

Proactive Release

Published on or before: 14 November 2025

The following Cabinet papers and related Cabinet minutes have been proactively released by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Title	Reference
Cabinet Minute of Decision – Report of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 12 September 2025	CAB-25-MIN-0308
Cabinet External Relations and Security Committee – Minute of Decision – Southeast Asia: Implementing the Foreign Policy Reset	FPS-25-MIN-0021
Southeast Asia: Implementing the Foreign Policy Reset	

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Key to OIA redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials; and
- 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 of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee: Period Ended 12 September 2025

On 15 September 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee for the period ended 12 September 2025:

FPS-25-MIN-0021

**Southeast Asia: Implementing the Foreign Policy
Reset**
Portfolio: Foreign Affairs

CONFRIMED

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet



Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee

Minute of Decision

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Southeast Asia: Implementing the Foreign Policy Reset

Portfolio Foreign Affairs

On 8 September 2025, the Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee:

- 1 **noted** the progress made since the Foreign Policy Reset in February 2024 to strengthen linkages with priority Southeast Asian partners, including 38 outward Prime Minister and Ministerial visits to the region, as outlined in the submission under FPS-25-SUB-0021;
- 2 **noted** that the next 12-18 months will focus on delivery of new work plans for upgraded bilateral relationships, progressing trade and economic opportunities, and implementing defence and security initiatives;
- 3 s6(a)
- 4 **noted** that the continuing reprioritisation of Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) resources and utilisation of new funding under Budget 2025 will support further increases in activity required under the Foreign Policy Reset;
- 5 s6(a)
- 6 s6(a)
- 7 s9(2)(f)(iv)
- 8 **noted** that MFAT will work with other NZ Inc agencies on proposals for the newly established contestable Southeast Asia Growth Fund, which is worth NZ\$12 million over four years;
- 9 s9(2)(f)(iv)

- 10 **agreed** that MFAT work with relevant agencies to formulate a recommended Ministerial travel schedule for Southeast Asia for 2026.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Rt Hon Winston Peters (Chair)
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Todd McClay

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair of FPS
Officials Committee for FPS
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Office of the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Cabinet Foreign Policy and National Security Committee (FPS)

SOUTHEAST ASIA: IMPLEMENTING THE FOREIGN POLICY RESET

Proposal

1. We provide an update on progress implementing the Foreign Policy Reset in Southeast Asia; and seek Cabinet's approval for ongoing prioritisation of activities to enhance New Zealand's prosperity and security in the region, and hold our own relative to others, s6(a) that are already heavily investing in the region.

Relation to government priorities

2. In February 2024, Cabinet approved 'Resetting New Zealand's Foreign Policy' (refer FPS-24-MIN-0033), confirming the need to significantly increase New Zealand's focus on and resources applied to priority relationships, including s6(a) in Southeast Asia s6(a)
It recognised that Southeast Asian partners had grown in importance for New Zealand – economically and strategically – s6(a)
3. This paper follows the Cabinet papers on our relationship with India (refer FPS-24-MIN-0013) and the Foreign Policy Reset Year One Stocktake (refer FPS-24-MIN-0030), and should be read in conjunction with our accompanying Cabinet paper on the conclusion of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership negotiations with Singapore. Our approach supports the Government's "Going for Growth" agenda, National Security Strategy, and Strategic Defence Policy as laid out in the Defence Capability Plan.

Executive Summary

4. Closer engagement with Southeast Asia is vital to achieving the Government's objectives:
 - With some of the fastest economic growth rates globally, Southeast Asia is a **critical partner in advancing the Government's "Going for Growth" agenda** – boosting investment, diversifying and doubling exports, and driving innovation.
 - s6(a)
We are implementing initiatives supporting the Government's **defence and security objectives**.
 - Our **International Development Cooperation (IDC)** Programme promotes New Zealand expertise and international reputation, while enhancing regional security and prosperity.
5. s6(a)

Economically, we aim to harness Southeast Asia's dynamism

– expanding exports and investment with priority partners to deliver lasting benefits for New Zealanders.

