



The Commonwealth



Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Samoa, 21-26 October 2024

# **Administrative Note for CHOGM Side Event Participants**

IN CONFIDENCE

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## **COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING 2024**

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2024 will be held in Apia, Samoa, from Monday 21 to Saturday 26 October 2024.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting brings together leaders and representatives from the Commonwealth nations to deliberate on critical issues and provides an opportunity to explore collective solutions to common goals. CHOGM 2024 will be held under the theme of ‘One Resilient Common Future: Transforming our Commonwealth’, with a focus on resilience of democratic systems, environment, economy and peoples and culture. With cross cutting themes of youth, gender, and digital transformation.

CHOGM Side Events play a vital role in complementing the main CHOGM programme. They serve as an inclusive space for Commonwealth Heads of Government, senior officials, business leaders, civil society, youth and women leaders, sections across the Commonwealth Secretariat, and others. It is an opportunity for these stakeholders to showcase their critical work, innovative solutions or contributions to thematic issues and trends that CHOGM 2024 seeks to address. It is also a platform that creates opportunities for collaboration, exchange of ideas and enables participants to explore practical actions to address common challenges.

The Commonwealth Secretariat will communicate the official CHOGM Side Events programme in a separate memorandum.

### **1. RESPONSIBILITY FOR ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **1.1 Commonwealth Secretariat**

The Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, is responsible for the general organisation and conduct of CHOGM 2024, which will be administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat in collaboration with the Government of Samoa.

For information and guidance on the general organisation of CHOGM Side Events 2024, direct enquiries to: [2024CHOGMSideEvents@commonwealth.int](mailto:2024CHOGMSideEvents@commonwealth.int)

#### **1.2 Side Event Organisers**

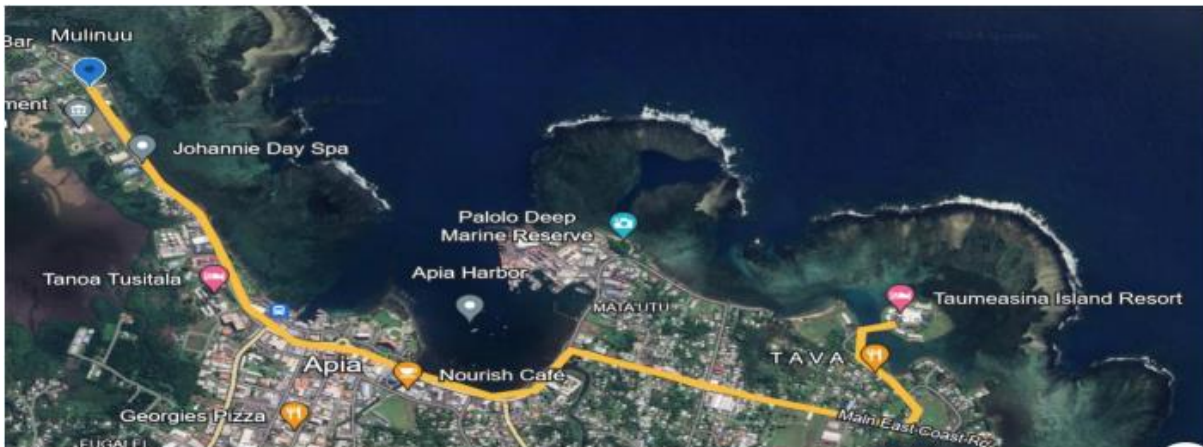
Side Event Organisers are responsible for coordinating the specific logistics and arrangements related to their individual events. Participants are requested to communicate

any special requirements or arrangements to the Side Event Organisers, who will then liaise with the CHOGM Side Events Team to ensure these needs are met.

Point of contact details for Side Event Organisers can be accessed here: [Side events at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2024 | Commonwealth \(thecommonwealth.org\)](https://www.thecommonwealth.org/chogm-2024/side-events)

## 2. CHOGM 2024 VENUES AND EVENTS

Most meetings and events will take place in Apia, along the route highted in yellow below, between the Taumeasina Island Resort and the Peninsula:



Please see below a list of venues for key meetings and events happening across CHOGM week:

<b>EFKS Youth Hall</b>	Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF)
<b>TATTE Convention Centre</b>	Commonwealth Women’s Forum (CWF)
<b>Tanoa Tusitala Hotel</b>	Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF)
<b>Sheraton Samoa Aggie Greys Hotel and Bungalows</b>	Commonwealth Business Forum (CBF)
<b>Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration Building</b>	CHOGM Side Events
<b>MEC Cultural Center</b>	
<b>National University of Samoa (NUS), Main Campus</b>	

## 3. ACCREDITATION

All persons attending CHOGM Side Events must be accredited. This accreditation is mandatory for access to CHOGM Side Event venues. Accredited delegates are free to attend any number of side events, provided there is available capacity at the venue.

