

Proactive Release

31 October 2023

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute have been proactively released by the Minister for Trade & Export Growth

Title	Reference
<i>Cabinet Minute of Decision – Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O’Connor</i>	CAB-23-MIN-0438
<i>Report on Overseas Travel: 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; and
- 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 Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Trade and Export Growth**

On 18 September 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Damien O'Connor under CAB-23-SUB-0438 on his travel, from 26 August to 2 September 2023, to India, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates for bilateral meetings.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released by the Minister for Trade and Export Growth

~~[Restricted]~~

Office of the Minister for Trade and Export Growth

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to India, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates from 26 August – 2 September.

Report

2 The focus of my visit to India was to sustain high-level political engagement and work with my Ministerial counterparts towards a more broad-based economic partnership. My travel to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) enabled me to discuss with my counterparts the New Zealand – Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Free Trade Agreement negotiations, and New Zealand's decision to enter into exploratory discussions with the UAE towards a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

3 My travel was an opportunity to highlight India's importance to New Zealand as a partner in the Indo-Pacific and outline our strategy for lifting ambition in our trade relationship. During my visit I met with my ministerial counterparts: Minister of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Hon Parshottam Rupala; Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Hon Narendra Singh Tomar; Minister of Commerce and Industry, Hon Piyush Goyal; and Minister for Civil Aviation, Hon Jyotiraditya Scindia. I also met with the High Commissioners of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to discuss their respective countries' recently announced intentions to join RCEP.

4 My meetings with my counterpart Ministers traversed a range of issues, including trade partnership building, cooperation on agriculture and horticulture, upgrading air travel linkages, market access issues, as well as G20, IPEF and the WTO. Outcomes from these meetings included ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i)}

a joint media statement between myself and Minister Goyal, which provided a strong signal of India's willingness to strengthen our economic relationship; a Memorandum of Cooperation to upgrade our Air Services Agreement; and political endorsement for our ambition to lift relations by directing government effort to sector cooperation, including by further progressing two Memoranda of Cooperation on agriculture and horticulture.

5 My visit coincided with that of a 50 strong New Zealand business delegation, the largest ever to visit India, led by the India New Zealand Business Council, and additionally enabled the opportunity to meet with key Indian private sector stakeholders. This included engagements with the Confederation of Indian Industry and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and meetings with

representatives of Amul, the National Dairy Development Board, and Air India. Through these engagements I laid out New Zealand's priorities and strategy to lift our economic and trade partnership with India. This included building better India-New Zealand business-to-business relationship architecture; pursuing primary sector partnerships that deliver commercially meaningful market access opportunities; supporting education partnerships; and encouraging the commencement of non-stop flights between Auckland and New Delhi.

6 In Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, I met with my counterpart Ministers: Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture HE Abdulrahman Al Fadhli; Minister of Commerce, HE Majid bin Abdullah al Qasabi; Assistant Minister of Commerce, HE Dr Iman Al Mutairi; and the GCC Secretary General, HE Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi. Across all meetings, I confirmed New Zealand's commitment to concluding the New Zealand-GCC FTA, and notified my counterparts of my upcoming visit to Dubai to discuss a possible bilateral process. We agreed to review and refresh the GCC-NZ Strategic Dialogue Action Plan for a new four-year period (2024-2027).

7 In Dubai, UAE, I met with the UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi and Minister of State for International Cooperation Reem Al Hashimy to formally notify them of New Zealand's decision to enter exploratory discussions on a CEPA with the UAE. Discussions with my counterparts also traversed a range of topics, such as COP 28 and WTO MC13, which the UAE will be hosting later this year and early next.

8 Whilst in the UAE I also met with the President of Emirates Airlines to discuss the general direction of tourism and trade, and enquire into Emirates' decarbonisation journey. I also met with a range of New Zealand business representatives in the region to gain insights on the key opportunities and challenges for New Zealand companies operating in the Middle East market.

Proactive release

9 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

10 I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister for Trade and Export Growth