



## **Proactive Release**

The following documents have been proactively released by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), on behalf of Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister:

### **Report on Overseas Travel - Prime Minister and Hon Damien O'Connor**

The following documents have been included in this release:

**Title of paper:** Report on Overseas Travel - Prime Minister and Hon Damien O'Connor (CAB-22-SUB-0176 refers)

**Title of minute:** Report on Overseas Travel - Prime Minister and Hon Damien O'Connor (CAB-22-MIN-0176 refers)

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 Act). Where this is the case, the relevant section of the Act that would apply has been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

#### **Key to redaction code:**

Section 6(a), making the information available would be likely to prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

~~[Restricted]~~

Office of the Prime Minister

Chair, Cabinet

## Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern and Hon Damien O'Connor

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on travel to Singapore and Tokyo, Japan from 18 April to 23 April by Minister O'Connor and myself to reconnect with important political and trade partners, and signal that New Zealand is open for business.

### Report

- 1 This was my first overseas visit since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and I was accompanied by Damien O'Connor and a delegation of twelve business leaders and eleven media. The focus of the trip was on reconnecting New Zealand to the world and highlighting New Zealand's trade and exports interests. It also provided an important opportunity to meet with two key Indo-Pacific partners to discuss global and regional challenges and bilateral issues, including Russia's invasion of Ukraine, a free and open Indo-Pacific, China related issues, and the regional trade agenda.

### *Singapore*

- 2 In my bilateral meeting with Singaporean President Halimah Yacob, we exchanged views on our countries' experiences with the pandemic, including our similar approaches to the management of COVID-19 (such as a focus on vaccination and the transition to border reopening), and issues of social cohesion arising as a result of the pandemic. We also discussed Singapore's recent White Paper on Women's Economic Development, and Singapore and New Zealand's work on gender-based violence, pay equity, and support for caregivers and early childhood education. In addition, supporting women's leadership was a strong feature in our meeting, and we agreed that while both Singapore and New Zealand had made good progress in recent years, increasing the number of women in leadership was a "long haul" project.
- 3 I later had a productive and wide-ranging discussion with Prime Minister Lee. He highlighted the progress made under the New Zealand-Singapore Enhanced Partnership, and the importance of cooperation under the Partnership's new "green" pillar, given the existential threat of climate change. I emphasised New Zealand's particular interest in sustainable aviation cooperation with Singapore in this space. We also had a valuable exchange on managing COVID-19, which highlighted the ease and strength of the Singapore-New Zealand relationship.

4 s6(a) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted], Prime Minister Lee emphasised the importance of Singapore's role as CPTPP Chair this year and of New Zealand as the in-coming Chair in 2023.

5 We also discussed a range of other regional and global issues, s6(a) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

6 Separately, Minister O'Connor met with Singapore's Minister for Trade Gan Kim Yong to discuss IPEF, ASEAN Australia New Zealand FTA, CPTPP, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and APEC. s6(a) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

*Announcements and engagements*

7 Following our meeting, Prime Minister Lee and I formally announced the new "Climate Change and Green Economy" pillar of the New Zealand-Singapore Enhanced Partnership. Areas for cooperation include a regular climate change policy dialogue; joint capacity-building training on carbon markets to ASEAN countries; information exchange on decarbonisation in shipping and port operations; encouraging the rapid uptake of zero and low emissions vehicles; exchanges on waste management technology and strategy; and joint research on low carbon technology

8 It was this context of increased cooperation on sustainability that I witnessed the signing of a Sustainable Aviation Agreement alongside Singapore's Minister of Transport S. Iswaran. The Arrangement, the first of its kind for either country, is aimed at cooperation around the development and deployment of sustainable fuels and the designing sustainable airport infrastructure, as well as policy and regulation coordination. While it is a government-to-government arrangement, it has strong support from the aviation industry. Following the signing, Singapore's Director of Civil Aviation chaired a roundtable discussion on how to make sustainable aviation viable and accessible to consumers. During the panel session, Greg Foran announced that New Zealand private sector aviation stakeholders, including

the Board of Airline Representatives New Zealand, will work together to support the Sustainable Aviation Arrangement.

- 9 Prime Minister Lee and I also launched a Supply Chain Working Group in support of more resilient and sustainable supply chains. Areas for future collaboration include working to improve freight data; sharing best practices around managing supply chain disruption risks; exploring digital and automated trade; and partnering in policy initiatives for supply chain resilience. This supply chain cooperation will build on the commitments New Zealand and Singapore made during the pandemic to ensure supply chain continuity and support the flow of essential goods and services. There will be opportunities to involve the private sector in the Working Group discussions.
- 10 While in Singapore I also announced the re-opening from 5 May of an updated Working Holiday Scheme, which includes an increase in the number of visas available under the scheme, from 200 to 300 in each direction, and a doubling of the visa duration to 12 months.
- 11 Engagement with the business delegation was consistent throughout the trip and focused on opportunities to connect New Zealand and Singapore business leaders. Engagements included an event on “Digital Disruption and Sustainability” and a “Working Together” breakfast. At the latter, I witnessed the signing of a partnership Arrangement between NZTE and its Singapore counterpart Enterprise Singapore, as well as an arrangement to enable collaboration on food technology between FoodBowl/the New Zealand Food Innovation Network and the Singapore Institute of Technology.

#### *Japan*

- 12 While our focus on the Japan leg of the visit remained reconnecting New Zealand to the world, this was also an opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to Japan as a likeminded partner, and to reset our ambition for the Japan relationship.
- 13 My bilateral with Prime Minister Kishida covered a wide range of topics and we both signalled our strong ambitions for the bilateral relationship, noting the importance of renewable energy (including cooperation on hydrogen and e-vehicles), and of re-connection and rebuilding travel by students, tourists, and businesspeople.