All persons attending CHOGM as a country delegate, Forum delegate or Commonwealth Accredited Organisation can use their accreditation to access side events.

\*Invite-only side events will be clearly marked and are accessible only to those with invitations.

Participants are requested to direct all enquiries regarding accreditation to: [accreditation@samoachogm2024.ws](mailto:accreditation@samoachogm2024.ws).

### **3.1 Accreditation Badges**

Badges are important security credentials. Loss of badges must be reported immediately at the accreditation site. Please note that badges are personal and cannot be transferred. They must be worn and displayed at all times whilst within CHOGM 2024 venues and access-controlled zones.

## **4. ACCOMMODATION**

Participants are requested to direct enquiries regarding accommodation to: [accommodation@samoachogm2024.ws](mailto:accommodation@samoachogm2024.ws)

All accredited delegates are requested to book their accommodation via the online centralised booking portal to secure their hotel accommodation.

A wide range of accommodation options which includes hotels, private homes and a chartered cruise liner, listed according to category/standard and room details will be available on the online booking portal.

### **4.1 Allocation and Reservation Process**

All accredited delegates will receive a link to the book accommodation via the online centralised booking portal. All rooms must be booked and paid-up front.

Accredited delegates can continue to use the online booking portal to secure rooms until Friday 11 October at 5pm (Samoa Time), when the accommodation portal is set to close. Please note that accommodation may not be guaranteed once rooms are made available to the public.

## **5. ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

### **5.1 Airport arrangements**

The majority of flights into Samoa will arrive at Faleolo International Airport.

Faleolo International Airport is located 31.4 km from the Parliament House Pavilion, the main CHOGM 2024 venue.

In accordance with the Government of Samoa's legislation, all CHOGM 2024 participants are subject to customs and immigration regulations. Certain exemptions will apply to Heads of Government, Foreign Ministers and their spouses/partners, which will be communicated in due course.

To facilitate all delegates, dedicated immigration counters will be operating at Faleolo International Airport.

An information desk located outside the main arrival terminal area will also be available to assist with transport, accommodation, currency exchange and SIM card purchase upon arrival.

## **5.2 Faleolo International Airport: Arrivals and Departures**

All accredited CHOGM delegates will be guided towards arrivals and the dedicated CHOGM Immigration Lane. All delegates will be required to present their accreditation confirmation at this point.

Delegates will proceed to the baggage reclaim area to collect luggage from carousels and exit to their vehicles for transfer to the designated hotels. CHOGM information desks shall be available in the arrivals area.

Delegates departing Samoa will check in at the Faleolo International Airport desks and then proceed through the CHOGM Immigration Lane and security channels before departure.

## **5.3 Fagalii Airport: Arrivals and Departures**

The Fagalii Airport will cater for flights arriving from American Samoa, for which some delegates may come through traveling from Hawaii. Access to a VIP lounge is extremely limited / restricted.

## **TRAVEL ROUTES TO SAMOA**

Airlines which fly directly to Samoa are:

1. Air New Zealand - from Auckland New Zealand takes 3h 40mins to 4 hours with flights running once or twice a day and returning the same day. Auckland Airport has a vast array of connecting flights to other international destinations.
2. Virgin Australia - from Brisbane Australia to Apia (Faleolo Airport), flights run three times a week with a flight duration of approximately 4h 45 minutes.
3. Qantas Airlines - from Brisbane Australia Qantas has a direct flight between Samoa and Australia once a week. The trip takes approximately 5 hours.
4. Fiji Airways - Flights run once or twice a day directly from Nadi, Fiji to Apia, the flight duration is 1h 55mins. A direct flight is also available from Honolulu, Hawaii to Apia once a week.
5. Talofa Airways and Samoa Airways - with direct flights from American Samoa. The small airlines run daily flights between Pago Pago (American Samoa) and Apia, which takes approximately 30 minutes. Pago Pago Airport has frequent flights to/from Hawaii. Entry Permit requirements for American Samoa can be accessed here <https://www.legalaffairs.as.gov/>

## 5.4 Aviation Security Screening

It is an International Air Transport Association (IATA) requirement that all CHOGM 2024 delegations travelling on Regular Passenger Transport (RPT) aircraft undergo aviation security screening processes at transit points and on departure from Samoa.

## 5.5 Visas

All Commonwealth citizens travelling with standard passports will be issued with a gratis visa upon arrival at all border posts without prior application. For further information on the Samoan visa regime, please check the following site: <https://www.samoa.travel/travel-advice>

Delegates should be mindful of the visa requirements for countries they will transit through and to make the necessary visa arrangements, in good time, in accordance with the visa regime of the respective country/ies.

