

# Proactive Release

Date: 11 May 2023

The following Cabinet paper has been proactively released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni	CAB-23-MIN-0098
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- 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;



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni

**Portfolio**                      **Associate Foreign Affairs**

On 27 March 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Carmel Sepuloni under CAB-23-SUB-0098 on her travel, from 23 to 24 February 2023, to attend the Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat, on behalf of the Prime Minister.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released  
by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

In Confidence

Office of the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Pacific Region)

Chair, Cabinet

### **Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Carmel Sepuloni**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Fiji 23–24 February to attend the Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat.

#### **Report**

- 1 I attended the Pacific Islands Forum Special Leaders' Retreat and associated events in Nadi, Fiji, 23-24 February, on behalf of the Prime Minister, Hon Chris Hipkins.
- 2 The Retreat was chaired by Fiji and attended by leaders and ministers from Australia, the Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- 3 The Retreat was a celebration of regional unity with Kiribati's formal re-joining of the Forum. It was an opportunity to talanoa on implementing the Suva Agreement, and a number of issues of mutual interest to member countries including the discharge of treated water from Fukushima, the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, labour mobility, and Australia's bid to co-host COP31 with the Pacific. During the Retreat, Baron Waqa (President of Nauru 2013-2019) s6(a) he was duly appointed.
- 4 At the conclusion of the Retreat, the Cook Islands formally took over the role of Forum Chair from Fiji.
- 5 I was able to meet informally with all Pacific leaders, and formally with Fiji, Samoa and Papua New Guinea.

#### *Bilateral with Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka*

- 6 My first bilateral was with Fiji Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka who expressed his sympathy for the loss of life and devastating impact as a result of the January floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. I relayed my sincere thanks, on behalf of the New Zealand Government and people in impacted regions, for Fiji's assistance in sending a contingent of Defence, national disaster management and fire service personnel, who were able to join me on the return leg of the trip.
- 7 s6(a), s6(b)(i)

We had a fruitful discussion on our respective expectations for the Leaders' Retreat and our common interests in labour mobility and the effective functioning of the RSE scheme.

- 8 In closing I extended an invitation, on behalf of Prime Minister Hipkins, to Prime Minister Rabuka to visit Aotearoa New Zealand.

*Bilateral with Prime Minister of Samoa Fiamē Naomi Mata‘afa*

- 9 My bilateral meeting with Samoan Prime Minister Fiamē Naomi Mata‘afa was warm and extensive. Labour mobility was a particular feature, with reflections offered on our respective experiences and current RSE reviews.
- 10 Other matters discussed included New Zealand’s broader immigration settings, our scholarships offering, and Samoa’s planning as it prepares to host the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 2024.

*Bilateral with Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko*

- 11 My bilateral discussion with Papua New Guinea Foreign Minister Justin Tkatchenko was similarly warm and covered a range of topics including the Cyclone Gabrielle response, expectations for the Leaders’ Retreat, <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup> regional security matters, PACER Plus, and labour mobility.
- 12 I noted that Minister Tkatchenko’s recent visit to Aotearoa New Zealand had been disrupted by the floods and Cyclone Gabrielle, and expressed my hope that he might be able to visit under better circumstances in the near future.

**Proactive release**

- 13 I propose to proactively release this paper within 30 business days with redactions made in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982.

**Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Carmel Sepuloni

**Deputy Prime Minister**

**Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (Pacific Region)**