

#### ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2014



**Regional Connectivity for Shared Prosperity** 

#### UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 07.00 GMT, WEDNESDAY, 6 AUGUST 2014

### SAMOA

#### Country briefing notes

#### Economic growth likely resumes positive growth in 2014

- The economy contracted by 0.5% in 2013 after growing by 2.7% in 2012. Samoa is highly vulnerable to natural disasters, as witnessed by the extensive damages caused by Cyclone Evan in many parts of the country in late 2012.
- A strong rebound in agricultural production following Cyclone Evan helped stabilize domestic price levels in 2013, after the inflation rate of 6.2% in 2012. Moderating international food and fuel prices were also a contributing factor.
- The economy is projected to turn from a contraction in 2013 to expand 2% in 2014, due to an expansionary budget, which is aimed at stimulating growth.

#### **Policy developments**

- The fiscal deficit narrowed to 4.4% of GDP in 2013. Government revenue rose by about 10% due to higher external grants for post-cyclone rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- Although the fiscal shortfall remains above the official target of 3.5% of GDP, there has been some progress in efforts that began in 2010 aimed at achieving medium-term fiscal consolidation.
- Samoa's medium-term development plan identifies 14 key priorities, including macroeconomic stability, promoting tourism and business development and improved access to essential social services, as well as to safe drinking water, sanitation and transport.

#### Policy challenges faced by Pacific island developing economies

- Pacific island developing economies continue to face the growing challenge of providing basic services to the poor. The situation is compounded by falling levels of official development assistance, lower agricultural productivity, growing populations, high youth unemployment, and low and uneven economic growth.
- Pacific island countries also have to deal with the increasing threat from climate change. Climate change, including ocean acidification and sea-level rise, affects both the natural environment and economic and social development, particularly for vulnerable populations.

- Pacific island countries need to adopt policies that develop their comparative advantages in agriculture, tourism and fisheries in a sustainable fashion. These policies also need to promote jobs, particularly for the large pool of unemployed youth.
- To enhance job-rich growth, Pacific island economies need more private sector investment, especially in niche markets that can overcome market size and distance disadvantages.
- Development of rural areas and outer islands through the provision of necessary infrastructure and support for leveraging sustainable resource-based sectors will foster improved livelihoods and mitigate rural-to-urban migration.

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