

Proactive Release

Published on or before: 05/11/2024

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 of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 20 September 2024</i>	CAB-24-MIN-0370
<i>Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee Minute of Decision - United Nations Security Council 2039-40 Candidature</i>	FPS-24-MIN-0023
<i>United Nations Security Council 2039-40 Candidature Proposal</i>	

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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 of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 20 September 2024

On 23 September 2024, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee for the period ended 20 September 2024:

FPS-24-MIN-0023 **United Nations Security Council 2039-40 Candidature** CONFIRMED
Portfolio: Foreign Affairs

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet

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Minister of Foreign Affairs



Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

Minute of Decision

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United Nations Security Council 2039-40 Candidature

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 17 September 2024, the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the next available slate in which New Zealand could run uncontested for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council for the 2039-40 term;
- 2 **noted** that New Zealand's prospects for success in an uncontested election would be significantly higher, and the costs associated with an uncontested campaign would be substantially lower;
- 3 **agreed** that New Zealand should declare its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2039-40, with elections in June 2038, to maintain the possibility of New Zealand serving within the next two decades;
- 4 **agreed** that this candidature should be reviewed periodically by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (the Minister) ^{s6(a)} based on an assessment of progress made, the likely costs and expected benefits of membership, and competing priorities;
- 5 s6(a)
- 6 **agreed** that officials should seek advice from the Minister on whether to move New Zealand's candidacy forward if an earlier uncontested slate for election becomes available;
- 7 **noted** ^{s9(2)(g)(i)} _{s9(2)(g)(i)} that updated advice on costs and funding will be provided in 2033/34 to inform a decision on whether to continue with the candidature.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Attendance: (see over)

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Judith Collins
Hon Mark Mitchell
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Nicola Grigg

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for FPS
Office of the Chair of FPS
Office of the Minister of Defence

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Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

United Nations Security Council 2039-40 Candidature

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to declare New Zealand's candidature for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations (UN) Security Council for the 2039-40 term.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 Pursuing a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council would contribute to the priorities set out in the Government's foreign policy reset, including by focusing targeted multilateral engagement in areas where New Zealand's core interests and fundamental values are at stake.
- 3 Early announcement of New Zealand's candidacy would improve our chances of running an efficient and successful campaign, as well as signalling the Government's commitment to re-engaging with the world and contributing to critical international security issues in a way that would be valued by likeminded countries, including traditional security partners.

Executive Summary

- 4 To preserve the opportunity to serve on the UN Security Council (UNSC) within the next two decades, it is recommended that New Zealand declare its candidature for a non-permanent seat in 2039-40, which is the next available uncontested slate. Doing so now would provide New Zealand with the best chance of securing election and of avoiding the costs and uncertainties involved in a contested campaign.
- 5 Declaring this candidacy now would not bind future governments. It is recommended that officials regularly seek reconfirmation of this candidature from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, ^{s6(a)}

- 6 ^{s9(2)(g)(i)}

Closer to the time, MFAT would provide updated advice on costs and funding arrangements ^{s9(2)(g)(i)} Previous UNSC candidatures and memberships have been funded from within Ministry baselines.

Background

- 7 The UNSC has primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Security Council is one of the only UN bodies with the power to make

decisions that are binding on all member states under the UN Charter. Its powers and responsibilities include: authorisation of the use of force, conflict prevention and resolution, deployment of international peacekeepers, and imposition of sanctions to address threats to peace and security. It also plays a leading role in decisions on admitting new UN Members, appointing UN Secretaries-General, and electing Judges to the International Court of Justice.