ALL passengers entering Samoa must have a valid passport for up to 6 months, a return or onward travel ticket and completed arrival form. A 90-day tourist permit will be issued on arrival, for further information on permit requirements for Samoa please visit <https://mpmc.gov.ws/divisions/immigration/permits-2/>

The Government of Samoa will not be responsible for arrangements of any transit visas for participants travelling to Apia for the meetings, or for their return.

Please check visa requirements for New Zealand, Australia, USA and Fiji. This information should assist delegations in checking whether transit visas are required for these countries. All information is available online and must be reconfirmed with the relevant authorities.

Delegations transiting through Fiji can apply for transit visas online. Please refer to link: ONLINE APPLICATION FORM. Please also refer to the list of visa exempted countries on the Fiji Immigration website. The High Commission of Fiji in London can be contacted for more information at [mail@fijihighcommission.org.uk](mailto:mail@fijihighcommission.org.uk).

New Zealand - please refer to the list of visa waiver countries available online - <https://www.new-zealand-visa.co.nz/new-zealand-eta-visa-waiver-citizens>. Diplomatic passport holders who wish to apply for a transit visa are required to provide a list of documents you will find on their website.

Australia - please visit <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/transit-771>

USA - please contact the nearest US Embassy for diplomatic/official visa application instructions, visit <https://be.usembassy.gov/visas/#wizard>

## 5.6 Customs and Biosecurity

A dedicated lane will be in operation for the entirety of CHOGM through which all delegations shall be processed. Normal customs procedures will be upheld for all delegates with exemptions only for Heads of Governments, Foreign Ministers and their respective spouses/partners.

Delegates must clarify if they are bringing to Samoa any type of risky goods that need to be declared before arrival into Faleolo International and Fagalii Airport. The types of goods include: any food, animals or animal products, plants or plant products, other biosecurity risk items, equipment used with animals, plants or water, and items that have been used for outdoor or farming activities, agriculture and household pesticides. For further information on types of risk goods, please check the following website: <https://www.maf.gov.ws>

Each adult (21 years old and over) is entitled to import into Samoa certain duty-free goods, e.g. a combination of alcoholic beverages not exceeding 2.25 litres of alcohol, wine or spirits; 200 cigarettes/sticks or 250 grams of tobacco. Any amounts in excess of these allowances could result in a fine or seizure of goods. Firearms, ammunition, explosives, drugs and indecent publications of any kind are prohibited.

## **5.7 Baggage**

Should luggage be lost, a dedicated lost luggage service desk will be available for assistance. Delegates can choose to have their luggage delivered to their hotel, subject to a fee, or to collect it at the airport at no cost.

## **6. TRANSPORT**

A shuttle bus service will be provided for airport transfers and transportation between CHOGM 2024 venues, to accommodate accredited delegates who do not have dedicated transport.

Shuttle routes and the timetable of operation for accredited delegates will be available online, as well as at information desks at designated hotels and meeting venues. Delegates will be required to present their accreditation pass to the driver to gain access to the CHOGM 2024 shuttle service.

Pick-up and drop-off points will be designated within easy walking distance of hotels and meeting venues for delegates' convenience.

Delegates that choose to use rented vehicles and chauffeur-driven vehicles are requested to note that these vehicles may not be permitted to access the high security zones of CHOGM 2024 venues or specified hotels.

## **7. SECURITY**

All enquiries pertaining to security should be directed to: [security@samoachogm2024.ws](mailto:security@samoachogm2024.ws)

### **7.1 CHOGM 2024 Security**

The Government of Samoa is responsible for all security arrangements for CHOGM 2024.

Security arrangements will be in place at all CHOGM 2024 hotels and meeting venues. All venues will be secured by police and access to certain areas of venues will require security clearance. Please note that Participants are required to wear their official CHOGM accreditation badge at all times.



Luggage, bags, parcels, mail, catering, and other equipment will undergo security screening at official CHOGM 2024 hotels and meeting venues.

Delegates are requested to allow sufficient time at all venues for security screening.

## 8. HEALTH SERVICES

The main hospital in Apia is the **Tupua Tamasese Meaole (TTM) Hospital** at Moto'otua. It is located less than a 5-minute drive from the town of Apia, where the main hotels and meeting venues are located.

Health services will primarily be available at CHOGM 2024 meeting venues, side events and designated hotels. Ambulance services will also be available for transport to an appropriate health facility, if required.

The main hospital will be on standby to provide escalated medical services (*apart from the routine medical services available at the designated venue and accommodation clinics*) during the CHOGM week.

Delegates on any routine medication are advised to travel with their usual medication in sufficient quantities to cover two weeks of treatment, as certain brands of medication may not be available in Samoa.

The medical coverage on-island provided by the Government of Samoa will be limited strictly to **emergency cases**. The cost of any routine consultation (*including prescriptions for medicines*) will be borne by the participants or their sponsors/insurance companies. Delegates are strongly advised to obtain medical and travel insurance before commencing their journey.

