

Proactive Release

25/09/2023

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: Prime Minister and Hon Damien O’Connor</i>	CAB-23-MIN-0363
<i>Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Chris Hipkins and Hon Damien O’Connor</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; 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: Prime Minister and Hon Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Prime Minister**

On 14 August 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Prime Minister under CAB-23-SUB-0363 on his travel, together with Hon Damien O'Connor to:

- 1 Brussels, Belgium to oversee the signing of the New Zealand-European Union Free Trade Agreement and Horizons Europe Agreement;
- 2 Stockholm, Sweden for a bilateral visit;
- 3 Vilnius, Lithuania to attend the NATO Summit and hold bilateral meetings.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released by the Minister of Trade and Export Growth

~~(Restricted)~~

Office of the Prime Minister
Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Chris Hipkins and Hon Damien O'Connor

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Belgium, Sweden, and Lithuania on 8-12 July 2023.

Report

Brussels

- 1 From 8-9 July, I made a visit to Brussels accompanied by Minister O'Connor and a media delegation.
- 2 Minister O'Connor, European Commission Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis, and Spanish Ambassador Marcos Alonso (representing the European Council) signed the New Zealand-European Free Trade Agreement (NZ-EU FTA) in Brussels on Sunday 9 July. I witnessed the signing alongside European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Following the ceremony, Minister O'Connor and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis held a press conference highlighting the benefits the FTA will deliver to both economies.
- 3 New Zealand's Ambassador to the EU signed the Horizon Europe Agreement in the same ceremony. The Horizon Europe programme will enable New Zealand researchers to collaborate with European counterparts on cutting-edge research on the next generation of clean tech, biotech, digital projects, health, and other fields. This is the first Association Agreement that the EU has concluded with a country outside the "European neighbourhood".
- 4 I had a one-on-one discussion with President von der Leyen, which was followed by a formal lunch, also attended by Minister O'Connor and Executive Vice President Dombrovskis.
- 5 The President and I discussed Russia's illegal war in Ukraine,^{s6(a)}
^{s6(a)} the climate crisis, energy issues, the NATO Summit, and the FTA. We thanked the FTA negotiating teams for their efforts and hosted the chief negotiators at the lunch.^{s6(a), s6(b)(i)}
- 6 Minister O'Connor and Executive Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis met for dinner in Brussels on the evening of Saturday 8 July. The Ministers discussed next steps for the NZ-EU FTA,^{s6(a)}

the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, the Spanish elections, and sport, among other topics.

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

8 Minister O'Connor and I were the guests of honour at a business reception at the New Zealand Residence on the morning of 9 July. The event was well attended by New Zealand business representatives, including ANZCO Foods Europe, Dawn Aerospace, Fonterra, Mainfreight, Manta 5, Orbica, Sistema, Supply Chain Logistics, T&G Global, Villa Maria/Indevin, and Zespri. The event was an opportunity for the Minister and I to engage with New Zealand business representatives in the EU and to hear perspectives on the current economic and trade outlook.

Stockholm

9 I visited Stockholm on 9-10 July, also accompanied by Minister O'Connor and the media delegation. The key purpose of the visit was to express New Zealand's thanks for Sweden's steadfast advocacy for the NZ-EU FTA during Sweden's term as President of the Council of the European Union.

10 Prime Minister Kristersson and Trade Minister Forssell hosted Minister O'Connor and I for a working lunch, where the Minister and I reiterated New Zealand's gratitude to Sweden in the FTA process. New Zealand's commitments to date on Ukraine were warmly welcomed and there was strong interest in our views on geostrategic trends and developments in the Indo-Pacific, including New Zealand's engagement with China.

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

s6(a)

I welcomed increasing interest from the US, EU, and UK in engaging the Pacific.

12 My programme included a meeting with leading Swedish company representatives with interests in New Zealand, and a New Zealand food and beverage promotion event. The business engagements were an early opportunity to promote the NZ-EU FTA and highlight the opportunities for importers and exporters. Businesses I engaged with signalled a strong interest in the FTA and were clear on its benefits due to lower tariffs, new rules, and greater profile. Businesses noted the importance of green transition,^{s9(2)(g)(i)}

New Zealand was seen as like-minded in this effort.

13 Minister O'Connor stayed on in Sweden to sign an update to our existing Air Services Agreement. The Minister also attended an in-depth roundtable

discussion with New Zealand-linked Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operating in Sweden.

Vilnius

- 14 I participated in a session with NATO's four partners in the Indo Pacific, Sweden, and the EU at the NATO leaders' Summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 10-12 July.
- 15 In my intervention at the NATO Summit, I emphasised New Zealand's long-standing relationship with NATO, our dependence as a small state on a strong and effective rules-based international order, and our commitment to supporting Ukraine. I noted New Zealand's commitment to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, our concerns with strategic competition in the Pacific, and emphasised that climate change remained the single greatest existential threat in the region. I reinforced that New Zealand was committed to working with partners as the bedrock of the New Zealand-NATO relationship.

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

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- 18 I met jointly with the other three Indo Pacific leaders (Australia, South Korea, and Japan) ahead of our session with NATO Allies, where we discussed regional security ^{s6(a)}

Following our discussion, we released a joint statement strongly condemning North Korea's launch of a long-range ballistic missile.

- 19 In the margins of the Summit, I held bilateral meetings with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Støre, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, South Korean President Yoon, Lithuanian Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė, Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte,

French President Emmanuel Macron, and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Common themes covered in these discussions included Russia's war against Ukraine and its global impact and implications; ^{s6(a)}

Each meeting also confirmed New Zealand's strong bilateral relationship with these likeminded partners.

- 20 At the NATO Leaders' Dinner hosted by President Nauséda, I was also able to speak to UK Prime Minister Sunak, Italian Prime Minister Meloni, Belgian Prime Minister de Croo, and North Macedonia Prime Minister Kovačevski. I spoke briefly with US President Biden during the NATO partner session, had a pull-aside with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and engaged informally with Australian Prime Minister Albanese.
- 21 It was clear from these discussions that New Zealand's contribution to Ukraine's self-defence is recognised and appreciated.
- 22 I also had a brief informal discussion with Ukraine's President Zelenskyy. Unfortunately, our scheduled bilateral could not take place due to the President's meeting with President Biden running significantly overtime. I acknowledged Ukraine's courage and resilience in the face of Russia's illegal invasion and assured President Zelenskyy of New Zealand's strong support for Ukraine. I noted that New Zealand saw Russia's invasion as not only an attack on Ukraine, but on the international rules-based system and the values upon which that system was built. President Zelenskyy thanked New Zealand for our support. Officials confirmed that we would have a longer discussion by telephone at a future date.

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

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Chris Hipkins

Prime Minister