- 8 New Zealand is a founding member of the UN and has served on the UNSC four times: in 1954-55, 1966, 1993-94, and 2015-16. For a country of New Zealand's size, reputation, and resources, seeking membership of the Security Council every 20-30 years is consistent with the principle of equitable geographic distribution in UN elections, and represents a credible contribution to efforts by likeminded partners to maintain the rules-based international system.
- 9 Following the conclusion of our successful 2015-16 UNSC term, the then-National Government instructed officials to "pencil in" New Zealand for membership of the UNSC in 2035-36, noting that future governments would decide closer to the time whether to take it forward (ERD-17-MIN-0009). s6(a) s6(b)(i)

Analysis

Why It Matters

- 10 New Zealand has a strong stake in a well-functioning rules-based international system. The UNSC lies at the heart of this system and plays a central role in the peace and security architecture underpinning our security and prosperity. New Zealand has acknowledged the shortcomings of the UNSC since its inception (including through our consistent opposition to the veto power). However, the benefits of UNSC membership outweigh these shortcomings. Membership is one of the ways in which New Zealand can contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security and would be valued by likeminded countries, particularly traditional security partners, our Pacific neighbours, and small states more generally.

Benefits of Membership

- 11 UNSC membership offers New Zealand the opportunity to amplify and pursue issues of national and regional importance, including security challenges in the Indo-Pacific, s6(a)

The Pacific region has had little representation on the Council, with Australia and New Zealand the only countries from Oceania to have served to date.

- 12 Membership of the UNSC elevates New Zealand's international profile, reputation, and relevance. It significantly increases New Zealand's opportunities for engagement with the Council's Permanent Members (China, France, Russia, the UK, and the US), as well as a broad range of other international partners. New Zealand's contribution

during its previous UNSC terms bought it significant political and diplomatic capital, which has had enduring benefits for our bilateral interests. Membership also provides opportunities for engagement with states we do not otherwise regularly engage with, as well as those with which New Zealand is seeking to deepen its relationships.

- 13 New Zealand is regarded as having performed strongly during its previous UNSC terms, particularly in 1993-94 and 2015-16, when we played a positive and influential role in the international response to security challenges in Africa (Rwanda) and the Middle East (Syria, Israel/Palestine), as well as highlighting issues of importance to our own region, such as the security impacts of climate change. While current geo-strategic tensions have blocked the UNSC from responding effectively to issues where the five permanent members have direct interests (notably Ukraine and Israel/Hamas) the UNSC continues to deliver on a wide range of other peace and security issues on its agenda (e.g. deployment of peace keeping missions, implementation of counter terrorism and non-proliferation sanctions).
- 14 New Zealand has demonstrated that non-permanent members can have an impact, including by leading on key issues, helping to bridge differences between major players, and initiating practical improvements to its ways of working. An example is New Zealand's leadership in 2016 of a UNSC Resolution on healthcare personnel in conflict situations, which was unanimously adopted.

Benefits of Running Uncontested

- 15 New Zealand is a member of the UN's Western European and Other Group (WEOG), which is allocated two non-permanent seats on the UNSC that are filled in elections every two years. Slates in the WEOG group are heavily subscribed, and the next uncontested slate is for the 2039-40 term, with elections in June 2038. ^{s6(b)(i)}
- 16 Running in an uncontested slate is vastly preferable to a contested campaign. Such candidacies are more likely to be successful and are far less costly. While some resourcing is required to credibly run an uncontested campaign, this is of a completely different magnitude to the costs and effort required for a contested campaign.

s6(a)

- 17 To preserve the opportunity for New Zealand to serve on the UNSC within the next two decades, a decision is needed to declare a candidacy for the next available uncontested term in 2039-40. Declaring this candidacy now would provide New Zealand with the best prospects for securing its election and for avoiding the costs and uncertainties involved in a contested campaign. By declaring well in advance and steadily building support, New Zealand can work to deter potential competitors. Declaring our intention now would also serve to underline New Zealand's commitment to engaging on critical international security issues and supporting the rules based international order, consistent with the Foreign Policy Reset.
- 18 Declaring this candidature now would not bind future governments. ^{s6(a)}

s6(a)

Implementation

- 19 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade would be responsible for implementing the proposed candidature for election to the UNSC for the term 2039-40. An indicative timeline for the proposed phases of the candidature and potential membership is provided in Table 1 (below).

