

6 May 2026

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OIA 30768

Out of scope

Thank you for your email of 27 February 2026, in which you request the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA):

"Please release the following documents in full, listed here by their title:

- 1. "Informal note - potential water management support to Fiji"*
- 2. "Further advice on Budget 2026 to inform initiative submission"*
- 3. "Timor-Leste: Inclusion in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme"*
- 4. "Budget 2026 - Package for submission to Minister of Finance"*
- 5. "Increased funding for Pacific water security activities: Kiribati and Tuvalu"*
- 6. "Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026"*
- 7. "Niue Renewable Energy Project: Funding Approval"*
- 8. "US-NZ Critical Minerals Framework: Negotiations Update and Options for Signing"*
- 9. "Meeting Brief: Lord Fakafanua, Tonga Prime Minister"*
- 10. "A non-binding framework on critical minerals between the United States and New Zealand"*
- 11. "Informal Note — Forum Dialogue Partner and Observer Tiering"*
- 12. "Informal Note — Tokelau: Current Developments"*
- 13. "New Zealand-Niue Political Declaration"*
- 14. Meeting brief: Hon. Simon Kofe, Tuvalu Minister for Transport, Energy, Communication and Innovation*
- 15. "Managing bilateral interest in New Zealand's critical minerals sector"*
- 16. "Meeting: Meeting with Hon. Dalton Tagelagi"*
- 17. "Initial advice on Budget 2026"*
- 18. "Briefing: New Zealand approach and positions for CITES CoP20"*
- 19. "Informal Note - Update on the Operating Model Review of the IDC Programme"*
- 20. "University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment"*
- 21. "Cook Islands: Next Steps"*

Your request has been numbered for administrative convenience.

On 5 March 2026, your request for document 18, titled, 'Briefing: New Zealand approach and positions for CITES CoP20' was transferred under section 14(b) of the OIA to Department of Conservation (DoC) for response.

On 27 March 2026, the timeframes for responding to your request were extended by an additional 25 working days because responding to your request necessitated the review of a large quantity of information, and due to the consultations necessary to make a decision on your request (section 15A(1)(a) and (b) of the OIA refers).

Response to your request

Please see the following table for a list of documents in scope of your request. Some documents are withheld in full, and some information contained in the documents 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;
- 6(b)(ii): to protect the passing of information from an international organisation on a confidential basis;
- 7(b)(i): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand;
- 7(b)(iii): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of the self-governing State of Niue;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy;
- 9(2)(ba)(i): to protect the supply of confidential information by a third party;
- 9(2)(f)(iv): to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials;
- 9(2)(g)(i): to protect the free and frank expression of opinions by departments;
- 9(2)(h): to maintain legal professional privilege; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

#	Title	Decision
1.	<i>Informal note - potential water management support to Fiji"</i>	Some information withheld under section 6(a).
2.	<i>Further advice on Budget 2026 to inform initiative submission</i>	Withheld in full under sections 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i).
3.	<i>Timor-Leste: Inclusion in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme</i>	Some information withheld under section 9(2)(a).
4.	<i>Budget 2026 - Package for submission to Minister of Finance</i>	Withheld in full under sections 9(2)(f)(iv) and 9(2)(g)(i).

