



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Trade and Export Growth**

On 21 March 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Damien O'Connor under CAB-22-SUB-0078 on his travel, from 16 to 29 November 2021 to:

- 1 Singapore to attend the Indo-Pacific Economic Partnership meeting and bilateral meetings;
- 2 Melbourne and Canberra, Australia for bilateral meetings.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively released
by the Minister for Trade and Export Growth

[Restricted]

Office of the Minister for Trade and Export Growth

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Singapore, Australia and the United Kingdom from 16 – 29 November 2021 for the first Ministerial-level discussions on the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework, to further enhance our bilateral relationship with Australia, and engage with New Zealand business in the United Kingdom. Due to the changing Covid-19 situation and the emergence of the omicron variant, the WTO Ministerial Conference that I was due to attend in Geneva, Switzerland was postponed not long after I arrived in London, and I returned to New Zealand directly from London.

Report

- 1 This was my third overseas visit in 2021 and like my previous travel, this visit was focused on strengthening key relationships and advancing New Zealand's interests in two of my portfolios, Trade and Export Growth, and Agriculture.
- 2 In **Singapore**, my visit was centred on a meeting organised by US Secretary of Commerce Raimondo with the Trade Ministers from New Zealand, Australia and Singapore to discuss a new US proposal for an Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

- 3 In advance of the IPEF meeting, I was able to have fruitful bilateral meetings with the Trade Ministers from Singapore (Gan Kim Yong) and Australia (Dan Tehan), and with Secretary Raimondo. ^{s6(b)(i)}
s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

I also had the opportunity to visit the Singapore port authority and see first-hand their advanced technology in action and understand more the critical role that they play for New Zealand exporters to the region.

- 4 Minister Tehan invited me to visit **Australia** after Singapore for in-depth discussions in a secure environment on a wide range of multilateral and regional issues. Our exchanges on key regional and geo-strategic challenges, as well as sharing updates on our respective EU and UK FTA negotiations, underlined the value of being able to connect regularly, and in particular in person, with our closest partner. It is clear that Australia and New Zealand remain likeminded on a wide range of trade issues, and they are an important ally as we move forward in fora such as the WTO, in the CPTPP accessions and the Five Nations Trade Ministers grouping. It was also useful to get an update on Australia's future FTA agenda, including India. On bilateral issues, Minister Tehan and I discussed the importance of appropriately marking CER's 40th anniversary in 2023 and instructed officials to begin work on developing some ideas where we can move CER into some new spaces to assist our trans-Tasman businesses. While in Melbourne for the meeting with Minister Tehan, I also met with key business people to share perspectives on the current trade agenda, including hearing about the impact of China's recent actions against Australia, and the ever-growing environmental consciousness among business.

- 5 After Melbourne, I travelled to Canberra – being the first New Zealand Minister to visit the Australian capital since the start of the pandemic. I met with my Agriculture counterpart, David Littleproud, for a useful exchange on the strong current world prices for agricultural exports, and the outlook for the future, especially in respect of measures that need to be taken to address climate change impacts. ^{s6(b)(i)}

s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

I also had the opportunity to visit rural NSW and discuss the primary industries' outlook and key issues affecting rural communities with a range of farmers (cropping, sheep, bees, wine).

- 6 In Canberra, I also met with the Australian Minister for Resources and Water, Keith Pitt. Our discussion focused on the Southern Positioning Augmentation Network collaboration project between our countries. ^{s6(b)(i)}

s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

A paper on this project is being considered by Cabinet today. I also had the opportunity for a meeting with the Labor Shadow Trade and Resources Minister, Madeleine King, and useful engagements with senior Australian officials, academics, business people and commentators on current international trade issues facing our two countries.

- 7 Coming hot on the heels of Minister Mahuta's visit to Sydney, my visit to Australia reinforced the closeness and significance of our relationship, as well as helped to promote New Zealand as a prominent consideration in Australian thinking.
- 8 I had planned a short visit to **London** en route to the key WTO meeting in Geneva. This included a visit to New Zealand company 'The Collective' to support their growth in the UK market, and a meeting with the New Zealand government agencies based in London, as well as Beef and Lamb, to discuss the current situation in the key UK market and how we could expand opportunities there for our exporters following the entry into force of the UK FTA later this year.
- 9 Unfortunately, the WTO Ministerial Conference that I was due to attend in Geneva, Switzerland was postponed at the last minute due to Covid and I returned to New Zealand directly from London.

Proactive release

- 10 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

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister for Trade and Export Growth