

Proactive Release

13/06/2023

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
<i>Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Nanaia Mahuta</i>	CAB-22-MIN-0152
<i>Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to Fiji, 15-17 March 2023</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;



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 1 May 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Nanaia Mahuta under CAB-23-SUB-0152 on her travel from 15 to 17 March 2023 to Fiji to undertake a bilateral visit.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet

Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to Fiji, 15-17 March 2023

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Fiji on 15-17 March 2023.
- 2 My visit to Fiji in mid-March established strong foundations for longer-term relationships with key Fijian stakeholders. My meetings with Prime Minister Sitiveni Rabuka, senior Fijian Cabinet Ministers, and MPs, reinforced the strong, wide-ranging, and highly valued areas of cooperation between New Zealand and Fiji, which are becoming increasingly mature as Fiji continues to build its leadership role within the region. The visit set the scene well for ongoing relationship building.
- 3 My discussions with stakeholders traversed a wide range of topical issues, including women's leadership, indigenous governance, trade and investment opportunities, democratic strengthening, social well-being, climate change, disaster management, cultural and whakapapa connections, Pacific regionalism, and beyond. Throughout my visit, Fijian stakeholders commented on the value of the varied areas of cooperation between our two countries.
- 4 The visit also illustrated the Pacific Resilience principles in practice through the nexus of our foreign policy and International Development Cooperation, and included a particular focus on the recognition of deep and enduring whakapapa connections – brought to light during a culturally significant visit to Bau island.
- 5 The trip met Aotearoa New Zealand's objectives and reaffirmed our commitment to Fiji. The objectives for my visit were to:
 - 5.1 Build a relationship with the new Fiji Government leadership who were elected in late December 2022;
 - 5.2 Reinforce Aotearoa New Zealand's position as a natural partner for Fiji in the region and demonstrate solidarity on important issues such as climate change and regional security;
 - 5.3 Discuss geopolitical developments in the Indo-Pacific region and reflect on Fiji's recent hosting of the PIF Special Leaders' Retreat;
 - 5.4 Highlight the important role the New Zealand International Development Cooperation programme plays supporting Fiji partners to deliver long-term social and economic resilience for the Fijian people; and
 - 5.5 Express thanks for the deployment of Fiji military and emergency personnel to support the Cyclone Gabrielle response.

Bilateral relationship and regional issues

6 Prime Minister Rabuka and I held a warm and engaging meeting that covered many facets of the bilateral relationship, as well as key regional issues. I acknowledged the success of the PIF leaders' meeting and noted that it sent a strong signal about regional solidarity, and the need to focus on common objectives. s6(a)

s6(b)(i)

7 s6(b)(i)

8 s6(a)

s6(b)(i)

Domestic Fiji issues

9 s6(b)(i)

Cyclone Gabrielle support

10 I acknowledged Fiji's support to Aotearoa New Zealand via the deployment of the 34-strong team which was sent to New Zealand in the wake of Cyclone Gabrielle. Prime Minister Rabuka said that Fiji was glad to help and pay back New Zealand for the support it had provided to Fiji over the years; another example of 'the Pacific way'. Prime Minister Rabuka also acknowledged New Zealand's support to assist in the deployment of a Fijian team to Vanuatu following its recent cyclones.

Climate Change and budget support

11 s6(b)(i)

12 The major announcements from my visit included a package of NZ\$ 20 million in flexible climate finance and NZ\$ 10 million in budget support towards the Fiji Government's social and economic development priorities.

Dinner with Fijian Cabinet Ministers

13 A dinner at the New Zealand Official Residence with six senior Fijian Cabinet Ministers enabled a rich discussion on topical issues for Fiji and its relationship with Aotearoa New Zealand. s6(a)

s6(b)(i)

Meeting with FijiFirst opposition representatives

- 14 My meeting with the FijiFirst opposition took place in the wake of the suspension and then resignation from parliament of previous Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama. Senior FijiFirst MPs Faiyaz Koya and Ioane Naivalurua attended the meeting, which was warm and constructive. s6(b)(i)

Bau Island visit

- 15 My visit to Bau island was deeply significant. Bau lies at the heart of the chiefly system in Fiji as the seat of the recently installed Paramount Chief of the Kubuna Confederacy (widely considered to be the highest-ranked Chief in Fiji), *Turaga na Vunivalu na Tui Kaba*, Ratu Epenisa Cakobau. Outsiders cannot ordinarily visit the island unless invited and this was likely to have been the first ever visit by a government minister from outside Fiji. Ratu Epenisa and I had a friendly and relaxed exchange, where we discussed long-standing cultural and familial connections between New Zealand and Fiji, and the re-establishment of the Great Council of Chiefs, which would meet on Bau island in May this year.

Koroipita Development Project

- 16 I visited the New Zealand-funded Model Towns Charitable Trust site at Koroipita to highlight the benefits that long-term and enduring partnerships can have on communities. Residents, Board Members and staff of Koroipita discussed the positive impact of Koroipita on their lives, particularly the livelihoods training, social welfare services, and financial literacy courses provided by the initiative.
- 17 Detailed reporting has been produced by the New Zealand High Commission in Suva and circulated through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade's formal message system.

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