#	Title	Decision
5.	<i>Increased funding for Pacific water security activities: Kiribati and Tuvalu</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a) and 9(2)(a).
6.	<i>Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a) and 9(2)(a).
7.	<i>Niue Renewable Energy Project: Funding Approval</i>	Some information withheld under sections 9(2)(a) and 9(2)(j).
8.	<i>US-NZ Critical Minerals Framework: Negotiations Update and Options for Signing</i>	https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/critical-minerals-proactive-release
9.	<i>Meeting Brief: Lord Fakafanua, Tonga Prime Minister</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a) and 6(b)(i).
10.	<i>A non-binding framework on critical minerals between the United States and New Zealand</i>	https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/critical-minerals-proactive-release
11.	<i>Informal Note — Forum Dialogue Partner and Observer Tiering</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a) and 6(b)(ii).
12.	<i>Informal Note — Tokelau: Current Developments</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a), 9(2)(ba)(i), 9(2)(f)(iv), 9(2)(g)(i), 9(2)(g)(ii), 9(2)(h), and 9(2)(b)(ii).
13.	<i>New Zealand-Niue Political Declaration</i>	Please refer to the below excerpt of this document (section 16(1)(e) of the OIA refers). The remainder of this document is withheld under the following sections of the OIA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - s6(a); - s7(b)(i)/(ii)/(iii); - s9(2)(a); and - s9(2)(g)(i).
14.	<i>Meeting brief: Hon. Simon Kofe, Tuvalu Minister for Transport, Energy, Communication and Innovation</i>	Some information withheld under sections 6(a) and 9(2)(f)(iv).
15.	<i>Managing bilateral interest in New Zealand's critical minerals sector</i>	https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/media-and-resources/critical-minerals-proactive-release
16.	<i>Meeting: Meeting with Hon. Dalton Tagelagi</i>	Some information withheld under sections 9(2)(a), 6(a) 7(b)(i) and 7(b)(iii).
17.	<i>Initial advice on Budget 2026</i>	Withheld in full under sections 6(a) and 9(2)(f)(iv).
18.	<i>Briefing: New Zealand approach and positions for CITES CoP20</i>	Transferred to Department of Conservation.

#	Title	Decision
19.	<i>Informal Note - Update on the Operating Model Review of the IDC Programme</i>	No information is withheld.
20.	<i>Cook Islands: Next Steps</i>	Withheld in full under sections 9(2)(f)(iv), 7(b)(i), 7(b)(ii), 7.(b)(iii) 6(a), 9(2)(g)(i), 7(a)(i), 9(2)(j), 9(2)(a).
21.	<i>"University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment"</i>	Some information withheld under sections 9(2)(g)(i) and 9(2)(a)

Please note, documents 8, 10, and 15 are publicly available. A link to the available material has been included in the table above. Accordingly, these parts of your request are refused under section 18(d) of the OIA.

In accordance with section 16(1)(e) of the OIA, the following is an excerpt of document 13, titled, 'New Zealand-Niue Political Declaration'. A summary is being provided because providing the information in another form would prejudice the interests protected by section 6, 7 or 9 of the OIA. Information not being provided in the summary 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;
- 7(b)(i): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of New Zealand;
- 7(b)(ii): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of the self-governing State of the Cook Islands;
- 7(b)(iii): to avoid prejudicing relations between any of the Governments of the self-governing State of Niue;
- 9(2)(a): to protect individuals' privacy; and
- 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.

Excerpt of document "New Zealand – Niue Political Declaration" dated 5 November 2025 provided under section 16(1)(e) of the OIA.

Key points

- New Zealand's bilateral relationship with Niue is in good heart. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)].
- The Declaration will be an enduring but not legally binding relationship document. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)].
- The draft Declaration for your in-principle approval is set out in Annex 1, subject to updated text as negotiations continue. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)].
- [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(ii), s7(b)(iii)]. There are however no financial or people implications to the specific recommendations contained in this submission. Any action can be absorbed as part of the Ministry's current priority work.

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

4. **Approve** in-principle the draft New Zealand-Niue Political Declaration, subject to an updated text.
5. **Note** that proposed reactive media lines will be provided to your office ahead of the publication of the New Zealand-Niue Political Declaration.
6. **Note** that there are no resourcing implications attached to the specific proposals in this submission.

Report

2. As mutually agreed during Prime Minister Luxon's visit to Niue in June 2024, Prime Minister Luxon and Prime Minister Tagelagi are scheduled to meet for the inaugural annual Leaders meeting on 13 November 2025 and sign a high-level Political Declaration (Declaration). The Declaration will be an enduring but not legally binding relationship document [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)]. Text still under consultation is indicated in red text and square brackets.

Free association relationship

4. Beyond the Niue Constitution Act 1974, New Zealand and Niue do not have political-level documentation setting out in detail the expectations in our free association relationship, [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)].
7. The New Zealand – Niue Statement of Partnership 2022-2025 (Statement) sets out priority areas in our development cooperation and is due for renewal. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)].
9. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)] New Zealand officials assess we are currently meeting our responsibilities by providing coordinated whole-of-government administrative assistance and development assistance through the International Development Cooperation Programme. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)]
11. Consultation on the text of the draft Declaration with the Government of Niue is ongoing. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)]

Resourcing

16. [s7(b)(i), s7(b)(iii)]. There are however no financial or people implications to the specific recommendations contained in this submission. Any action can be absorbed as part of the Ministry's current priority work.

