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CONCERNING FATHER FRANCIS (FRANK) GERARD KLEP

Auseugaefa M.T Vaasatia Poloma Komiti, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Prime Minister and Cabinet, today made the following statement concerning Father Francis (Frank) Gerard Klep (Father Klep).

"Father Klep is an Australian citizen who entered Samoa as a Temporary Resident in 1998.

As part of his application to enter Samoa, Father Klep declared on 20/1/97 that:

"21. I am a person of good character and reputation and of good health and have never been convicted of a criminal offence."

Father Klep's declaration was witnessed by a Father John Murphy of Lysterfield, Victoria, Australia. I understand that Father Murphy is a senior official in the Salesian Order of the Catholic Church and that Father Klep is a member of the Salesian Order.

Father Klep's declaration was false.

Yesterday (Tuesday 22/6/04), through the Attorney General, I received an official report from the Australian Federal Police stating that:

(a) Father Klep had been convicted in 1994 in the Melbourne Magistrates Court, Victoria, Australia on 4 counts of indecent assault of 2 boys who were under Father Klep's care at the Salesian Secondary College, Rupertswood, Victoria, Australia. Father Klep was sentenced to 3 months imprisonment on each charge to be served as an intensive correction order; and

(b) Father Klep faces a further 5 charges of indecent assault on a boy who was under Father Klep's care at the Salesian Secondary College, Rupertswood.

As a result of the above information I have exercised my duty under the Immigration Act 2004 to:

(a) order Father Klep to be deported to Victoria, Australia; and

(b) declare Father Klep to be permanently declared a Prohibited Immigrant.

The Government of Samoa is liaising with the Australian Federal Police and the Government of Australia to facilitate Father Klep's return to Australia to face the outstanding criminal charges against him.

The Government of Samoa notes:

(a) the role of Father John Murphy in witnessing Father Klep's false declaration to enter Samoa; and

(b) that it is alleged that another Salesian Order priest, Father John (Jack) Ayres in Samoa and that Father Ayres faces similar charges to Father Klep in Victoria, Australia.

The Government will follow up these matters and, if the facts are established, will deport Fathers Murphy and Ayres and declare them Prohibited Immigrants.

The Government of Samoa notes that it appears the Right Reverend Catholic Archbishop of Samoa was not informed about Father Klep's criminal past and that His Grace may have been deceived and misled about Father Klep by Father Klep and senior officials of the Catholic Church in Australia.

The Government of Samoa will discuss with His Grace about what action the

Catholic Church and the Government of Samoa can take to minimize the risk of further sex offenders connected with the Catholic Church coming to Samoa and putting our citizens, particularly our children at risk.

The Government of Samoa records its thanks to the Australian Federal Police, the Office of the Australian High Commissioner to Samoa and the Australian Government, through the Honourable Alexander Downer, Australian Minister of Foreign Affairs, for their timely support and cooperation in dealing with this matter. It is appreciated.

Finally, on behalf of the Government of Samoa I say to the Samoan people and to citizens of other countries that the Government will do all in its power to:

- (a) prevent sex offenders coming to Samoa; and
- (b) protect Samoan citizens, especially our children."

DATED this 23rd day of June 2004.

Auseugaefa M.T Vaasatia Poloma Komiti

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

MINISTRY OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET

Added: 23rd June 2004

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