

Proactive Release

06/12/2022

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: Hon Nanaia Mahuta</i>	CAB-22-MIN-0452
<i>Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to Niue and Tonga: 15-19 August 2022</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 international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;



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: Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Portfolio **Foreign Affairs**

On 25 October 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Nanaia Mahuta under CAB-22-SUB-0452 on her travel, from 15 to 19 August 2022, to Niue and Tonga for bilateral visits.

Rachel Hayward
Acting Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released
by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

[RESTRICTED]

Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet

Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to Niue and Tonga: 15-19 August 2022

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Niue and Tonga over 15-19 August 2022.

Report

- 2 My travel to Niue and Tonga over 15-19 August underscored the deep enduring whakapapa connections and culture we share with Polynesia. With disruptions due to the pandemic, it had been five years since Niue had last received a visit, and four for Tonga. Tikanga and Mātauranga Māori played a meaningful part of engagements in both countries.
- 3 Climate resilience was at the forefront of discussions in both countries and a centrepiece of my travel was the launch of *Tui te Waka a Kiwa – Aotearoa New Zealand International Climate Finance Strategy*. There are now some identified priorities to work towards, including ahead of the 2024 50th Anniversary of Niue's Self-Governance.
- 4 Detailed reporting has been produced by the diplomatic posts in Niue and Nuku'alofa and circulated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade's formal message system.

Niue

- 5 My travel to Niue was an opportunity to build on the conversations and connections established during the Premier's visit to Aotearoa New Zealand in July 2022. It also coincided with an unprecedented whale season with tohorā a daily reminder of the importance Niue attaches to the preservation of its moana.
- 6 Specific objectives were to:
 - 6.1 Reinforce our deep ties and the priority we give to the special relationship between Aotearoa New Zealand and Niue;
 - 6.2 Highlight that we continue to stand with Niue, as we have throughout the pandemic and during its economic recovery; and,
 - 6.3 Demonstrate our shared understandings on regional issues, including regional security, Pacific Islands Forum unity, climate change and the blue Pacific.
- 7 My conversations both individually with Premier Dalton Tagelagi and in meeting with his full Cabinet centred on our constitutional ties and how to mark the 50th Anniversary of Niue assuming self-government in free association with New Zealand

RESTRICTED

in 2024. We discussed a number of ideas such as further support for language revitalisation and culture, and support for Niue's climate change priorities in renewable energy and ocean conservation. I invited the Premier to return to me with further thinking on an appropriate gift.

- 8 I was privileged to be invited by Speaker Hima Douglas to be the first Minister and external visitor to address the Niue Legislative Assembly in the new Fale Fono II. Both the original building and the new Fale Fono II were funded by Aotearoa New Zealand. In my address I spoke to the value of intergenerational resilience and our shared commitment to the core principles that support good governance, particularly as the region and world face increasing challenges to peace and stability. Responding comments by MPs framed the relationship as one of partnership.
- 9 As part of my visit to Niue Foa Hospital I was able to acknowledge the significant achievements of Niue's health service's response to COVID-19, which eliminated omicron from the community for the second time, the day after the delegation departed Niue. I met with frontline health workers and was able to see in person the value of the cooperation between Niue and Aotearoa New Zealand through the Polynesian Health Corridors programme.
- 10 I also visited the worksite of a major aviation infrastructure project, the resurfacing of Hanan International Airport. Work is being led by Downer New Zealand Limited, with the Regional Manager noting the challenges presented by COVID-19 disruptions to global supply chains and cost increases related to volatile global markets. He also noted the partnership Downer provided with the local workforce, creating at least 12 jobs for Niueans with up-skilling opportunities.
- 11 A theme throughout my engagements was cultural resilience. It was clear that language is a key pillar to Niue's cultural identity and a number of my conversations centred around language revitalisation. Events that particularly demonstrated our strong cultural and people-to-people links included:
 - 11.1 Being given a moving takalo welcome by the Head Students of Niue High School, which I visited to open buildings refurbished in July during Exercise Tropic Twilight. There I announced Aotearoa New Zealand's support to the preservation of Pacific languages, including Vagahau Niue, as well as an exchange between Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori and the Niue Language Commission.
 - 11.2 Handing across a Lawes Bible, a Vagahau Niue translation dating from 1914, a significant taonga to Niue. The great grandson of Frank and Sarah Lawes, two of the first missionaries to live on Niue, had gifted the Bible and the family's photograph album to Niue. The bible will be stored at Tāoga Niue Museum, which I visited at its new site following Tropical Cyclone Heta in 2004.
 - 11.3 Meeting with the Niue Council of Women to discuss women's leadership, including within Niue's Assembly, with upcoming elections in 2023.