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 stylized 'S' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical stroke.

Sarah Corbett
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Informal Note — Potential water management support to Fiji

- Following the visit of Fiji's Minister for Agriculture and Waterways, Hon Tomasi Tunabuna, to New Zealand in November, MFAT and MBIE officials are exploring options to support Fiji in addressing water management challenges.
- Fiji faces serious water security challenges from climate change, intensified flooding, aging infrastructure and high leakage rates. Urban areas struggle with rising demand and contamination risks, while a lack of reliable access in rural communities undermines health, food security and agriculture development. Outlined in its cross-government Water Sector Strategy 2050, Fiji plans to address these challenges through strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure, advancing integrated water management, and promoting nature-based solutions to protect communities, secure water supply, and sustain key economic sectors.
- s6(a)

s6(a)

Further support

- s6(a)
- Water security and management are not agreed priorities under our Fiji-New Zealand Statement of Partnership. However, our IDC programme provides limited support through community-level partnerships to improve rural access to clean water and sanitation, as well as part of an agriculture-related land-use planning activity. In addition, the Government of Fiji has confirmed that approximately NZ\$5.1 million from New Zealand's untagged climate flexible finance contribution will be allocated to drainage and flood protection projects.

Pacific Melanesia & Micronesia Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
1 December 2025



9 December 2025

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

19 December 2025

Timor-Leste: Inclusion in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE To seek agreement to Timor-Leste's inclusion in New Zealand's labour mobility development programme to support their participation in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme.

Recommended referrals

Minister of Immigration

For information by

19 December 2025

Minister of State for Trade

For information by

19 December 2025

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
Tharron McIvor	Unit Manager	Pacific Regional Division	s9(2)(a)
Emma Sherwood	Senior Adviser, Labour Mobility	Pacific Regional Division	

Minister's Office to complete

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events | <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes | |

Comments

Timor-Leste: Inclusion in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme

Key points

- In August 2024, the Government announced Timor-Leste's inclusion in New Zealand's Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme, responding to consistent requests from Timor-Leste. In April 2025, Timor-Leste was officially added to the list in the RSE Immigration Instructions of eligible countries that employers can recruit from.
- The Strengthening Pacific Labour Mobility Programme (SPLM) Phase III is New Zealand's core development cooperation activity for Pacific labour mobility. The SPLM Programme, which the Ministry manages, supports Pacific governments to maximise opportunities offered by participation in New Zealand's RSE scheme, contributing to increased social and economic well-being and resilience across the Pacific.
- We propose to add Timor-Leste to the SPLM Phase III, to the value of NZ\$1.1 million over three years. This would provide wrap-around support for Timor-Leste to successfully participate in RSE, including: funding for Timor-Leste's Labour Sending Unit; a New Zealand-based RSE Country Liaison Officer; end-to-end operational support and subject matter expertise; and support for workers before their departure to New Zealand. This support would be consistent with what is provided to Pacific countries.
- SPLM Phase III was approved in June 2023 to a total value of NZ\$19.4 million over five years. An additional NZ\$1.1 million to support Timor-Leste's inclusion in SPLM over the final three years of this phase increases the whole-of-life value to NZ\$20.5 million, which sits within the Minister of Foreign Affairs' delegation.
- Recruitment of Timorese workers presents challenges for New Zealand employers including geographical location, flight costs, and an Australian transit visa requirement. A small number of employers have indicated interest in recruiting a small number of workers in 2026, but until recruitment commences it will be difficult to estimate what the true demand for Timorese workers will be.
- Up front support through SPLM will help mitigate this risk. SPLM will support Timor-Leste to ensure processes are in place to support the successful mobilisation of RSE workers, and to give employers assurances in their decision to recruit from Timor-Leste. Our support can be scaled depending on the level of recruitment and mobilisation.
- The NZ\$1.1 million of additional funding requested will be met from existing allocations within the International Development Cooperation (IDC) Programme appropriation. No additional resource is required.



