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TELEPHONE: (202) 225-5021
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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.

**STATE DEPARTMENT PRAISES FALEOMAVAEGA
FOR HIS WORK IN THE PACIFIC**

At a press briefing today on the Secretary of State's upcoming trip to the Asia Pacific and her stopover in American Samoa, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Kurt Campbell, praised the contributions of Eni F.H. Faleomavaega, the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and the Global Environment, for his contributions to enhancing U.S. engagement in the Pacific.

As Campbell said in the briefing, "On the way home we will stop in American Samoa. And here I just want to underscore that we often talk about stepping up our game in the Asian-Pacific region. In that – in that formulation, the 'A' gets a lot more attention than the 'P.' The Pacific, you will note on this particular trip, that the secretary will be stopping in three Pacific islands, American Samoa for a quick meeting there on the way home. And I must say that the Secretary and the State Department's very grateful for the encouragement and support that we've gotten from Congressman Faleomavaega in terms of our overall desire to increase our assistance and our overall engagement with the Pacific islands."

In response, Faleomavaega said, "I appreciate the comments made by the Assistant Secretary. He has testified before my Subcommittee twice this year, and we have had a number of other conversations about the critical need for greater U.S. engagement of the Pacific Islands. I want to thank him and Secretary Clinton for listening and, more importantly, for making real commitments of time and resources to the region."

“Based on suggestions I have made, the Secretary of State has already pledged to annualize her meetings with Pacific Island leaders as part of her participation in the U.N. General Assembly, to upgrade the U.S. presence in the Pacific Island Forum’s yearly post-Forum Dialogue, and to return the U.S. Agency for International Development to the region after a 15 year absence,” Faleomavaega continued.

“These are important steps for which all Pacific Islanders are grateful. But I will continue to press this Administration to do more so that the United States plays a role in the Pacific fully commensurate with our interests. As I have outlined in my discussions with the Administration, I would like to see the United States further institutionalize its participation in the Pacific Islands Forum by creating an Ambassador-level position for the Forum, just as we now have for ASEAN. We should also move quickly to ensure that President Obama’s planned participation in the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders next year in Hawaii takes place. The significance of America’s first Pacific President attending that Conference cannot be overstated.”

“We should enlarge the International Visitor Leadership Program and other exchanges for Pacific Islanders so they can interact more often with their American counterparts. We should increase the presence of Peace Corps volunteers in the region, offer more Fulbright scholarships to Pacific Islanders and increase funding for the U.S.-South Pacific Scholarship Program run under the auspices of the East West Center,” Faleomavaega said.

“The U.S. Navy’s Pacific Partnership, which has been so successful, should be annualized and expanded. This past summer, the hospital ship MERCY treated more than 1,000 Palauans; and two summers ago, 15,000 residents of the Federated States of Micronesia received medical attention.”

“In addition, the United States should help strengthen the region’s economy through the promotion of trade and investment, including encouraging the Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations negotiations (PACER Plus) to provide maximum economic benefits for Pacific Island nations. And as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) moves forward, I hope that the United States and other countries involved would consider developing links between TPP and PACER Plus. In addition, the Administration should actively encourage the Millennium Challenge Corporation, International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to enhance their programs in the region. For all these organizations, it is critical to remember that a small amount of assistance goes a very long way in the Pacific islands.”

“Again, I want to thank Secretary of State Clinton and Assistant Secretary of State Campbell for listening and for taking real and substantive actions to enhance U.S. relations with the Pacific Islands. I look forward to welcoming them both to American Samoa next month and to working with them and the rest of the Obama Administration in making further progress in the region,” Faleomavaega concluded.

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