

16 April 2025

Personal details removed for proactive release

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OIA 30039

Thank you for your email of 19 March 2025 in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

*"Please supply the summary, report, and comment sections of formal messages from the following meetings:*

- 1. A meeting between Rt Hon Winston Peters and Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, held on 27 February 2025.*
- 2. A meeting between Rt Hon Winston Peters and the ambassadors to China of Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Nauru, Solomon Islands, and the Federated States of Micronesia, on 25 February 2025.*
- 3. A meeting between Rt Hon Winston Peters and a United States Congressional Delegation, held on 19 February 2025."*

### **Response to your request**

Attached is an excerpt of the information relevant to your request from a Formal Message dated 2 March 2025, relating to a meeting between Rt Hon Winston Peters and Wang Yi, Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China, which was held on 27 February 2025. Some information is withheld under the following sections of the OIA:

- 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;
- 7(b): to prejudice relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand: the self-governing State of the Cook Islands: the self-governing State of Niue;
- 7(c)(i): to prejudice the international relations of the Governments of the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments.

Where the information has been withheld under section 9 of the OIA, no public interest in releasing the information has been identified that would override the reasons for withholding it.

Parts 2 and 3 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/](http://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](mailto: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](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SC', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Corbett  
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

# FORMAL MESSAGE: MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VISIT TO CHINA, 25-26 FEBRUARY 2025

Dated 2 March 2025

## Summary

- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters visited Beijing for a two-day visit from 25-26 February. The visit took place against the background of <sup>s6(a)</sup>, including the PLA-Navy presence in the Tasman Sea, and the conclusion of various agreements between China and the Cook Islands during Prime Minister Mark Brown's recent visit to China.
- Both issues were discussed extensively during the visit, with Minister Peters outlining clearly the nature of the special, constitutional relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands. This was a fundamental New Zealand interest. The Minister also set out New Zealand's concerns around live fire activities with limited notification. <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- The Minister put these issues in the context of our mature and comprehensive relationship with China which enabled us to talk about differences, respectfully and openly. <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

- <sup>s6(b)(i)</sup>

<sup>s6(a), s6(b)(i)</sup>

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

- s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

## Report

1. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Winston Peters visited Beijing from 25-26 February. This was Minister Peters' sixth official visit to Beijing, the first taking place in 1997. Minister Peters was last in Beijing in 2018 when he was hosted by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.
2. While in Beijing, Minister Peters met with a number of senior Chinese leaders, including Vice President Han Zheng for a courtesy call. He also met with Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Minister Liu Jianchao for a wide-ranging discussion focused on regional and global issues. Liu travelled to New Zealand in May last year. The centrepiece was a 70-minute bilateral meeting with counterpart Foreign Minister Wang Yi, followed by a working dinner.
3. s6(b)(i), s9(2)(g)(i)

The Minister emphasised his long history of engagement with China and how much China had transformed over his lifetime – s6(a) s9(2)(g)(i)

## *Bilateral relationship*

4. Minister Peters placed his visit in the context of New Zealand's long-standing relationship with China, noting the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1972 and the visit of then Prime Minister Robert Muldoon thereafter. s6(a)
5. Minister Peters emphasised the importance of high-level political engagement, noting the successful visit of Premier Li to New Zealand in June of last year, and looked forward to Prime Minister Luxon visiting China in the coming months s6(a)

s6(a)

6. The Minister also reiterated the importance of senior level and technical discussions between New Zealand and China across a range of issues, and recommitted to holding dialogues, including on human rights and consular affairs. These mechanisms were essential so that when problems arose, we could deal with these.

7. Minister Peters made clear that it was our mature and comprehensive relationship with China which enabled us to talk about our differences, respectfully and openly  
s6(a)

8. s6(b)(i)

9. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

*Trade and Economic Relationship*

10. s6(b)(i)

11. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

s6(b)(i)

12. Minister Peters noted the economic benefits that had accrued to New Zealand from our Free Trade Agreement concluded in 2008 and looked forward to further developing those opportunities. The Minister emphasised the importance of New Zealand China tourism and education connections, and people-to-people links.  
s6(a)

*CPTPP, DEPA*

13. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

14. s6(b)(i)

15. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

*Cook Islands/Pacific*

16. New Zealand's concerns regarding the recent agreements between the Cook Islands and China were extensively traversed in each of the three high level meetings, with Minister Peters focused on explaining to China the special, constitutional relationship between New Zealand and the Cook Islands. This was a fundamental interest to New Zealand. The relationship of 'free association' placed a duty on the Cook Islands to consult with New Zealand and the Cook Islands' people before entering into any such arrangements. This had not taken place in this case – s6(a)

s6(a), s6(b)(i), s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s7(c)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

20. The Minister also set out the centrality of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) to arrangements in the Pacific. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

*China's Tasman Sea deployment, live fire exercises*

21. The Chinese Naval Task Group deployment in the Tasman Sea (ongoing as the Ministers met) was raised in clear terms with both Wang and Liu. The Minister – noting that China had also just undertaken live fire exercises in the Taiwan Strait – made clear that while New Zealand understood China's right to be in the Tasman Sea under the Law of the Sea, it was alarming to us that we had received so little warning such that numerous aircraft in one of the busiest commercial routes had to be rerouted. How come this had to come as a surprise to us? What was China hoping to learn from these exercises that couldn't be learnt elsewhere?

22. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

23. Minister Peters drew a parallel with the ICBM test into the South Pacific last year, noting that he had travelled to French Polynesia last year (at the edges of whose EEZ's the missile had landed). New Zealand had received very little warning, and Pacific Island countries none at all. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

24. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a),  
s6(b)(i)

s6(a)



s6(a), s6(b)(i)

*Ukraine*

29. Given the rapidly evolving developments over a possible peace deal in respect of Ukraine, and Minister Wang's recent travel to Europe, the Russia-Ukraine conflict loomed large in all discussions. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

s6(a), s6(b)(i)

32. A range of other pressing international issues were discussed across the meetings, including Israel-Gaza and the DPRK. s6(a), s6(b)(i)

#### *Other Programme Elements*

33. Minister Peters also participated in a roundtable with eight Pacific Island Ambassadors based in Beijing to discuss their respective bilateral relationships with China and current challenges and opportunities for cooperation in the Pacific. A separate meeting with Chinese alumni of New Zealand universities aimed at profiling New Zealand's vibrant international education sector was also hosted at the Embassy. These will be reported back through separate channels.

#### *Media*

34. As agreed, following the meeting, both sides released separate readouts (see [China](#) and [New Zealand](#)). The IDCPC and Vice President's office also published summaries of the meetings (see [Han Zheng and Liu Jianchao](#) readouts). s6(a)

35. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

36. New Zealand and international media interest in the visit was high. The Embassy was contacted by a range of local and international media outlets. A media interview with RNZ, AP and Reuters took place immediately following the bilateral which was widely syndicated back to New Zealand outlets.

#### **Comment**

37. The visit was a timely opportunity to discuss at high levels of the Chinese system a number of current issues in the New Zealand China relationship, notably the live fire exercises in the Tasman Sea and the Cook Islands agreements. s6(a)

38. From New Zealand's side, our key messages around China's behaviour in our home region were clearly registered in all engagements. s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

s6(a), s9(2)(g)(i)

39. It was also a useful inflection point at which to seek China's views on rapidly-evolving international issues, including with respect to Ukraine. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

ENDS

Released under the  
Official Information Act 1982