



Government of Samoa

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Level 3, Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi
Building (TATTE), Sogi, P.O Private Bag,
Apia, SAMOA.
Website: <http://www.mnre.gov.ws/>

Telephone: (+685) 67200
Email: environment@mnre.gov.ws

Please address all correspondence to the
Chief Executive Officer, Private Bag, Apia,
Samoa.
Faamolemole faatuatusi uma mai
fesootaiga i le Ōfisa Sili.

Press Release

Historic Signing Ceremony Marks the Establishment of the International Mangrove Center (IMC) Shenzhen, China – November 5, 2024

A significant milestone in global environmental cooperation was reached on November 5, 2024, as representatives from 27 countries, including Samoa, officially signed the Establishment Agreement for the International Mangrove Center (IMC) in Shenzhen, China. This momentous event formalized the creation of an intergovernmental institution dedicated to the conservation, restoration, and sustainable management of mangrove ecosystems worldwide. The signing ceremony coincided with the second anniversary of the 14th Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP14) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, emphasizing the essential role of mangroves in biodiversity and climate resilience.

As a Ramsar Regional Initiative (RRI), the IMC will operate as a non-profit organization aimed at amplifying international efforts to safeguard mangroves, restore degraded ecosystems, and promote sustainable practices that benefit coastal communities. The ceremony was attended by senior government officials, Ministers, and environmental experts, who gathered to show their support for this landmark initiative.

The Associate Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Afioga Faleomavaega Titimaea Tafua represented Samoa. The Associate Minister reaffirmed Samoa's unwavering commitment to global efforts to protect mangrove ecosystems, which are crucial for the island nation's coastal resilience and environmental sustainability.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of China, and Shenzhen in particular for this great initiative in the Establishment of the International Mangrove Center and I am honored to be part of today's ceremony," said Associate Minister Faleomavaega Titimaea Tafua. "A high reduction of mangroves due to human impacts such as the clearance and conversion of mangrove areas for other developments, therefore we need to protect, conserve, and wisely use our mangrove ecosystems. Being a vital part of a healthy environment, and a breeding site for estuary marine life, mangroves should be protected"

Mangroves provide essential ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, coastal protection, and biodiversity habitat, yet they are increasingly threatened by climate change, coastal development, and other environmental pressures. As natural buffers against storm surges and rising sea levels, mangroves play a key role in mitigating the impacts of climate change, making their conservation more urgent than ever. The IMC aims to strengthen international collaboration on mangrove protection through large-scale restoration projects, capacity-building programs, and raising public awareness.

The creation of the IMC was made possible through years of cooperation among governments, international organizations, academia, the private sector, and civil society. The collective efforts of the Group of Friends of the IMC, a coalition of 27 countries, were formalized in a Joint Statement issued on July 26, 2023, reaffirming support for the IMC's mission. The establishment of the IMC was first announced by President Xi Jinping of China at COP14 in 2022, as part of China's broader environmental leadership efforts.

The IMC's primary goals include facilitating large-scale mangrove restoration, promoting knowledge exchange, strengthening international partnerships, and contributing to global environmental frameworks such as the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Paris Agreement, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IMC also aims to implement pilot projects in regions most in need of mangrove restoration, while raising awareness and engaging local communities.

The IMC's creation was officially endorsed by the 62nd Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ramsar Convention on September 6, 2023, providing a strong legal foundation for its operations. The signing ceremony in Shenzhen marks the beginning of a new chapter in global mangrove conservation, with Samoa and its international partners committing to a collaborative approach to restore and protect these vital ecosystems.

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