

Proactive Release

24 April 2024

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
<i>Cabinet Minute of Decision – Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Winston Peters and Hon Dr Shane Reti – February 2024</i>	CAB-24-MIN-0073
<i>Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Winston Peters and Hon Dr Shane Reti – Tuesday 6 February – Saturday 10 February 2024</i>	

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the OIA that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to OIA redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 7(b): to avoid prejudicing relations between the Government of New Zealand and the Government of the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials; and
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Winston Peters and Hon Dr Shane Reti - February 2024

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 11 March 2024, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Rt Hon Winston Peters under CAB-24-SUB-0073 on his travel, together with Hon Dr Shane Reti, from 6 to 10 February 2024, to Tonga, Cook Islands and Samoa for bilateral visits.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

~~[Restricted]~~

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Winston Peters and Hon Dr Shane Reti – Tuesday 6 February – Saturday 10 February 2024

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Tonga, Cook Islands and Samoa from Tuesday 6 February to Saturday 10 February 2024. Minister of Health and Minister of Pacific Peoples, Hon Dr Shane Reti also joined the delegation.

Report

- 1 This visit, to three locations in four days, successfully demonstrated the renewed commitment under the New Zealand Government to engaging with Pacific partners. The pace of engagements - which included substantive meetings with political leaders, visits to local projects and receptions - allowed the visits to have high impact and good profile. It was also an opportunity to reconnect with the incoming and outgoing chairs of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), and the host of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM),^{s9(2)(g)(i)} We sought to demonstrate that this government will be more present, that we will be active and respectful, good listeners and partners in the region.
- 2 Common interests discussed across all three visits included the bilateral and development relationships, opportunities for improvement in facilitating people-to-people links, enhancing post-COVID-19 health cooperation, climate change cooperation, labour mobility, and regional relationships.
- 3 The participation of Minister Reti brought relevant portfolio depth given the importance of health cooperation in these partnerships, but also underlined our broad, whole-of-government engagement in the Pacific. The value of New Zealand's health support, and in particular the Polynesian Health Corridors programme, was reiterated by partners. Engagements reinforced the close links with diaspora populations and highlighted the continued need to support Pacific communities in New Zealand.

Tonga

- 4 Highlights of the programme in Tonga included a roundtable meeting led by Acting Prime Minister Hon. Samiu Vaipulu and Cabinet Ministers, and the opening of the Pharmacy Warehouse, to which New Zealand had provided NZ\$2.4 million for the construction. There was also a contribution of NZ\$20 million to the programme *Weather Ready Pacific*. Both countries agreed to reinforce structured engagements through a refreshed Statement of Partnership and to schedule High Level Consultations. Tonga also proposed annual Ministerial-level meetings.

5 s6(a)

6 The importance of PIF as the pre-eminent Pacific region mechanism was discussed. We assured Vaipulu of New Zealand's commitment to supporting Tonga as incoming Chair of the Forum and helping to ensure its success.

7 Education was highlighted as a key priority area for Tonga. s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)

8 On the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, Vaipulu hoped to work together to address issues for workers, including accommodation, benefits and workers' rights. We noted New Zealand was trying to come up with solutions and suggested we could provide more support in training.

9 Regarding economic development, Vaipulu thanked New Zealand for the commitment to rebuild the Parliament building and the installation of the second ICT cable. s6(a)

10 Minister Reti met separately with Tonga's Minister of Health, Dr. 'Akau'ola, who raised ambitions for Tonga National University to develop its School of Medicine, particularly in post graduate diplomas. Dr. 'Akau'ola noted the need for more nutritionists and pharmacists. He asked to formalise an arrangement to upskill emergency medicine doctors.

Cook Islands

11 In Rarotonga, the visit involved a ground-breaking ceremony for a New Zealand-funded farmers and crafts market at Punanga Nui Market, meetings with Prime Minister Brown, Cabinet members, and the Leader of the Opposition. Minister Reti undertook a visit to Rarotonga Hospital. The day concluded with a Waitangi Day reception.

12 Brown said our visit presented an opportunity to reaffirm economic, health, security and climate resilience as ongoing bilateral priorities. He thanked New Zealand for its support during COVID-19. Brown welcomed our announcement of an additional \$16.5 million in climate finance support, and asked that New Zealand continue its Polynesian Health Corridors and Core Sector Support programmes. Brown underlined the importance of our joint Infrastructure Trust Fund (ITF), which had funded the Punanga Nui Market.

13 On chairing of the PIF, Brown described it as a very successful Leaders' meeting. He underscored the significant interest in the Pacific on the part of dialogue partners.

14 Brown highlighted in a presentation the importance of seabed mining for the Cook Islands' economic independence, ^{s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)}

15 ^{s6(a), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)}

Regarding the Cook Islands' proposed trilateral security agreement, Brown told media that Rarotonga was looking for more of an expansion of the existing arrangements in place, including as they relate to defence, transnational crime, and cyber, air and maritime security.

16 ^{s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii)}

Samoa

17 In Samoa, we met with the Head of State (O le Ao o le Malo), the Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa, and the Leader of the Opposition Tuila'epa. The delegation also attended a Waitangi Day reception, and announced new IDC funding for the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). New funding was also announced during a visit to the National University of Samoa for the Bachelor of Health Science programme, and for the second phase of the Polynesian Health Corridors programme.

18 Both countries signed a renewed Statement of Partnership 2024-2028 which was updated to acknowledge new priorities including the Pathway for the Development of Samoa, CHOGM 2024 and our Climate Finance Partnership.

19 ^{s6(a)}

20 Fiame thanked New Zealand for the support we'd provided for CHOGM ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i)}

21 ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i)}

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

22 s6(a), s6(b)(i)

Proactive release

23 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4 on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. The paper will be subject to redaction as appropriate on the grounds set out under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

24 I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt. Hon Winston Peters

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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