Table 1: Timeline for UNSC candidature and membership

Milestone/Activity	Timeframe
Announce UNSC candidature at the UN General Assembly in New York	September 2024
Updates on UNSC campaign planning and reconfirmation of candidature	2027, 2030
UNSC campaign 'Build Phase' begins Minister reconfirms candidature and Build Phase budget and planning	July 2034 (4 years from vote)
UNSC campaign 'Active Phase' begins Minister reconfirms candidature and Active Phase budget and planning	July 2036 (2 years from vote)
UNSC Vote Minister reconfirms membership term budget and planning	June 2038
[If successful] UNSC Membership Term	2039-2040

- 20 The Minister of Foreign Affairs will be provided with regular updates on progress. It is recommended that reviews are undertaken at regular intervals ^{s6(a)} based on progress made and the candidature's value relative to other interests and priorities. ^{s6(a)}

Cost-of-living Implications

- 21 None.

Financial Implications

- 22 It is not possible this far out to provide an accurate estimate of the resources required for a UNSC campaign and two-year term, as the costs and requirements for campaigning and membership are likely to change. ^{s9(2)(g)(i)}
- 23 Closer to the time, in the early 2030s, MFAT would provide more detailed advice on costs and possible funding arrangements for a candidature and membership, as well as any potential resource implications for other agencies, ^{s6(a)}

s6(a) The costs of New Zealand's previous UNSC campaigns and membership have been met from within Ministry baselines.

Legislative Implications

24 None.

Impact Analysis

25 None.

Population Implications

26 None.

Human Rights

27 None.

Use of external Resources

28 If New Zealand pursues this candidature, some external consultants, such as project managers or specialist communications experts, may be employed in the later stages of the campaign and during membership. It is not possible to accurately calculate these requirements and associated costs until closer to the election. Advice would be sought from the Minister of Foreign Affairs before making any decisions, including as part of the periodic reviews envisaged in Table 1.

Consultation

29 The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Treasury, the Ministry of Defence, the New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police, the Government Communications Security Bureau, and the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service have been consulted on this paper. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's National Security Group have expressed strong support for its recommendations.

30 Given New Zealand's tradition of close cooperation with Australia and Canada on UN candidatures, officials have informally consulted with counterparts from these partners to ensure that a New Zealand UNSC candidature would be welcomed and would not conflict with their own planned candidatures. s6(b)(i)

Australia is running for a seat on the UNSC for the 2029-30 term, ten years before New Zealand's proposed candidature. s6(b)(i)

31 s6(b)(i)

Communications

- 32 If confirmed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs would announce New Zealand's candidature for election to the UNSC for the 2039-40 term at the opening of the UN General Assembly in New York in late September 2024.

Proactive Release

- 33 Should the recommendation to declare New Zealand's candidacy be approved, it is proposed to proactively release this Cabinet paper, subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister for Foreign Affairs recommends that the Committee:

- 1 note that the next available slate in which New Zealand could run uncontested for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council is for the 2039-40 term;
- 2 note that New Zealand's prospects for success in an uncontested election would be significantly higher, and the costs associated with an uncontested campaign would be substantially lower;
- 3 agree New Zealand should declare its candidature for a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council for 2039-40, with elections in June 2038, to maintain the possibility of New Zealand serving within the next two decades;
- 4 agree this candidature should be reviewed periodically by the Minister of Foreign Affairs ^{s6(a)} based on an assessment of progress made, the likely costs and expected benefits of membership, and competing priorities;
- 5 ^{s6(a)}
- 6 agree officials should seek advice from the Minister of Foreign Affairs on whether to move New Zealand's candidacy forward if an earlier uncontested slate for election becomes available;
- 7 ^{s9(2)(g)(i)} updated advice on costs and funding will be provided in 2033/34 to inform a decision on whether to continue with the candidature.

Rt Hon Winston Peters

Minister for Foreign Affairs