

## PRESS RELEASE

26 March 2013

### **European Investment Bank backs development of remote aviation in the Pacific**

The European Investment Bank has agreed to help examine safety improvements, upgrading of terminal facilities and more efficient power use at airports in the Cook Islands and Samoa. The USD 1.1m technical assistance programme (EUR 850,000) will be used to improve preparation of key investment expected to improve tourism, regional integration and economic development.

The technical assistance agreements were signed in Auckland by Hon Henry Tuakeu Puna, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands and Hon Tuilaepa Aiono Sailele Malielegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa and European Investment Bank Vice President responsible for lending in the Pacific, Pim van Ballekom currently visiting the region.

In the Cook Islands the technical assistance will help the Cook Islands Airport Authority examine how to improve runway safety at Rarotonga airport, upgrade the airport terminal and examine ways to increase use of renewable energy.

“The Cook Islands is truly appreciative of this technical assistance toward this crucial sector, given the importance of sustaining vital national infrastructure and the key services for our tourism-driven economy,” said Prime Minister Henry Puna. “Rarotonga Airport is a significant part of our priority to promote a ‘Clean and Green’ destination and we are encouraged by this support to also explore the renewable energy power generation of our gateway to the whole country.”

In Samoa the European Investment Bank support will help ensure long-term viability of the Samoa Airport Authority crucial for transport across the seven islands in the archipelago and essential for tourism, commerce, education and medical support. This technical assistance will complement a short-/medium-term investment programme of the World Bank to improve operational safety and oversight of international and domestic air transport that will be carried out under their Pacific Aviation Investment Programme. The EIB is highly committed to work closely with the Government of Samoa, the World Bank and Australia in the implementation of this project alongside the technical assistance project of the European Investment Bank.

“Samoa depends heavily on tourism for foreign exchange earnings and employment. Having the necessary infrastructure and services such as a good airport is critical for the development of tourism in Samoa. The technical assistance provided by the European Investment Bank will allow a strategic review of the airport operations and its financial management to ensure that efficient services to the travelling public are provided sustainably. Samoa has had a long association with the European Investment Bank and I would like to again thank the European Investment Bank for the support it is providing this time towards the improvements of Samoa’s international airport and its aviation sector,” said Prime Minister Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi.

“Small nation states in the Pacific are challenged by their remote location and depend on air travel for work, education and health. The European Investment Bank is committed to supporting key infrastructure essential for poverty reduction and sustainable growth in the region. We look forward to working closely with our partners in the region to prepare projects for future investment.” said Pim van Ballekom, European Investment Bank Vice President responsible for lending in the Pacific.

#### **Press contacts:**

For more information about the EIB please contact: Richard Willis, +352 621 555 758, [willis@eib.org](mailto:willis@eib.org)  
Website: [www.eib.org/press](http://www.eib.org/press) - Press office: +352 4379 21000 – [press@eib.org](mailto:press@eib.org)