

Proactive Release

Date: 20 September 2019

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

Report on overseas travel Rt Hon Winston Peters:

(CAB-MIN-19-412)

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Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Winston Peters

Portfolio **Foreign Affairs**

On 19 August 2019, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Rt Hon Winston Peters under CAB-19-SUB-0412 on his travel, from 15 to 20 July 2019, to Washington DC, United States of America, to attend the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom and conduct bilateral talks.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:
Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair

Cabinet

REPORT ON OVERSEAS TRAVEL: RT HON WINSTON PETERS: UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, 15–20 JULY 2019

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to the United States from 15 – 20 May 2019.

Report

Religious Freedom Ministerial

In mid-July, we travelled to Washington DC to take up the invitation of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to attend the United States-hosted Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom (MARF). Speeches at the Summit by Vice President Pence, Secretary of State Pompeo and White House Acting Chief of Staff Mulvaney signalled the extent to which this US Administration is deeply invested in promoting religious freedom through US foreign policy.

2 New Zealand endorsed Statements at the MARF on Counterterrorism as a Pretext for Religious Freedom Repression; Religious Freedom Repression by Non-State Actors; Respect for Religion or Belief; and Protecting Places of Worship.

3 In addition to the New Zealand Government attendance at the MARF, Mr Farid Ahmed from Christchurch attended as a representative of the Christchurch Terror Attack survivors. Ahmed's message of love and tolerance resonated well and he made a real impression on those who met him, including President Trump who met with Ahmed alongside other survivors of religious persecution in the Oval Office.

Bilateral visit

4 The visit also provided an opportunity to follow up on priority issues raised during our December 2018 visit to Washington DC, including through:

- Four Cabinet-level meetings with Vice President Pence, Secretary of State Pompeo, Secretary of the Interior Bernhardt and National Security Adviser Bolton;

- Calls on Senator Cory Gardner, Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee for Asia Pacific, and the ranking Democrat member Senator Ed Markey; and
 - A speech delivered at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, making the case for enhanced US economic engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.
- 5 The following key messages were conveyed in all meetings:
- New Zealand welcomes heightened US attention to the Pacific Islands region and we are committed to even closer cooperation on joint projects, to give Pacific governments development and infrastructure options;
 - New Zealand needs a strong economy to play our full part in the Pacific region; and
 - A free trade agreement between the United States and New Zealand would better align our economic relations with one of our most important strategic and security relationships.

Pacific cooperation

6 We had substantive discussions with the Vice President and with Secretaries Pompeo and Bernhardt on the Pacific, on stepped-up US engagement since our December visit, and on the scope for even closer cooperation. ^{s6(a)}

7 ^{s6(a)}

we also highlighted positive developments. New Zealand had warmly welcomed the closer attention now being paid to the Pacific Islands by the US, ^{s6(b)(i)}, and US commitment to again attend the Pacific Islands Forum at Cabinet level.

8 ^{s6(b)(i)}

9 ^{s6(b)(i)}

10 ^{s6(b)(i)}

s6(b)(i)

11 s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i); s6(a)

12 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

13 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

14 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

15 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

16 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

17 s6(b)(i); s6(a)

s6(b)(i); s6(a)

Comment

18 s6(a); s6(b)(i)

19 s6(a)

20 s6(a)

Proactive Release

21 I plan to release this paper in part within 30 business days. All redactions will be made in line with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

22 I recommend that Cabinet **note** this report.

Approved for lodgement

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs