised, democracy is not perfect, but ‘until a better system is developed, democracy is still the most representative, most transparent system of government available.’ And since Bainimarama has Samoan ancestors in his family, he has a real connection to Samoa, and that offers a wonderful opportunity for meaningful dialogue. I encourage Bainimarama to take the Prime Minister up on his offer,” added Faleomavaega.

“On my three trips to Suva this year, I have been able to hold wide-ranging discussions with Prime Minister Bainimarama and key leaders from the opposition on a pathway forward for Fiji. With help and engagement by the United States, by the Pacific Island countries, and others around the region, there is an excellent chance that Fiji can put its recent troubles behind it and return to democracy and prosperity. ‘Talanoa,’ which means dialogue in both Fijian and Samoan, is the way to go. And there is no better place to start fresh discussions than Samoa, which has so many cultural, ancestral and other ties to Fiji. Again, I commend Prime Minister Tuilaepa for his efforts in extending this invitation, and I do hope Prime Minister Bainimarama will accept it as soon as possible,” Faleomavaega concluded.

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