

4 July 2024

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We refer to your Media enquiry of 12 June 2024 in which you asked:

I'm working on an article for NZ Listener on NZ's potential for peace mediation (for a July publication). I am seeking comment and information from the Ministry for my piece.

Specifically:

- 1. What resources does that Ministry presently allocate for peace mediation and conflict resolution? And if it does so, what do those resources look like and where are they directed?*
- 2. What is currently budgeted for peace mediation and conflict resolution work?*
- 3. Where does peace mediation/conflict resolution sit within the Ministry? Which division/s and how does the effort get advanced by on and offshore staff i.e. at the UN, multilateral fora etc?*
- 4. Has the Ministry noted the Colin Keating-chaired 2023 MFAT Advisory Group report to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the 2018 NZ Alternative report Aotearoa New Zealand and Conflict Prevention: Building a Truly Independent Foreign Policy, which separately recommend that a more proactive approach to mediation/dispute resolution be adopted by NZ and that a Govt-supported peace meditation unit be established?*
- 5. Is the Ministry exploring or undertaking practical efforts in support of these recommendations? If so, what does this look like?*
- 6. If the Ministry is not planning to enhance New Zealand's peace mediation efforts, what are its reasons?*
- 7. Does the Ministry support the general idea of New Zealand being more active in peace mediation - as an engaged and direct broker of peace in foreign conflicts, similar to other small states such as Norway? If not, why not?*
- 8. Does the Ministry currently engage or have plans to engage in professional training to strengthen skills within the NZ foreign service that specifically benefit peace mediation and conflict resolution? If so, what does that look like?*
- 9. Does the Ministry engage with civil society (NGOs, academia etc) in NZ or abroad to actively promote peace meditation? If so, which ones and what does this effort look like?*
- 10. Does the Ministry acknowledge that NZ has the credentials and experience to build on its record in peace mediation after the successful Bougainville Peace Agreement?*

On the same day you were notified that your request would be treated as an Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) Request.

You responded to this notification and added the following to you request:

Other than the information request, could MFAT answer a couple of straightforward questions:

- 1. Is peace mediation part of the Ministry's strategic or operational framework? And if so, in what way is it part?*
- 2. Is the Ministry expected to follow the 2023 Advisory Group's report recommending a greater focus on peace mediation and dispute resolution?*
- 3. As there is no dedicated peace mediation unit within the Ministry, which division handles efforts to help advance peace and the peaceful settlement of conflicts? UN & Commonwealth as part of a wider multilateral focus?*

Conflict prevention and resolution, and the peaceful settlement of disputes are core principles underlying New Zealand's foreign policy and are central to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (the Ministry) strategic direction. Further details of the Ministry's strategic direction can be found on the Ministry website: <https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/our-strategic-direction>.

These principles and activities are embedded across the Ministry's work and are not the responsibility of one specific team. They are reflected in New Zealand's strong support for international law, and for international bodies and frameworks that support mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes, including the United Nations (UN). This includes core funding to support the UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the UN Peacebuilding Fund, the UN Development Programme (which provides peace and security advisers) and UN Women (which has the lead on Women, Peace, and Security).

These principles and activities are reflected in our strong support for regional bodies and frameworks, such as the Pacific Islands Forum and ASEAN, that emphasise the importance of conflict prevention and resolution and provide mediation and good offices to resolve issues and disputes. Pacific Leaders have endorsed a Pacific led approach to peace and security in our region, and New Zealand is strongly committed to supporting this, including through our diplomatic engagement as well as our contributions to regional security through New Zealand security agencies (such as New Zealand Police, and the New Zealand Defence Force).

At present there are no plans to establish a dedicated peace mediation and conflict resolution capability within the Ministry, as it is embedded across the Ministry's work and is part of our daily activities. As such, there is no specific budget allocated to peace mediation and conflict resolution. The Ministry provides training to staff to develop capabilities, such as negotiating skills and cultural awareness and sensitivity, that are relevant to mediation and conflict resolution. When situations warrant it, we are also able to engage professional peace mediators and conflict resolution specialists to support our work.

The Ministry also funds and works with third parties who lead conflict resolution and peace building. For example, the Ministry has provided around NZ\$4m to fund the international peace building Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) Conciliation Resources, that works to build peace in communities affected by climate change, including work in three rural districts in Fiji to help prevent and manage conflicts emerging as a result of climate-change related displacement and relocations.

New Zealand is a trusted partner in peace mediation and has on occasion been invited to play a direct role in mediation processes, such as our work in facilitating the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We continue to offer assistance in support of the ongoing political dialogue between the Autonomous Bougainville Government and the national government of Papua New Guinea. We are open to assisting other mediation efforts in this manner in the future, if requested.

In 2022, the Ministry's then Secretary appointed an Advisory Group chaired by Colin Keating to write a report advising on foreign policy tools available to respond to grave international situations of concern involving threats to peace and security and breaches of human rights. The report has been published on the Ministry website:

<https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/report-of-advisory-group-released?m=813914#search:cmVwb3J0IHRvIHRoZSBzZWNYZXRhcnkqb2YgZm9yZWlnbiBhZmZh aXJz>.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement to media in February in respect of the report, saying amongst other things: "*The Coalition Government will carefully consider the recommendations contained in the Advisory Group's report, taking into account the Government's international agenda and priorities.*"

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website: www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade