

# Proactive Release

Date: 12 September 2022

The following Cabinet paper[s] and related Cabinet minute[s] have been proactively released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

<b>Title</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<b><i>Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio</i></b>	
<b><i>Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio on behalf of Hon Nanaia Mahuta</i></b>	CAB-21-MIN-0306

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Key to OIA redaction codes:

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- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio on behalf of Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Portfolio                      Foreign Affairs

On 8 August 2022, the Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Aupito William Sio under CAB-22-SUB-0309 on his travel, from 7 to 9 July 2022, to Suva, Fiji to attend the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting on behalf of Hon Nanaia Mahuta.

Rachel Hayward  
Acting Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

In Confidence

Office of the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

Chair, Cabinet

### **Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Fiji on 7- 9 July 2022 to attend the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting on behalf of Hon Nanaia Mahuta, hosted by the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat.

#### **Report**

- 1 I attended the Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Suva, Fiji on 8 July 2022, at the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat Headquarters on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon Nanaia Mahuta. I was supported by officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Deputy Secretary, Andrew Needs and Unit Manager, Tharron McIvor.
- 2 The purpose of the meeting was for Foreign Ministers to discuss;
  - the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent and review the regional architecture; and
  - consideration of the operationalisation of the Suva Agreement and other matters of concern in the region.
- 3 My attendance was to embed Aotearoa New Zealand's Pacific Resilience Approach, including our value proposition as being in and of the Pacific. New Zealand's policy priorities for the Forum Foreign Ministers' Meeting focus on issues of critical regional importance, including:
  - Endorsing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent
  - Maintaining Micronesian memberships of the Forum; and
  - Strengthening unity of the Forum and Pacific regionalism in the face of increasing external pressure
- 4 The meeting was chaired by Fiji and attended by representatives from Australia, Cook Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

Discussions were productive and laid a solid foundation for the Leaders' week (12 – 14 July), reflecting a collective effort "to keep the family united." Off the back of a tumultuous three years, the primary focus was ensuring Forum unity as reflected in the outcome document (Appendix 1).

Discussions throughout the day emphasised shared commitment to Forum unity, underpinned by the Suva Agreement, and endorsement of the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent.

*Suva agreement:*

- 5 The Suva Agreement was discussed and was strongly supported by Members. The Agreement outlines reforms intended to ensure sub-regional balance in the Forum and will see Palau, Nauru, Federated States of Micronesia and Republic of Marshal Islands pull back from terminating their membership. Seven leaders have so far signed the Suva Agreement, with 10 noting in-principle support.
- 6 Foreign Ministers endorsed the approach of officials to take a “phased approach” to implementation, allowing time for officials to interpret and agree the details required to operationalise the political commitments of Leaders. s6(a), s9(2)(j)

I expressed New Zealand’s gratitude for the resolution offered by the Suva Agreement, noting our commitment to help fund the transition cost while making clear the Forum would need to consider long-term funding options.

- 7 Forum Members have expressed concern with Kiribati’s disengagement at the Forum. s6(a)

Foreign Ministers agreed to make concerted effort to engage with Kiribati, and emphasising the strength of the Forum family.

*Geostrategic landscape and the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*

- 8 The *2050 Strategy* – called for by Leaders in 2019 to secure our future in the face of geostrategic competition and climate change – was “critically important at this juncture in our history.” Forum Members recognised the *2050 Strategy* as an opportunity to be intentional on policy response to the geostrategic environment that reflects the region’s priorities and ambitions.

- 9 s6(a), s6(b)(i) welcomed the opportunity to navigate the geostrategic landscape towards outcomes that secured our future. It was a chance for the region to assert itself and chart its own course, from a position of strength, and provide a foundation for engagement with (large) countries from outside the region.

- 10 s6(a), s6(b)(i) need to work together strategically in a complex and challenging world. While we needed to respect sovereignty, we were also family and the Blue Pacific Continent was our shared home. s6(a)

s6(a)

11 s6(a)

Other Members, s6(a) emphasised the need to focus on the security issues that mattered to the region, such as climate change and maritime boundaries.

12 I echoed the calls s6(a) for Members to talanoa and ensure the regional architecture remained fit for purpose. I reiterated New Zealand's view that Forum Members have the capacity and commitment to meet our region's security needs, including those of Solomon Islands. The expectation that if there were gaps, Members would raise this with partners within the region before seeking external support. Underscoring our shared values should guide us in working together to support a peaceful, stable, prosperous and resilient Pacific.

13 Of noting:

13.1 Members recognised the importance of levelling up the region's **climate advocacy efforts** and welcomed interest from Australia to host a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) - Conference of Parties in partnership with Pacific Island countries. Foreign Ministers endorsed the recommendation for Leaders to declare a climate emergency and urge world leaders to recognise climate change as the single greatest threat to the planet.

13.2 Vanuatu's initiative to seek an **advisory opinion on climate change** from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) was endorsed. Members agreed to seek ICJ's advice on text or question, before signing onto a UNGA resolution. s6(a), s6(b)(i) New Zealand noted our willingness to work with Vanuatu on the development of an appropriate question.

13.3 Foreign Ministers considered the **Forum Observer Mission's report on New Caledonia's 3<sup>rd</sup> independence referendum**. s6(a)

13.4 I raised for Members' consideration the need to develop a **clear articulation of the region's ocean science priorities**, including the deep sea. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

13.5 Director General of the Forum Fisheries Agency, Manu Tupou-Roosen provided an update to the Committee on the four key goals of the **Sustainable Roadmap for Pacific Fisheries** – Sustainability, Value, Employment and Food Security. SPC Director General also updated Foreign Ministers on the progress of a Pacific regional aquaculture strategy.

13.6 Members welcomed Tuvalu's proposal for an initiative to **coordinate the campaigns of candidates for positions in international fora**. s6(a)

it was critical that Pacific representatives were involved in global decision making. I supported the initiative and also advocated for gender equality in candidacies.

### **Proactive release**

14 I intend to release this paper within 30 business days with redactions made in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982.

### **Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Aupito William Sio  
**Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs**