

Proactive Release

Date: 4 July 2022

The following Cabinet Minute and related Cabinet paper have been proactively released by the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs:

| Title: | Reference: |
|---|-----------------|
| Minute of Decision - Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio | CAB-22-MIN-0164 |
| Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio | Cabinet Paper |

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- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
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Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio

Portfolio **Associate Foreign Affairs**

On 9 May 2022, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Aupito William Sio under CAB-22-SUB-0164 on his travel, from 9 to 16 April 2022, to Palau, to represent New Zealand at the seventh Our Ocean Conference.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

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 Palau, from 9 – 16 April, 2022 to represent the Government at the seventh Our Ocean Conference, Palau.

Report

- 1 I attended the seventh Our Ocean Conference (the Conference) from 11 – 14 April, 2022 in Palau, co-hosted by the Government of Palau and the United States and it was the first to be held in a small island developing state. I was supported by senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand’s Ambassador to Palau, Mike Ketchen, Manager, Pacific Regional Division, Jonathan Austin and Senior Advisor for Oceans and Fisheries, Finbar Kiddle.
- 2 The Conference titled ‘Our Ocean, Our People, Our prosperity’, emphasised the importance of a healthy ocean to small island developing states, and to all communities where oceans is a primary source of sustenance. The focus was on a ‘Super Year’. A catalysing year for ocean action. The themes included partnership and collaboration, as well as the challenges and successes different regions and states are facing.
- 3 My attendance was to demonstrate that New Zealand is prioritising the development of strong international legal frameworks that keep pace and global development, and address the challenges face by the marine environment. I highlighted that Aotearoa New Zealand places great importance on the collective kaitiakitanga – stewardship – responsibilities for the conservation and sustainable use of the ocean. We are a maritime state of the Pacific, where the ocean defines our cultures, well-being, economies and connections to one another.
- 4 The Conference saw the announcement of 410 commitments with a total value of US\$16.35 billion in cash and accompanying benefits. This brings the total value of commitments given at Our Ocean Conferences to around US\$108 billion since 2014. The US alone made over 100 commitments, including work to create two new marine protected areas, protect fish stocks and decarbonise the shipping sector.
- 5 Aoteroa New Zealand announced two commitments:
 - 5.1 US\$3.4 million to support the third phase of the Forum Fisheries Agency’s work, increasing employment and economic benefits from the

Pacific's tuna fisheries. A focus on market access, employment and investment in the Pacific region's important tuna fisheries, including growing Pacific women's leadership opportunities in fisheries.

- 5.2 US\$3 million commitment to support to the University of the South Pacific and the University of Canterbury to produce the Pacific Ocean and Climate Crisis Assessment, to fill the gaps and support Pacific resilience through effective evidence-based decision making, with a particular focus on ensuring the region's rich traditional knowledge systems are part of this evidence base.
- 6 Aotearoa New Zealand's commitments were well received. Especially our funding for the Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency's work to deliver better economic returns from the Pacific's tuna fisheries – receiving applause when it was announced in the plenary.
- 7 ^{s6(a)}
- 8 Pacific Island countries were represented, albeit limited representation from Polynesian countries. Those who attended included Prime Minister of Tonga, Hon Sioasi Sovaleni and Tongan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Fekitamoeloa 'Utoikamanu as well as Pacific Island Forum Secretary General, Henry Puna.
- 9 Of noting:
 - 9.1 I held bilateral meetings with; Gustav Aitaro, Palau Secretary of State; Joses Gallen, Secretary of Justice of the Federated States of Micronesia; Marshall Islands Minister of Resources and Development, John Silk; US Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Monica Medina; and New Caledonia Minister of Sustainable Development, Joseph Manaute.
 - 9.2 Meeting with Gustav Aitaro, Palau Secretary of State was an opportunity to acknowledge Palau's leadership on climate and ocean issues, and reinforce the importance of a unified Pacific Islands Forum that includes Palau. ^{s6(b)(i)}

9.3 Bilateral meeting with US Assistant Secretary Monica Medina was held on the first day of the conference. ^{s6(b)(i)}

s6(a)

9.4 ^{s6(b)(i), s6(a)}

9.5

9.6

10 In the margins of the conference, I held informal discussions with Palau President Surangel Whipps Jnr, and Pacific Island Forum Secretary General, Henry Puna.

11 ^{s6(b)(i)}

s6(b)(i)

12 s6(b)(ii)

13 Informal discussions with the Prime Minister of Tonga in the margins was useful. ^{s6(b)(i)}

14 Meeting with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Director, Mitigation and Adaptation Division, German (Gerry) Velasquez, and Sabin Basnyat Energy Efficiency Senior Specialist of the same division, discussed improving access to the GCF for Pacific countries.

s6(b)(ii)

s6(b)(ii)

Proactive release

15 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