6. Since the Foreign Policy Reset in February 2024, New Zealand has lifted effort and engagement in Southeast Asia to enhance New Zealand's security and prosperity. This concerted effort has been spearheaded by 38 outward Prime Ministerial and Ministerial visits to advance a substantive political and economic lift.
7. Diplomatic anniversaries have been used as framing to elevate the formal status of our relationships and reinforce our position as a reliable and valuable partner, s6(a)
8. Our increased tempo of engagement has been supported by reprioritisation of resources by MFAT and NZ Inc agencies. s9(2)(g)(i)
Budget 2025 included new funding to support the Government's priorities to double export value and deepen relationships in Asia.
9. s6(a)
10. s6(a)

Analysis

Why Southeast Asia? How does closer engagement benefit New Zealanders?

11. Southeast Asia is collectively New Zealand's fourth largest trading partner. New Zealand exported NZ\$10.3 billion (+14% year-on-year) in goods and services to the region in the year ending March 2025. Nearly 10,000 international students from the six priority Southeast Asian countries were enrolled with New Zealand education providers in 2024, representing NZ\$500 million (+19% year-on-year) in education-related travel services exports. ASEAN member countries held investments in New Zealand totalling NZ\$18.1 billion in the year ending March 2024. The upgraded ASEAN-Australia-NZ Free Trade Area Agreement (AANZFTA) entered into force in April 2025 and supports these trade and economic flows.
12. Southeast Asia has some of the fastest economic growth rates globally, and demographic and consumer trends that align with New Zealand's export profile. Southeast Asia is important to the Government's "Going for Growth" agenda – boosting investment, diversifying and doubling exports, and driving innovation. ASEAN countries are looking to accelerate investment in areas including digital infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, and energy transition technologies.

13. s6(a)

14. New Zealand's security and prosperity is enhanced by stability in Southeast Asia. Our defence, security and law enforcement investments recognise the region is a priority for New Zealand's risk mitigation, consistent with our National Security Strategy. Regional transnational organised crime, irregular migration, and radicalisation have a direct impact on New Zealand, including social and economic harm. For example, Customs' seizure of approximately 1,800 kilograms of illicit drugs from Southeast Asia in 2024 was equivalent to preventing NZ\$1.4 billion in harm in New Zealand.
15. Contributions to uplifting law enforcement capabilities throughout the region – for example, training courses at Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC) – strengthen New Zealand's borders. Enhanced regional engagement improves our ability to protect New Zealanders in times of consular need. s6(a)
16. Our security, prosperity and resilience objectives in Southeast Asia, and the benefits New Zealanders derive from them, are supported by investments under our International Development Cooperation (IDC). IDC spending has flow-on benefits for New Zealand's Going for Growth agenda. It has expanded opportunities for the private sector and Crown institutes, particularly in the areas of renewable energy and agricultural innovation, and opened doors to future commercial opportunities. Tertiary institutions earn revenue under the sizeable scholarships programme. Our increased engagement on climate change cooperation supports New Zealand's access to climate change solutions and enables climate change and green economy related private sector partnerships and investment.

What is our desired end state?

17. s6(a)

18. s6(a)

Economically, New Zealand has opportunities to capitalise on Southeast Asia's growth – expanding exports and investment with priority Southeast Asian partners to maximise long-term gains for New Zealanders. Domestically, our goal is for

New Zealanders to understand the impact and recognise the benefits of deeper connections with Southeast Asia¹.

What have we achieved so far?

19. Our deepened focus on Southeast Asia has delivered benefits for New Zealand. An increased tempo of 38 Prime Ministerial and Ministerial visits since the Foreign Policy Reset (Annex 1 refers) has intensified political engagement and has been critical for building reciprocal support for wider economic and security outcomes. Return visits to New Zealand and growing engagement by Southeast Asian officials confirm the region welcomes a stronger New Zealand presence, closer relationships, and deeper cooperation.
20. Celebrating diplomatic anniversaries alongside high level visits has elevated the formal status of our relationships and reinforced our position as a reliable and valuable partner of long standing. This year, we have i) achieved an upgrade to our Viet Nam relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership; ii) secured an endorsement from ASEAN Foreign Ministers for a 'Leaders' Joint Vision Statement' which would establish a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership if adopted at the end of October; and iii) concluded negotiations at officials' level on our upgrade to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with Singapore. s6(a)
s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)
21. s6(a) s6(a)

MFAT has been consulting actively with relevant NZ Inc agencies to identify current and future planned initiatives that contribute to these relationship upgrades.

22. s6(a)

¹ Demonstrated by New Zealanders holding more positive perceptions of Southeast Asian countries in the Asia New Zealand Foundation's annual "Perceptions of Asia" survey.

