

8 April 2024

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I refer to your email of 12 March 2024 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

- *A list of all meetings officials have had concerning the Pacific "Zone of Peace" concept since 1 October 2023, organised by date, location, and attendees.*
- *All briefings, notes, reports, and aides memoire produced on the Pacific "Zone of Peace" concept since 1 October 2023.*

There have not been any officials meetings *concerning the Pacific "Zone of Peace" concept since 1 October 2023*. Therefore, this part of your request is refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information you requested does not exist.


The briefing titled *Overseas Visit by the Honourable Carmel Sepuloni Deputy Prime Minister Of New Zealand Brief A: Overview, Retreat And Plenary, Event Briefs, Bilaterals, and Bios* contains information concerning the Pacific Zone of Peace. This briefing was released to you on 12 February 2024 under OIA 28881 (our reference). The two pages relevant to this OIA request are being re-released to you under this OIA, please find attached. Some information is withheld under section 6(a), to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government. All other pages of the briefing are outside the scope of your request.

No notes, reports or aides memoire have been produced on the *"Zone of Peace" concept* therefore, all other aspects of your request are refused under section 18(e) of the OIA, as the information does not exist.

Please note that it is our policy to proactively release our responses to official information requests where possible. Therefore, our response to your request (with your personal information removed) may be published on the Ministry website:
www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-us/contact-us/official-information-act-responses/

If you have any questions about this decision, you can contact us by email at: DM-ESD@mfat.govt.nz. You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision by contacting www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large loop on the left and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Sarah Corbett
for Acting Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

'Pacific Zone of Peace' concept

Intervention

- New Zealand welcomes the vision articulated by Prime Minister Rabuka. Our Pacific voice is a powerful one, and demands an audience – especially during this time of global turmoil and tragedy.
- In New Zealand, we say that we do not inherit the land from our ancestors, but we borrow it from our children. The Blue Pacific is a precious treasure and we have the collective ability and will to protect it, especially so when we work together and lend a hand when our neighbours are in need.
- We are strongest when we come together as a Pacific to support one another on shared challenges. We have a unique style of peacekeeping, we are accustomed to come together through the Pacific way to *talanoa* and dialogue on differences, and we have experienced the tragic impacts of conflict in our region. Others can learn from us.
- It is also incumbent on us to assert our expectations on powerful countries who wish to engage with our region. We expect partners to respect our ways, to be led by us, and to work with us to address our shared challenges.
- I will encourage my officials to work with Fiji and other partners to further develop this important vision.

New Zealand's position

- Prime Minister Rabuka has made recent public statements on a high-level vision for a 'Zone of Peace', a Pacific-centric means by which to elevate Pacific concepts of peace to the global stage. ^{s6(a)}
New Zealand is broadly supportive of this call, noting its alignment with the Boe Declaration on Regional Security.
- ^{s6(a)} and
support Pacific regionalism and sovereignty.

Handling advice

- ^{s6(a)}

Background

1. We understand Fiji Prime Minister Rabuka intends to raise in the Forum a call for his fellow Forum Leaders to support his vision for a 'Pacific Zone of Peace.' Prime Minister Rabuka spoke of this concept at in early October recent Lowy Centre address, at which Australia's Foreign Minister Penny Wong indicated her broad support for his vision. This

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speech, occurring shortly after Hamas' attacks on Israel, was clouded by these global events.

2. s6(a)

3. Broadly though, the 'Pacific Zone of Peace' stems from the Prime Minister's own background as a former peacekeeper, who has served in UN peacekeeping operations in the Sinai and Golan Heights. He has advocated for the Pacific to become renowned as a region wherein Pacific cultures and peoples live free from coercion and to be known as a region that works more cohesively to lend a hand to one another when crisis hits (whether that be instability, natural disaster, biosecurity, and illegal fishing).

4. Operationalising this vision is something that New Zealand is well placed to support. We are already well integrated within Pacific regional security architecture, global peacekeeping operations, and have a strong voice on issues such as the 'women, peace, and security agenda', and restorative justice processes via *talanoa* or consensus building. There are also existing areas of focus within the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent's* peace and security pillar that could inform this vision.

5. s6(a)

Released under the Official Information Act