

Proactive Release

Date: 4 September 2023

The following Cabinet paper has been proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

| Title | Reference |
|---|-----------------|
| Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to China 22-25 March 2023 | |
| Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Nanaia Mahuta | CAB-23-MIN-0321 |

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 sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b)(i): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments;



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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.

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Portfolio

Foreign Affairs

On 24 July 2023, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Nanaia Mahuta under CAB-23-SUB-0321 on her travel, from 22 to 25 March 2023, to Beijing, China for a bilateral visit.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released
by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet

Report to Cabinet: Minister of Foreign Affairs' Visit to China 22-25 March 2023

1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to China 22-25 March 2023.

Report

2 My visit to China 22-25 March was spent in the capital Beijing. As the first visit by a New Zealand Minister since the pandemic, s6(a) this was an opportunity to re-establish kanohi ki te kanohi connections, support New Zealand's reconnection and economic recovery strategies, and engage frankly with China on key issues, including those on which New Zealand's and China's views are s6(a) different.

Bilateral meetings

3 I met with both State Councillor Wang Yi and Foreign Minister (Director) Qin Gang during this visit to Beijing.

4 Discussion with Wang Yi, at the Great Hall of the People s6(a) My meeting with Foreign Minister Qin Gang was followed by a dinner.

5 To both Qin and Wang, I set out why China is an important relationship for New Zealand, with trade and economic ties of benefit to both sides, underpinned by people to people ties and cultural connections. I described the relationship as having moved from a focus on firsts to a mature relationship, on the basis of which we could manage differences and pursue opportunities in front of us. s6(b)(i)

6 s6(a)

7

8 s6(a)

s6(b)(i)

s6(a)

9 s6(b)(i)

10 s6(a)
s6(b)(i)

11 s6(b)(i)
s6(a)

The Pacific

12 In both meetings, I emphasised that Aotearoa New Zealand's approach was grounded in our perspective as being in and of the Pacific, and the importance of international law. It was important to build resilience in the Pacific, and support Pacific regionalism, institutions and norms. I urged China in its engagement with the region to support regional architecture and strategies, including the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum as the primary forum for regional solidarity, the Forum Fisheries Agency, and the University of the South Pacific, and to respond to the threat Pacific leaders saw from climate change. I said New Zealand recognised China had long been engaged in the Pacific, and noted that there were a number of contemporary challenges the Pacific faced, such as ongoing economic vulnerability, debt distress, climate change and sea level rise.

13 I raised some of New Zealand's concerns about the potential militarisation of the region and security issues that took the focus away from Pacific-led solutions. This was why the China-Solomon Islands security agreement was a particular concern.

International Rules: AUKUS, Ukraine, Fukushima

14 s6(b)(i)

s6(a)

s6(a)

- 15 Russia's invasion of Ukraine was a significant topic in both discussions.
s6(a)

I set out, and reiterated, New Zealand's position in clear terms: Russia's illegal and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine was a clear violation of international law. Russia needed to withdraw its troops to internationally recognised borders as the basis for political discussions to end the conflict, which must secure Ukraine's agreement. New Zealand and the world was looking to China to use its influence to encourage Russia to cease the conflict in Ukraine. s6(a) . We would be concerned by any provision of aid that would support Russia's illegal war.

- 16 s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- 17 s6(b)(i)

18

Sensitive Issues: Taiwan and Human Rights

- 19 I s6(a) raise several areas where New Zealand and China do not agree. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

- 20 I noted Aotearoa New Zealand has a long-standing commitment to universal human rights. I raised Xinjiang, s6(a) the changes in Hong Kong since the National Security Law was enacted, including the steady erosion of rights, freedoms and autonomy.

- 21 s9(2)(g)(i), s6(b)(i)

- 22 On Taiwan, I reiterated that Aotearoa New Zealand has adhered to our one-China policy for fifty years and understood the importance of territorial integrity and sovereignty. s6(b)(i)
- 23 I noted that as a small country in the Pacific, dependent on trade, Aotearoa New Zealand paid close attention to developments in the South China Sea, and regarded unimpeded access to sea and air routes as vital. I called for peaceful resolution of maritime disputes in accordance with UNCLOS. s6(b)(i)

Other aspects of the visit programme

- 24 I had the opportunity to lift post-Covid reengagement between China and New Zealand across the breadth of the relationship. A highly symbolic visit to the National Museum of China to view the kahu hūhūhuru (feather cloak) gifted to Chairman Mao Zedong in 1957 by filmmaker Ramai Te Miha Haward, on behalf of the fifth Māori King Korokī, poignantly captured the connection between past and present future aspects of the relationship. I unveiled a statue of prominent New Zealander Rewi Alley, at the site of his former residence in Beijing.
- 25 A reception at the Embassy on Thursday evening brought together key figures in the business, academic, alumni, cultural, international development banks and other expert communities. Chinese representation was at Vice Minister and Director General levels from several key agencies. s6(a)
- 26 I had two roundtable meetings including Chinese and expatriate members to hear first-hand from those that are working and living on the ground. These included a roundtable discussion with business people and a breakfast with women leaders.

Proactive Release

- 27 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18)4 on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. Proactive release is subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 note this report.

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Authorised for lodgement

Hon Nanaia Mahuta

Minita Take Aorere / Minister of Foreign Affairs

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by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

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