Bernadette Cavanagh
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Timor-Leste: Inclusion in the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Note the decision in August 2024 to include Timor-Leste in the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme; | Yes / No |
| 2 | Agree to Timor-Leste's inclusion in the Strengthening Pacific Labour Mobility (SPLM) programme to support their participation in the RSE scheme at a total value of NZ\$1.1 million over three years; | Yes / No |
| 3 | Agree to the whole of life cost for the SPLM increasing by NZ\$1.1 million from NZ\$19.4 million to NZ\$20.5 million for the period 2023-2028; | Yes / No |
| 4 | Note that this will be funded from existing IDC Programme baselines; | Yes / No |
| 5 | Refer a copy of this submission to the Minister of Immigration and the Minister of State for Trade for information. | Yes / No |

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: / /

Released under the Official Information Act



15 December 2025

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

19 December 2025

Increased funding for Pacific water security activities: Kiribati and Tuvalu

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE This submission seeks your approval to increase International Development Cooperation (IDC) funding for two existing Pacific water security activities in Kiribati and Tuvalu.

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
Karen Murray	Divisional Manager	Development People and Planet	s9(2)(a)
Kritesh Velji	Unit Manager	Development People and Planet	

Minister's Office to complete

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|--|---|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events | <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes | |

Comments

Increased funding for Pacific water security activities

Key points

- s6(a)
- In line with this approach, we recommend Kiribati rejoins the Pacific Partnership for Atoll Water Security (PPAWS), funded by New Zealand for 2025-2028 through the *Strengthening Water Resilience* IDC activity and delivered by the Pacific Community (SPC). Other countries in PPAWS include the Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu.
- New Zealand has a strong track record in water security projects that improve resilience for vulnerable communities, particularly atoll countries that rely solely on rainwater or groundwater.
- Kiribati was part of the first two phases of PPAWS (*2015-2019 Strengthening Water Security in Vulnerable Island States* and *2019-2026 Managing Water Scarcity*)
s6(a)
- The cost of including Kiribati in the third phase of PPAWS is NZ\$1,800,000 and can be funded within existing IDC baselines. This will increase the overall *Strengthening Water Resilience* activity budget from NZ\$18,750,000 to NZ\$20,550,000. We will discuss with your office as to whether this could be announced during your forthcoming visit.
- Additionally, we seek your agreement to provide further support for solar still distillation (SSD) in Tuvalu to complete installation of 60 remaining units in outer island communities.
- The Ministry has funded Engineers Without Borders New Zealand (EWBNZ) NZ\$1,749,793 to deliver the SSD project in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and Tuvalu as part of a regional Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity Activity. SSD installation is complete in Kiribati and 50% complete in Tuvalu and the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands is scheduled for completion by mid-2026. Recipient communities report positive impacts.
- The remaining installations in Tuvalu are in remote locations. Completion has been delayed and cannot be completed within the existing budget due to cost increases for shipping, local partner costs, and technical challenges beyond the control of EWBNZ.
- The additional cost to complete installation of the remaining 60 outer island units is NZ\$355,000, taking the total funding provided to EWBNZ to NZ\$2,104,793. This will increase the total cost of the regional Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity activity from NZ\$24,978,000 to NZ\$25,333,000. Funding will come from the existing IDC baseline.

Bernadette Cavanagh
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Increased funding for Pacific water security activities

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Agree to a NZ\$1,800,000 increase to the <i>Strengthening Water Resilience</i> activity budget to include Kiribati in the new phase of the Pacific Partnership for Atoll Water Security, bringing the total cost of the activity to NZ\$20,550,000 across the region. | Yes / No |
| 2 | Agree to a NZ\$355,000 increase to the <i>Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity</i> activity budget to complete installation of the 60 remaining units in outer island communities in Tuvalu, bringing the total cost of the activity to NZ\$25,333,000 across the region. | Yes / No |
| 3 | Note that these two activities are within the delegation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs to approve. | Yes / No |
| 4 | Note that these increases will be funded from the existing IDC baseline and there is no resource implications. | Yes / No |

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: / /

Increased funding for Pacific water security activities

Report

1. This submission seeks approval to increase funding (from within existing baselines) to two Pacific water security activities.
2. New Zealand has a long history of delivering water security projects across the region. A key area of support is for atoll countries with no surface water that are solely reliant on rainwater and/or groundwater. This support is delivered through initiatives such as the multi-phase Pacific Partnership for Atoll Water Security (PPAWS) programme coordinated by the Pacific Community (SPC), and initiatives delivering alternate water generation such as solar still distillation.

