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VISITOR EARNINGS & REMITTANCES REPORT FEBRUARY 2017

This report is a monthly release of the latest available indicators on the tourism sector and private remittances, with information sourced from the Central Bank, Samoa Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry for Revenue.

Report No.8: 2016/17

February 2017

Total **visitor arrivals** fell by a seasonal 34.4 percent to 7,810 visitors in February 2017. However, total arrivals were 5.1 percent lower when compared to February 2016, which was below its average increases of 6.0 percent in the past 3 years and 2.8 percent in the past 5 years.

Furthermore, **total arrivals in the first eight months of 2016/17** were 1.2 percent below the same period in 2015/16 (which includes the Commonwealth Youth Games in September 2015).

Accounting mainly for the lower arrivals in February 2017 were contractions in travellers from the USA (down 41.8 percent), New Zealand (down 40.5 percent), American Samoa (down 37.3 percent), Australia (down 33.6 percent) and 'Other countries' (down 13.8 percent). By purpose, the lower visitor numbers reflected mainly the reductions in number of those who were here 'visiting friends and relatives' (down 45.2 percent), 'holiday' (down 33.8 percent), 'others' (down 23.5 percent) and 'business and conference' (down 3.4 percent).

In the event, **total visitor receipts** narrowed by 24.5 percent (\$7.8 million) to \$24.0 million and was 4.2 percent lower when compared to February 2016.

In addition, **total visitor receipts in the first eight months of 2016/17** were 1.5 percent lower compared to the same period of 2015/16. At this rate, it was also lower than its average gains of 7.5 percent and 5.2 percent for the past 3 and 5 years respectively.

Total private remittances, likewise fell further by a seasonal 12.7 percent to \$26.8 million in February 2017 and was also 9.6 percent lower when compared to February 2016.

For the **first eight months of 2016/17, total inflow of private remittances** were however, 2.6 percent higher compared to the same period 2016. Likewise, it was also higher than its average decrease of 2.2 percent in the past 3 years and its average gain of 1.7 percent in the past 5 years.

The current drop was driven mainly by decreases in funds from the USA (down by 11.6 percent following the appreciation of Samoan tala against US dollar), New Zealand (down 12.8 percent), Australia (down 8.9 percent) and others (down by 46.1 percent particularly for Fiji and Germany). In terms of by recipient, lower transfers were recorded for 'non-profit institutions serving households'¹, 'hand-carried cash' and 'others'.

The share of total gross inflow of private remittances received through money transfer operators (MTOs) edged up to 89.1 percent from 86.2 percent in January 2017, whereas remittances coming through the banking system shrank to 10.9 percent from 13.8 percent in the previous month.

The average **cost of sending** NZD \$200.00 to Samoa increased to 13.5 percent from 12.8 percent in the previous month, while that for sending AUD \$200.00 to Samoa also went up to 12.8 percent from 12.2 percent a month ago. The cheapest money transfer operator from both countries was still KlickEx – Low priority.

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¹ NPISH – includes churches, NGOs, private schools, charities etc...

