

# Proactive Release

Date: 15 May 2024

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute has been proactively released by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade:

***Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Todd McClay - 23 February to 3 March 2024  
(CAB-24-SUB-0106 refers)***

***Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Todd McClay - February 2024  
(CAB-24-MIN-0106 refers)***

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## **Restricted**

Office of the Minister for Trade

Chair, Cabinet

### **Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Todd McClay - 23 February to 3 March 2024**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from 23 February to 3 March 2024 in my capacity as Minister for Trade.

#### **Report**

- 1 The primary purpose of this travel was to attend the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Thirteenth Ministerial Conference (MC13) where I was a Vice Chair to the host country the United Arab Emirates. The ministerial conference, which occurs every two years, is the highest decision making body of the WTO and determines its priorities and work programme.
- 2 As Vice Chair I had specific responsibility for facilitating negotiations on the extension of the e-commerce moratorium on customs duties on electronic transmissions. Through a busy agenda of close consultations with interested parties I was able to secure trust among the membership and forge a consensus outcome against expectations. The extension of the e-commerce moratorium was one of the few substantive outcomes of the MC13. This result provides certainty to businesses and exporters and has been welcomed by the New Zealand business sector as well as our international trading partners.
- 3 I also engaged constructively with Pacific Ministers whose main priority was to progress their interests in negotiations on Phase 2 of the Fish Subsidies agreement. Although these negotiations were not concluded the Pacific was successful in making its voice heard amongst the membership. New Zealand will continue to work closely with the Pacific to make further progress ahead of MC14 in 2026.
- 4 I also had a busy schedule of bilateral meetings with counterparts from 14 countries, including India, the US, the UK, China, Canada, the EU, Saudi Arabia and UAE. In addition to engaging on WTO matters, I used these meetings to establish relationships with my counterparts, discuss the Government's priorities and explore opportunities to advance New Zealand's bilateral trade and economic interests.
- 5 I took advantage of the time working closely with my counterpart and UAE Chair of the meeting, Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeitouni, to further progress discussions on a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with the UAE (essentially an FTA). My announcement of public consultations on the CEPA during MC13 was welcomed by the UAE.

- 6 New Zealand's profile at MC13 and our reputation as a trading nation that is 'open for business' was also enhanced by extensive media engagement during MC13. This included interviews with the Financial Times, Reuters, Bloomberg and UAE domestic media outlets.
- 7 Overall my active engagement across the MC13 agenda and securing an outcome on the e-commerce moratorium reinforced New Zealand's reputation as a country committed to the rules based trading system. Our efforts were valued by our UAE hosts and the WTO Secretariat.

**.Proactive release**

- 8 I propose to release this paper proactively in part.

**Recommendation**

- 9 I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Todd McClay

Minister for Trade

Proactively Released by the Minister for Trade



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Todd McClay - February 2024

Portfolio

Trade

On 2 April 2024, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Todd McClay under CAB-24-SUB-0106 on his travel, from 23 February to 3 March 2024, to Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates to attend the World Trade Organization's 13<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference.

Rachel Hayward  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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