Activity: Strengthening Water Resilience

3. Kiribati is heavily dependent on rainfall and groundwater. Rising sea levels, prolonged droughts and unsafe drinking water pose major challenges to health and livelihoods. Strengthening water security and atoll resilience are key priorities for Government of Kiribati.
4. We recommend that Kiribati rejoins the PPAWS funded by New Zealand and delivered by SPC. Other countries in PPAWS include the Cook Islands, Nauru, Niue, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Tonga and Tuvalu.
5. Under the PPAWS umbrella, Kiribati was part of two successive phases: the 2015-2019 NZ\$5 million programme 'Strengthening Water Security in Vulnerable Island States' and the closing 2019-2026 NZ\$19.9 million 'Managing Water Scarcity' programme.
6. s6(a)
7. Kiribati has delivered very good results through the first two PPAWS phases with 15,000 people in remote outer island communities directly benefitting through a range of initiatives including:
 - new and repaired rainwater harvesting systems;
 - new groundwater installations and desalination units providing drinking water;
 - installation of solar pumps;
 - water quality testing;
 - water resource assessments and community water management planning;
 - outer island water technician training; and
 - drought management planning at the national and community levels including supporting the response to the three years of water shortage during the extended 2020-2023 La Niña period.

Increased funding for Pacific water security activities

8. Kiribati will complete work on the current second phase of PPAWS by mid-2026. The Ministry has earmarked NZ\$1.8 million from within existing IDC baselines for Kiribati to join the third phase of the atoll water security programme.
9. If approved, this will increase the total value of the regional Strengthening Water Resilience activity to NZ\$20.55 million. An activity of this size falls within the delegation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Activity: Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity – Solar Still Distillation

10. The Ministry has funded Engineers Without Borders New Zealand (EWBNZ) as part of the Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity activity to deliver a solar still distillation (SSD) project in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and Tuvalu. The project is in response to ongoing droughts impacting the supply of clean drinking water in the Southern Gilbert group of Kiribati, outer islands of Tuvalu, and Northern Cook Islands. SSD is a low-tech solar-powered method that produces safe, high-quality potable water from any raw feedwater source.
11. Tuvalu is extremely vulnerable to sea level rise, storm surges and drought impacting health and livelihoods. Strengthening water security and resilience are key priorities for the Government of Tuvalu as outlined in *Te Kete*, Tuvalu's National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2021 – 2030.
12. SSD installation is complete in Kiribati and 50 percent complete in Tuvalu and the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands is scheduled for completion by mid-2026, within the existing activity budget. Recipient communities in the three countries report positive impacts.
13. The remaining installations in Tuvalu are in remote locations. These installations have been delayed and cannot be completed within existing budgets due to cost increases to shipping, local partner costs, and technical challenges outside the control of EWBNZ, for example:
 - Inter-island shipping costs have increased significantly, exacerbated by reduced capacity in the last year and schedules disrupted by vessel reliability and weather impacts.
 - The EWBNZ local non-government partner, Fuligafou (Youth for Tuvalu), had planned to use local labour in each island's installation location. However, there has been a labour shortage due to the impact of seasonal worker schemes. As a result, installation teams are being sent from Funafuti at additional cost.
 - There are some additional site-specific challenges in Tuvalu that will incur additional cost. These include access to raw feedwater on Funafala and community stewardship on Nanumanga, where damage to panels has occurred.
14. The additional cost to complete installation of the remaining 60 SSD units in Tuvalu is NZ\$355,000. The SSD project is part of the regional Reduce Risk of Water Scarcity activity. This will increase the total value of this activity to NZ\$25,333,000. An activity of this size falls within the delegation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Resourcing

15. This funding will be sourced from the existing IDC Programme baseline. There are no other resourcing implications.



15 December 2025

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by 23 December 2025

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

BRIEFING Overview Submission

PURPOSE To inform you of planning underway for New Zealand's hosting of a multi-national weapons of mass destruction counter-proliferation exercise and conference under the Proliferation Security Initiative, *Exercise Maru*, in November 2026.

