



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio

Portfolio **Foreign Affairs**

On 27 June 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Aupito William Sio under CAB-22-SUB-0245 on his travel, from 1 to 4 June 2022, to Fiji to represent New Zealand at a Special Ministerial meeting relating to the United States Tuna Treaty.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

In Confidence

Office of the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Fiji on 1-4 June 2022 to attend a Special Ministerial meeting hosted by the Pacific Island Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA) and the Government of the Republic of Fiji.

Report

- 1 I attended the FFA Special Ministerial meeting in Nadi, Fiji on 2-3 June 2022, co-hosted by the Government of the Republic of Fiji and FFA. I was supported by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.
- 2 The purpose of the meeting was for the Ministers and officials of the Pacific Island Parties (PIPs) to the United States (US) Tuna Treaty (Treaty) to discuss the progress on the Treaty renegotiation and next steps. The Treaty is a key means of US engagement in the region, and provides a platform for broader cooperation in areas such as regional security, fisheries governance, and economic development opportunities.
- 3 My attendance reinforced Aotearoa New Zealand's close partnership with PIPs,^{s6(a)} . I advocated for continuation of a Treaty that supports Pacific regional solidarity, delivers economic benefits for PIPs and promotes positive US engagement.
- 4 Prior to the ministerial meeting, I held informal discussions with Hon Semi Koroilavesau, the Forum Fisheries Committee (FFC) Ministerial Chair, and Dr Manu Tupou-Rosen, the FFA Director-General. These engagements were to reflect New Zealand's support and commitment to achieving regional consensus in the meeting to follow, and were received positively.

Pacific Ministers continue to pursue US\$60 million as a fair reflection of the value of the Treaty

s6(a)

10 Following the meeting, the FFC Ministerial Chair wrote to Dr Monica Medina, the US Assistant Secretary for Oceans and International Environment and Scientific Affairs, inviting the US to meet with PIPs Ministers in Nadi before 30 June 2022 with an aim to conclude negotiation on the economic assistance.

s9(2)(g)(i)

Meeting with the Fiji Minister of Health

- 12 While in Nadi, I met with Fiji's Minister of Health and delivered 50,000 rapid-antigen tests donated by New Zealand, as promised by the Minister of Foreign Affairs in her March 2022 visit to Fiji. The engagement was positive, and we discussed transitioning to living with COVID-19 in the Pacific region, and shared health priorities and challenges.

Importance of face-to-face Ministerial Engagement

- 13 The travel demonstrated the value of in-person Ministerial meetings, with Ministers working towards consensus and achieving regional solidarity. Issues that arose were able to be discussed informally and resolved with more ease than virtual discussions. The engagements were important, both formally and informally to further build on Aotearoa New Zealand's strong relationships and connections to PIPs countries, as our extended whānau of the Pacific.
- 14 It will be necessary for New Zealand to have continued Ministerial representation at future Pacific Ministers' meetings relating to the US Tuna Treaty renegotiation, as the Treaty is an important regional issue between the Pacific and the US. I have sought the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister for Oceans and Fisheries agreement for the continuity of my engagement with Pacific Ministers, to demonstrate New Zealand's ongoing commitment to support a successful renegotiation of the Treaty for the Pacific region,

s9(2)(i)

Proactive release

- 15 I propose to delay the release of this paper beyond 30 business days, until the Treaty renegotiation is concluded, to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Aupito William Sio
Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs