

FONZ LETTER



Friends of New Zealand Grouping European Parliament

January – February 2016

Best wishes from the New Zealand Mission to the EU



As each new year dawns, we all reflect on the year past and the one ahead.

Reflections in Europe on 2015 have been muted – financial woes, a slow economic recovery, the migration/refugee crisis, an arc of instability

around Europe's borders all contributed to a palpable sense of a region under siege.

Forecasts for 2016 suggest more of the same, with added complexity around reform of EU membership conditions.

But the news wasn't all bad. EU institutions moved forward with a variety of plans that should contribute to growth and prosperity and, beneath the headlines, a lot of important business was done by the Commission and the European Parliament.

New Zealand stood shoulder to shoulder with the EU, in spirit at least given the geographical distance between us.

As a United Nations Security Council member, we have been closely engaged around all the problems facing Europe in your near neighbourhood, recognising that they have implications for us too.

We are playing an active role in anti-ISIL efforts in the Middle East. We have offered additional places and funds for integration for Syrian refugees.

At the bilateral level, we concluded the Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation, signed an update to our Veterinary Cooperation Agreement and completed a new Customs Agreement.

At leaders' level, we also agreed to begin work towards obtaining a mandate for negotiation of a Free Trade Agreement. This work will be a top priority this year and beyond.

A modern, comprehensive, mutually beneficial agreement is within our collective grasp.

It will contribute to the economic success of companies, including SMEs in Europe and in New Zealand, creating jobs and growth. It will be consistent with EU policies, including around sustainability and labour, areas where New Zealand has a strong record already. It will provide a strong platform for even closer connections between Europe and New Zealand

This year the New Zealand Mission looks forward to working with FONZ and others across the European Parliament and institutions in Brussels to take forward our many shared interests.

We hope the PARC will come to Parliament this year for consideration.

We welcome INTA's ongoing support for FTAs with Australia and New Zealand.

We extend best wishes to all FONZ members and other friends for 2016 and all the opportunities and challenges that this year will bring.

David Taylor
Ambassador of New Zealand to the EU

Appointments: New Minister of Trade and Minister for Climate Change Issues

On 10 December, Prime Minister John Key announced a few changes in the cabinet. The Hon. Tim Groser, who held the portfolio of Minister of Trade as well as Climate Change Issues, was appointed Ambassador to Washington.

Mr. Todd McClay was named to succeed him as Minister of Trade. Prior to this appointment, Minister McClay was Minister of Revenue, Minister for State Owned Enterprises,



Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Associate Minister of Trade.

Mrs. Paula Bennett is now Minister for Climate Change Issues, adding to her existing responsibilities as Minister of Social Housing, State Services, and Associate Minister of Tourism and Finance. She also previously served as Minister of Social Development.

EU-NZ Free Trade Agreement: Minister of Trade launches call for submissions

Newly appointed Minister of Trade Todd McClay issued in December a call for public submissions on the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations between New Zealand and the European Union.

“New Zealand enjoys a close and long-standing relationship with the EU and last year concluded a Partnership Agreement on Relations and Cooperation. A modern, high-quality FTA is the missing link in our important relationship,” said Mr McClay. “The agreement reached in Brussels at the end of October between the Prime Minister and EU Presidents Juncker and Tusk, that the two sides would start the process for negotiations is the first step towards achieving a comprehensive, high quality FTA.”

The EU is New Zealand's third largest trading partner, with two-way trade valued at \$19.6 billion in goods and services in the year to June 2015. This includes exports of over \$8 billion and imports of \$11.5 billion in goods and services combined. The EU is also the second

largest source of foreign direct investment in New Zealand, as well as a major partner for New Zealand companies and organisations conducting international research and development.

In early 2016, the EU and New Zealand will begin discussions to define the scope and overall approach to the negotiations, which would likely start in early 2017, once all the pre-requirements have been completed.

“We are keen to hear from all New Zealanders with an interest in an FTA negotiation with the EU, including businesses, NGOs, and members of the public”, said Minister McClay. “In this initial call for public submissions, we have asked to receive submissions by the end of February, but there will be further opportunities for public input as the next steps in this process occur”.

More information on the [website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade](#).

“At a glance” paper on FTA with New Zealand and Australia from the European Parliament Think Tank

Krisztina Binder, of the European Parliament Think Tank, writes that the EU's future free trade agreements (FTAs) with Australia and New Zealand will be based on the strong and longstanding economic relationship between these countries and the Union.

Through enhanced market access, trade diversification and full exploitation of export possibilities, the author believes these FTAs could help to offset the potential negative impact of trade agreements which do not include the EU, both those being pursued and those which have already been concluded in the Asia-Pacific region.

Read the [full paper here](#).



Photo credit: European External Action Service

Flag referendum: reaching the final step

As you will have probably heard in the news, this spring New Zealanders will decide whether or not to adopt a new flag. In the first phase of the referendum from 20 November to 11 December 2015, eligible voters ranked the 5 alternative designs in their order of preference. On 15 December 2015, the Electoral Commission announced that the Silver Fern Flag would be the flag to move forward to the second referendum as the preferred alternative.

From 6 to 23 March, voters will state their preference between the current flag or the proposed new one. The flag that receives the most votes will become the New Zealand flag.

The Silver Fern flag

The designer considers the silver fern a New Zealand icon which has been proudly worn by generations for over 160 years. The designer's intent is that the multiple points of the fern leaf represent Aotearoa's peaceful, multicultural society, a single fern spreading upwards

representing one people growing onward into the future. The bright blue represents our clear skies and the Pacific Ocean, and the Southern Cross guided early settlers to our islands and represents our location in the South Pacific.

Read more about the flag consideration project [here](#).



Photo (left to right): Proposed new flag “Silver Fern” (left) and current NZ flag (right)

UN Security Council update – One year on

January marked the start of New Zealand's second and last year as a UNSC elected member. This is a time to reflect on the progress accomplished and focus on the next priorities to come. Here is a snapshot of current issues and what NZ hopes to achieve at the UNSC in coming months.

New Zealand's priorities in the Council include the Middle East peace process and the conflict in Syria. We also remain focused on addressing the conflicts in Libya, South Sudan and Yemen; supporting the Council's role in conflict prevention; promoting improved peacekeeping mandates; and enhancing Council working methods.

New Zealand wants the Security Council to actively support an outcome in Syria that achieves a peaceful political resolution of the conflict, counters ISIL, and adequately addresses the humanitarian impact on the civilian population. We support ongoing efforts in the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) to resolve the conflict. We supported the Council's unanimous adoption of a resolution in December in support of the ISSG process towards a political resolution to the conflict, and look forward to the start of peace talks, currently scheduled for 25 January. Together with Spain and Jordan, New Zealand also worked to ensure humanitarian assistance reaches those in need in Syria. New Zealand will continue to play an active role on Syrian humanitarian issues in the coming months.

Furthermore, the Council must remain focused on supporting positive momentum in efforts to

resolve the ongoing conflicts in Yemen and Libya. New Zealand strongly supported the resolution adopted in December welcoming the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement. We also welcome the scheduled resumption of peace talks in Yemen this month, given the grave humanitarian crisis and growing activity of extremist groups.

The situation in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories remains dangerous and unsustainable. We believe that the Council has a responsibility to act. New Zealand will continue to consult with Council members and others on steps the Council can take to advance the Middle East peace process and make a realistic, practical contribution towards a viable, two-state solution.

New Zealand will continue to push the Council to actively engage in preventing the emergence of conflict, in close cooperation with regional partners, especially in Africa. We are particularly concerned by the deepening crisis in Burundi. New Zealand is supporting measures to prevent the escalation of violence.

Finally, New Zealand believes the Council's working methods could be improved for greater effectiveness and transparency. New Zealand will continue to look for better ways for Council members to work together and find practical solutions that enable the Council to respond effectively to peace and security challenges in specific situations.