Recommended referrals

Minister of Defence	For information by	16 January 2026
Minister of Customs	For information by	16 January 2026
Associate Minister of Transport	For information by	16 January 2026

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
Charlotte Beaglehole	Divisional Manager	International Security and Disarmament Division	s9(2)(a)
Nicola Reid	Unit Manager	International Security and Disarmament Division	

Minister's Office to complete

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Referred |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Needs amendment | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by events | <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's notes | |

Comments

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

Key points

- Established by the US in 2003, the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) is a voluntary grouping which aims to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) through increased international cooperation. New Zealand is an endorsing state of the PSI and part of the Asia-Pacific Exercise Rotation (APER) group of countries that host annual exercises on a rotational basis. APER comprises Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, the US, and New Zealand.
- In 2020, Ministers agreed that New Zealand would defer its planned hosting in 2022 to a later date due to COVID-19 disruptions impacting APER rotational exercises.¹ It is now New Zealand's turn to host the 2026 APER exercise, referred to as *Exercise Maru 2026*. New Zealand last hosted *Exercise Maru* in September 2008 (Auckland) and November 2015 (Wellington). *Exercise Maru 2026* follows Australia's hosting of *Exercise Pacific Protector* in September of 2024, and Japan's recent hosting of *Exercise Pacific Shield* from 2 - 4 December 2025.
- Planning, led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with support from New Zealand Defence Force, Maritime New Zealand, the New Zealand Customs Service, and the Ministry of Defence, is underway for New Zealand to host *Exercise Maru* in November 2026 in Auckland over a two to four-day period between the dates of 16 and 20 November.
- Attendees of *Exercise Maru 2026* could come from the 116 countries (see Annex One) who have endorsed the PSI and its interdiction principles, as well as countries that have not endorsed the PSI that New Zealand chooses to invite. Officials are planning for approximately 150 attendees. Attendees will include officials from a range of agencies responsible for WMD non-proliferation, military, and local embassies.
- These exercises typically include an academic session and live, port and tabletop exercises. APER countries will expect to be invited to bring assets, including military vehicles, to New Zealand to participate alongside NZDF in the live exercise, which will focus on countering a WMD-proliferation event.

s6(a)

- There are no resourcing implications as *Exercise Maru 2026* can be funded through Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand Defence Force, Customs, and Maritime New Zealand existing baselines.



Taha Macpherson
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

¹ Submission to Minister of Foreign Affairs: *Proposal that New Zealand defer hosting Proliferation Security Initiative exercise until 2026*, INTS-36-372, dated 10 August 2020

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| 1 | Note that 2026 is New Zealand's turn to host and officials are undertaking planning to host Exercise Maru during November 2026 in Auckland with approximately 150 attendees expected. | Noted |
| 2 | Refer a copy of this submission to Minister of Defence, Minister of Customs, and Associate Minister of Transport for information. | Yes / No |

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: / /

Released under the Official Information Act

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

Report

Background on the Proliferation Security Initiative

1. The PSI is a voluntary international effort established primarily by the US in 2003 to prevent the illegal trade of WMD and related materials. The PSI was developed following the detection of a ship transporting missiles from North Korea to Yemen in late 2002. All PSI states endorse the Statement of Interdiction Principles. In doing so, they commit to participate in coordinated activities to impede and prevent WMD trafficking.
2. New Zealand is also a member of the 21-state PSI Operational Experts Group (OEG) which functions as the secretariat and governance body for the PSI. A new alphabetised approach to allocating annual hosting responsibility between the OEG means that New Zealand will not be required to host this meeting alongside Exercise Maru in 2026, however it will be expected to do so in 2035.
3. In addition, New Zealand is a member of the Asia-Pacific-Exercise Rotation (APER), along with Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and the US. The APER conduct annual exercises on a rotational basis encompassing a range of live, port, and tabletop exercises and academic sessions focused on WMD non-proliferation. New Zealand last hosted Exercise Maru in 2015 in Wellington, and prior to that in 2008 in Auckland.
4. New Zealand was due to host Exercise Maru in 2022, however Ministers agreed to postpone until 2026 to allow the US to host Exercise Fortune Guard in 2022 (due to be held in 2020 but cancelled due to COVID-19 disruptions). The US remains heavily engaged in the PSI, including under the new Administration, and is strongly supported by Australia.