Tonga

- 12 My travel to Tonga provided the opportunity for the first in-country Aotearoa New Zealand ministerial engagement since Prime Minister Hu'akavameiliku took office in 2021. Visiting shortly after Tonga reopened its borders also sent a strong

RESTRICTED

signal of our enduring partnership in light of recent disasters ^{s6(a)}
s6(a)

13 Specific objectives were to:

13.1 Reconnect kanohi ki te kanohi to demonstrate the value Aotearoa New Zealand places on the bilateral relationship with Tonga, and take the opportunity to engage and share perspectives on shared bilateral and key regional issues; and,

13.2 Further consolidate the relationship gains on the back of the significant support we have provided to Tonga in managing the impacts from the Hunga Tonga – Hunga Ha’apai volcanic eruption and tsunami, and the COVID-19 outbreak, and highlight the breadth and depth of our development assistance.

14 I canvassed a range of bilateral and international issues in my formal meetings with King Tupou VI, Prime Minister Hu’akavameiliku, Crown Prince Tupouto’a ‘Ulukalala, Foreign Minister ‘Utoikamanu, and Minister of Trade and Economic Development Viliami Latu. Prime Minister Hu’akavameiliku acknowledged Aotearoa New Zealand as a key partner, something that had been evident through the pandemic and in responding to the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha’api volcanic eruption and Tsunami.
s6(a), s6(b)(i)

We discussed education opportunities, sporting engagements, ^{s6(a)}
s6(a), s6(b)(i)

15 Tongan Ministers reiterated that climate change remained the greatest existential threat to the Pacific. Pacific-led local solutions and finding ways to reduce the administrative burden in accessing climate finance were important. We also discussed the importance of having a Pacific voice on climate change in international fora and weaving it into key regional frameworks – such as the Suva Agreement and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent – into our collective climate action. On regional issues, Prime Minister Hu’akavameiliku noted that Tonga would be hosting PIF in 2024, and would welcome Aotearoa New Zealand’s support in due course.

16 I was able to reinforce New Zealand’s commitment to addressing climate change during the launch in Tonga of Aotearoa New Zealand’s International Climate Finance strategy – Tuia te Waka a Kiwa. Our increased commitment of \$1.3 billion (50 percent of it directed towards the Pacific, and 50 percent for adaptation) responds to the call from developing countries to take a more holistic and comprehensive response to climate change – moving from a project-by-project approach to one focused on transformational partnerships. As part of this launch I also announced an initial contribution of NZ\$8 million to Tonga during the launch of Aotearoa New Zealand’s Climate Finance Strategy.

17 Other key engagements included:

17.1 Visiting the Queen Salote Institute of Nursing and Allied Health, where I provided a keynote address at an event profiling the strategic health partnership between Aotearoa New Zealand and Tonga and met with senior health officials and nurses. I also launched a new activity, supporting Tonga’s health workforce deliver quality health services and improve health outcomes.

RESTRICTED

- 17.2 Holding a breakfast kōrero with women in leadership in Tonga where I discussed the importance of building resilience through diversity.
- 17.3 Attending a reception onboard the HMNZS Manawanui provided further opportunities to meet with a broad range of partners, including the Lord Speaker and Lord Vaea, and announce that Exercise Tropic Twilight would take place in Tonga in 2023. Having the ship in port, near the centre of downtown Nuku'alofa was a tangible expression of Aotearoa's presence in, and commitment to, Tonga.

Proactive Release

- 18 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO(18)4 on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. Proactive release is subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Minita Take Aorere / Minister of Foreign Affairs

Proactively Released
by the Minister of Foreign Affairs