² s6(a)

s6(a)

s6(a)

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What were the funding implications of Budget 2025?

24. Budget 2025 included new funding under Vote Foreign Affairs to support the Government's priorities to double export value and deepen relationships in Asia. It is focused on increasing engagement with India and priority Southeast Asian partners; tackling non-tariff barriers; and implementing, leveraging, and expanding existing trade agreements.
25. Using Budget 2025 funding, MFAT is establishing six new roles dedicated to Southeast Asia – s6(a)
- MFAT has established the contestable Southeast Asia Growth Fund – worth NZ\$12 million over four years – to support targeted activities which is available for application by NZ Inc agencies. s6(a)
26. Tourism New Zealand received additional funding for international marketing in Budget 2025. It will direct NZ\$6 million of this towards activity in emerging markets in South and Southeast Asia, estimated to generate \$60 million in additional visitor spend in New Zealand. Activity will be aligned with the Tourism Growth Roadmap which seeks to increase the number of international visitors to New Zealand to at least 2019 levels (3.89 million) by 2026.
27. Budget 2025 discontinued the Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia, with \$3.75 million funding per year reprioritised to other areas. The programme supported over 3,810 New Zealanders from 2013 to 2025 to study, research, or intern across Asia.

What risks are we facing?

28. s6(a)

29. s6(a)

30. s6(a)

s6(a)

31. s6(a)

Areas of further focus

32. s6(a)

³ s6(a)

agencies. It is important to focus on areas where we hold a comparative advantage; to develop our capacity to engage and to ensure we follow through on our commitments.

33. A key element of the Foreign Policy Reset was more frequent Ministerial travel to Southeast Asia, s6(a) The Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Defence have prioritised travel to Southeast Asia (24 visits). Other Ministers have travelled less frequently to Southeast Asia (14 visits); s6(a) Further Ministerial travel to Southeast Asia linked with stated strategic priority relationships would be welcomed in the region. More Southeast Asian Ministers are making reciprocal visits to New Zealand, and we need to ensure agencies are resourced to provide the level of support and hospitality that is consistent with the importance that we place on their inwards visits.

Implementation

34. Annex 3 summarises upcoming initiatives for our s6(a) priority partners in Southeast Asia. Cabinet is being updated via separate papers on progress towards our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership upgrades with Singapore and ASEAN.

Financial Implications

35. s6(a)

36. s6(a)

Other Implications

37. There are no legislative, population, climate change, cost of living, human rights, or external contractor implications arising from this paper.

Consultation

38. This paper is based on consultations with: Ministry of Defence, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment [Immigration; Tourism; Science, Innovation and Technology], Ministry of Primary Industry, Ministry of Education, Education New Zealand, New Zealand Customs Service, National Emergency Management Agency, New Zealand Treasury, New Zealand Police, Ministry of Justice, Crown Law, Tourism NZ, Ministry of Transport, Ministry for the Environment, Government Communications Security Bureau,

s6(a)

New Zealand Security Intelligence Service, Ministry of Ethnic Communities, Visits and Ceremonial Office (VCO) of the Department of Internal Affairs. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has also been informed.

Proactive Release

39. There are grounds for withholding large sections of this Cabinet paper under 6(a), given the potential for its content to prejudice the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

Recommendations

40. The Minister of Foreign Affairs recommends that the Committee:
- **Note** the progress made since the Foreign Policy Reset in February 2024 to strengthen linkages with priority Southeast Asian partners, including 38 outward Prime Minister and Ministerial visits to the region.
 - **Note** the next 12-18 months will focus on delivery of new work plans for upgraded bilateral relationships; progressing trade and economic opportunities; and implementing defence and security initiatives.
 - s6(a)
 - **Note** the continuing reprioritisation of MFAT resources and utilisation of new funding under Budget 2025 will support further increases in activity required under the Foreign Policy Reset.
 - s6(a)
 - s6(a)
 - s9(2)(f)(iv)
 - **Note** that MFAT will work with other NZ Inc agencies on proposals for the contestable Southeast Asia Growth Fund – worth NZ\$12 million over four years.
 - s9(2)(f)(iv)
 - **Agree** that MFAT work with relevant agencies to formulate a recommended Ministerial travel schedule for Southeast Asia for the coming year.

Authorised for lodgement.

Rt. Hon Winston Peters

Minister of Foreign Affairs

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s6(a)

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