For those in need of medical support, a toll-free number **911** will be open to provide any advice.

### 8.1 Health Screening

The Government of Samoa and the CHOGM Taskforce will put in place measures required by the World Health Organization, at the time of CHOGM, in respect of screening for infectious diseases.

### 8.2 Pharmacy Services

Apia has several pharmacies - most of which are only open during business hours. The main hospital contains the only 24-hour operating pharmacy.

For more details, a map of main retail pharmacies in the vicinity of CHOGM venues and hotels will be posted on the CHOGM website.

### 8.3 Travel Immunisation

A Yellow Fever vaccination certificate is **required** to enter Samoa for delegates coming from Yellow Fever endemic countries, any country with active Yellow Fever transmission outbreak or who has recently (in the past 72 hours) visited such a country.

Entry will be allowed to a delegate who, at arrival, presents all the following:

- A valid Yellow Fever vaccination certificate;
- Without a fever (less than 38.5 ° C);
- Consents to self-report for any symptoms for six days.

Costs related to quarantine and vaccination will be borne by the delegate.

Unless made mandatory by the Government, keep your vaccination certificate for COVID-19 on your person during your travels.

## **8.4 Other Disease Control Measures**

Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, **Measles Mumps Rubella**, **Meningococcal disease**, Diphtheria and Pertussis (whooping cough) vaccines are recommended by CDC for most travels to reduce risk of contracting these diseases.

Salmonella Typhi (Typhoid fever) is endemic in Samoa and delegates must ensure they get vaccinated before traveling to Samoa.

### **Ebola:**

Samoa is an Ebola-free country. The Government of Samoa has put strong public health measures to prevent importation of the disease in Samoa.

## **9. OTHER USEFUL INFORMATION**

### **9.1 Dress Code**

For all other official and social events, the dress code will be island business casual / national dress. Please dress appropriately for both the hot weather and cultural sensitivities.

## **10. VISITOR INFORMATION AND SERVICES**

For more practical information on Samoa, please visit: <https://www.samoa.travel>

### **10.1 Climate**

In the country's eastern and south-eastern regions, trade winds arrive most afternoons or early evenings for a cooling effect during the hottest part of the day. For areas sheltered from the breeze, visitors may like to adopt the popular Samoan custom of carrying a handmade fan around for relief from the hot afternoons.

Samoa's dry season is from May to October, making this the most popular time for visitors. The wet season, from November to April, might not bring rain every day, but a raincoat or umbrella is advised for what can be short but intense thunderstorms.

### **10.2 Time**

The time in Samoa is GMT+13.

### **10.3 Banking Services and Currency**

The local currency is the Samoan tala and sene (ST\$). Rates are subject to fluctuation. It is wise to carry some cash on you as some services (taxis, stalls, markets) do not accept bank cards.

Banking hours are from 0900 to 1600hrs from Monday to Friday and from 0800 to 1500hrs on Saturday. Some branches are open on Sunday. Banking services are available at all commercial banks. Most banks have cash dispensing machines accepting Visa and MasterCard. Foreign exchange facilities are available in most parts of Apia.

Most internationally recognised currencies and travellers' cheques can be exchanged at commercial banks, hotels and international airport. Major credit cards are accepted in most hotels, restaurants and shops.

### **10.4 Telecommunications**

The following Samoan mobile telecommunication service providers are available:

- Vodafone
- Digicel

Mobile telephone service companies provide internet via GPRS, 3G and 4G. Mobile phone SIM cards are widely available and will need to be registered for activation on presentation of an identification document (ID card or passport). The SIM card can be registered at the point of purchase. Booths are available at the international airport where you can purchase a SIM card.

### **10.5 Electricity Supply**

The power supply in Samoa is 230V AC, 50Hz. Electrical sockets are three flat pins in a triangular pattern. Power adaptors are available for purchase from stores in Apia, but it is best to be prepared and bring your own.

### **10.6 Driver's licence**

Samoa recognises international driver's licences, as well as certain national driver's licences. The licence must be carried when driving a motor vehicle. Driving is on the left-hand side of the road. All passengers of motor vehicles must wear seatbelts. It is prohibited to use mobile phones while driving.

### **10.7 Smoking**

Smoking, including electronic cigarettes, is not permitted inside any venue in Samoa nor in the Government of Samoa vehicles. Designated smoking areas will be available at CHOGM 2024 venues.

### **10.8 Business and Shopping**

Public offices are open from 0900 to 1700hrs from Monday to Friday. Business opening hours are usually from 0800 to 1800hrs, Monday to Friday. Businesses' opening hours range between 09:00 to 14:00hrs on weekends.

## **10.9 Plastic Bags**

As part of an environmental protection policy, single-use plastic bags are banned in Samoa. Customers at supermarkets and stores will be supplied with an environmentally friendly alternative at a cost.