Small Island Developing States have their say in the Security Council

New Zealand's signature event during Presidency of the UN Security Council in July was an open debate on the Peace and Security Challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS). The key themes and proposals raised during this debate have now been published as a [non-paper](#) by New Zealand.

More than 70 speakers participated in the open debate, with 19 at heads of government and ministerial level, including SIDS from the Pacific, Caribbean, and the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.

According to the United Nations, there are 52 SIDS with a combined population of more than 50 million people. Of the 37 SIDS that are UN Member States, only six have served on the Security Council in the past 25 years. This open debate was a unique opportunity for the Security Council to give serious consideration to what SIDS say are the most pertinent peace and security issues affecting them.

"This is the first time most Small Island Developing States have addressed the Council," New Zealand Permanent Representative Mr.

Gerard van Bohemen said, "and the fact that there was such strong attendance, certainly was a demonstration of the relevance of the debate to them.

Issues identified as having a significant impact on SIDS included climate change and natural disasters, transnational organised crime and piracy, and the exploitation of natural resources, among other peace and security challenges. SIDS also reaffirmed their role as active multilateral actors, including through their contributions of personnel to UN peace operations.



Photo: Open debate on Peace and Security Challenges facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

Auckland fourth most cosmopolitan city in the world

Auckland was ranked the fourth most cosmopolitan city in the world, just behind Dubai, Brussels and Toronto, according to an international study. The city clocks in with 39 percent of the population born overseas. According to Statistics New Zealand, Auckland, which has around 1.4 million residents, has more than 220 recorded ethnic groups living there. See full article on [Stuff.nz](#)



Photo: Auckland, NZ. credit: www.newzealand.com

In addition, it is also worth noting that Auckland still has the world's third best quality of living according to the Mercer Quality of Living survey conducted in 2015. It had earned the third spot twice in the past, in 2012 and 2014. The survey ranks cities on factors such as culture and environment, political stability, safety, infrastructure and ease of doing business. More details about the ranking [here](#).

Wellington start-up in top three at Paris COP21

A Wellington e-commerce start-up with a unique eco-idea to lower CO2 emissions has been placed second in a worldwide competition to tackle climate change at COP21, the 2015 Climate Conference in Paris. The start-up, named 'Po0ol', is an ambitious concept from three young Wellington entrepreneurs that aims to develop an e-commerce marketplace to connect small and medium enterprises with sustainable suppliers. By aggregating the buying power of local businesses they aim to lower transport-related CO2 emissions on a city level.

Kim van Sparrentak, a researcher at the University of Otago, Wellington, presented Po0ol's business plan against 12 other teams during COP21 in a two-minute pitch to the Paris' Grand Palais audience. "To pitch our business plan alongside other great sustainable projects was extremely empowering. We received praise for the project's viability and potential impact," Kim says.



Photo: Kim van Sparrentak, co-founder of Po0ol

Climate-KIC, Europe's largest innovation institute focused on climate change, decided to look beyond Europe and organised the

Climathon event for the first time this year. More than 100 projects across 20 cities from six continents joined the challenge to create solutions to combat climate change on a city level.

"Our dream is to provide sustainable supply options to all small and medium enterprises in Wellington. Not only to cafés and organic supermarkets, but also to car mechanics and kebab shops" says other co-founder Isa Miralles.

After the Paris agreement, ideas aiming to reduce greenhouse gases are very timely. Po0ol aims to get small and medium businesses on board to become sustainable and resilient for the future.

Wellington City Mayor Celia Wade-Brown welcomes their ambition: "Po0ol's success in Paris is proof that Wellington can play a lead role in climate innovation. Kim and her team were backed by Wellington City Council, along with a world-class research and entrepreneur community. Cities must lead climate change mitigation and adaptation," she says. Po0ol was the top idea at the Wellington Climathon 2015 held earlier this year.

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