14 s6(a) [Redacted text block]

15 s6(a) [Redacted]

16 On Russia and Ukraine, we agreed on the importance of a strong response to Russia's aggression, s6(a) [Redacted]

17 Minister O'Connor had productive meetings with his ministerial counterparts: Japan's Foreign Minister, Trade Minister, CPTPP Minister, and Agriculture Minister. He reported that New Zealand and Japan remain generally well-aligned on trade policy issues, including on CPTPP, RCEP, IPEF, and APEC. s6(a) [Redacted]

18 On global issues, the Ministers agreed that Western countries – including Japan – were united in their sanctions against Russia. s6(a) [Redacted]

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- 20 In his meeting with the Agriculture Minister, Minister O'Connor expressed interest in increased cooperation in areas such as food waste, food security and reducing agricultural greenhouse gas emissions. He noted the similarities between New Zealand's Fit for a Better World Strategy and Japan's Green Strategy.

#### *Announcements and engagements*

- 21 Minister O'Connor and I engaged in several events highlighting New Zealand's food and beverage market. The first was a promotional event hosted by Zespri marking the start of the annual kiwifruit sales season in Japan, which was worth NZD \$600 million in 2021. Our engagement generated a significant amount of media exposure. Minister O'Connor hosted an event showcasing New Zealand's premium food and beverages to Japanese media at a New Zealand restaurant, which was followed by delegates from New Zealand joining a Japanese industry expert for a panel discussion on sustainable food innovation.
- 22 The minister also led the business delegation for a site visit to Nissui, the second largest seafood company in the world. Nissui is a 50% shareholder in Sealord Group, working closely with Aotearoa Fisheries Limited, the other 50% shareholder. The Sealord-Nissui arrangement is the most significant Māori-Japanese business collaboration in existence. Nissui has also been an official supporter of the Māori All Blacks for over 20 years and contributes around \$200,000 towards the New Zealand Rugby Union annually. During the site visit, the Minister and the business delegation received an update on sustainable business practices and recent health and functional food trends in the Japanese market.
- 23 Sustainability was also a key component of our engagements in Japan. Toyota New Zealand announced the introduction to New Zealand of a hydrogen car sharing scheme using the Toyota Mirai. A consortium of two New Zealand geothermal companies (GNS Science and Geo40) announced their intention to open a new office in Japan. At an investor event, Minister O'Connor engaged with key Japanese corporations to grow new opportunities for New Zealand and Japan to partner in the renewables energy sector by harnessing New Zealand's green energy. The Japanese participants stressed the importance of building the entire renewable energy value chain and noted that investor friendly regulation environments and government subsidies were indispensable.

- 24 To promote New Zealanders reconnecting to the world, I met with young people who had participated in New Zealand's Working Holiday Scheme (WHS), and those who were interested in taking up the opportunity once the border reopens from 2 May. I also relaunched Education New Zealand's Game On English (GOE) programme with Fonterra's North Asia President and the Commissioner of Japan Sports Agency. Originally launched in 2014, GOE is a sports and English education programme for Japanese students to learn both rugby and English while in New Zealand. Approximately 200 school and university students participated in the GOE programmes from 2014 to 2019.
- 25 Minister O'Connor and I attended a number of business and partnership focused events. We delivered speeches to senior Japanese businesspeople, hosted by the Japan-New Zealand Business Council, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce and Industry. My speech highlighted that New Zealand is open for business; that Japan as a priority economic partner; and promoted tourism and education. Minister O'Connor's speech highlighted the strong business and trade links between New Zealand and Japan.
- 26 We witnessed the signing of five collaboration agreements between Wakatū (a Māori-owned business covering food, beverages, and health and wellbeing products, among other things) and a range of Japanese organisations which will enable Wakatū to commence research and development projects, and secure Japanese suppliers for their supplements, blends, and healthy snacks. In addition, I witnessed the signing of a refreshed Hokkaido New Zealand Partnership Arrangement which supports people-to-people connections in the areas of agriculture, sports, education, and indigenous links between Māori and Ainu. An Education Cooperation Arrangement (ECA) between Education New Zealand and Japan Women's University Educational Corporation was also signed. This Arrangement will provide more opportunities for students from Japan Women's University and its affiliated schools to study in New Zealand, and promotes two-way student and faculty mobility.

#### *Media*

- 27 In Singapore I undertook interviews with the Straits Times and the BBC. My media engagement in Japan involved two TV interviews with high profile consumer media outlets, national broadcaster NHK International News and Nihon TV's News Zero, as well as an exclusive interview with a Japanese journalist whose work has a daily circulation of 4.5 million copies. Minister O'Connor also had interviews with the Straits Time and Bloomberg while in Singapore, and Nikkei while in Japan (with a daily circulation of 1.8 million copies).
- 28 Our comments in the media emphasised that New Zealand is open, safe, and welcoming to tourists, as well as articulating New Zealand's position on international issues and trade policy.

- 29 Our visit to Singapore and Japan received broad coverage in local media – print, broadcast, and social – which was extensive and positive in tone, supporting our diplomatic, business, and trade interests.

**Proactive release**

- 30 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4 on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade’s website. The paper will be subject to redaction as appropriate on the grounds set out under the Official Information Act 1982.

**Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Prime Minister

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# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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*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.*

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister and Hon Damien O'Connor

**Portfolio**                      **Prime Minister**

On 16 May 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Prime Minister under CAB-22-SUB-0176 on the travel undertaken by herself and Hon Damien O'Connor, from 18 to 23 April 2022, to Singapore and Japan to undertake bilateral visits.

Michael Webster  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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