Early planning for Exercise Maru 2026

5. APER exercises are made up of standard components and over a two to four-day period Exercise Maru is planned to include:
 - 5.1. An academic session focused on counter-proliferation occurring in Auckland with New Zealand, APER, PSI-endorsing states, and non-government speakers.
 - 5.2. A tabletop exercise to enable participants to discuss best practice to respond to a hypothetical WMD proliferation event.
 - 5.3. A port exercise in Auckland or a non-port location to demonstrate how New Zealand would respond to a WMD proliferation event if discovered at a port location.
 - 5.4. A live exercise, likely observed from Devonport Naval Base, to demonstrate a live interdiction involving NZDF responding to intelligence that a vessel is illegally transporting WMD.
 - 5.5. A welcome reception for participants with an opening speech, possibly by a Minister (if available given the event's possible proximity to the General Election).
6. Officials are engaging with NZTE to consider opportunities for showcasing the New Zealand defence industry during Exercise Maru, noting however that most attendees will be mid-level officials without responsibility for significant defence procurement decisions.
7. In addition to inviting the 116 PSI countries and relevant international organisations (such as the World Customs Organisation) New Zealand will invite and likely fund attendance by some

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

non-PSI Pacific Island countries. The purpose of their inclusion will be to grow Pacific capacity to identify and respond to proliferation incidents in their region. New Zealand is seeking to broaden the scope of the PSI to enhance its relevance for our region. This might see inclusion of new elements in the exercises and academic presentations, like the use of shipping registries and flags of convenience, tracking the financing, and the implications of emerging technology. Furthermore, we will highlight that the process followed to interdict vessels, either in port or at sea, is commodity agnostic and will be similar whether carrying WMD or narcotics.

Exercise Maru 2026 risks

8. Given the rotational approach, there is a strong expectation from APER countries that New Zealand will host Exercise Maru in 2026. s6(a)

9. There are also risks for New Zealand's reputation among PSI attendees at Exercise Maru 2026 if the exercise does not meet expectations. Officials are mitigating this risk by engaging on inter-agency planning early to ensure that all standard elements of APER exercises are included in Exercise Maru 2026 to a good standard. We are also working closely with Australia and the US.

10. Officials are planning for Exercise Maru to occur in November 2026. While during New Zealand's General Election period, this was assessed as the most suitable period to allow for appropriate NZDF participation in the live exercise component, s6(a)

Given APER exercises do not usually include ministerial participation – except where possible, at an opening event - officials assess that this will not present significant issues.

11. APER countries expect to be invited to participate in the live exercise through the provision of assets, including military vehicles. Australia's live exercise in 2024 included participation from Japan's Maritime Self-Defence Force, Republic of Korea's Navy and Coast Guard, the Singapore Armed Forces, and the US Navy and Coast Guard alongside the Australia Defence Force; in the recent Exercise Pacific Shield in Japan, US, Australian, and Republic of Korea personnel, as well as a US ship, *USS Higbee*, operated alongside the Japanese Self Defence Force. Given the visibility of these military assets, officials will develop a domestic public communications plan to ensure the public is well informed about the non-proliferation objective of the exercise. New Zealand will also likely release a joint statement on behalf of APER countries, as well as a press release on the exercise. Media may be invited to view some aspects of the exercise.

12. Visits by foreign military or state vessels and aircraft require diplomatic clearance from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. In addition, under the New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987, the entry of a foreign warship into New Zealand's internal waters or the landing of a foreign military aircraft requires the Prime Minister's approval. This approval may only be granted if the Prime Minister is satisfied that the vessel or aircraft is not carrying any nuclear explosive device. Officials will ensure that APER countries intending to participate in the live exercise are aware of, and comply with, these requirements.

Resourcing

13. There are no resource implications as Exercise Maru 2026 can be funded through MFAT, NZDF, Customs, and Maritime New Zealand existing baselines.

Proliferation Security Initiative: Exercise Maru 2026

Annex One: States that have endorsed the Proliferation Security Initiative Statement of Interdiction Principles

1. Afghanistan
2. Albania
3. Andorra
4. Angola
5. Antigua and Barbuda
6. Argentina
7. Armenia
8. Australia
9. Austria
10. Azerbaijan
11. Bahamas
12. Bahrain
13. Belarus
14. Belgium
15. Belize
16. Benin
17. Bosnia and Herzegovina
18. Brunei Darussalam
19. Bulgaria
20. Cambodia
21. Canada
22. Chile
23. Colombia
24. Croatia
25. Cyprus
26. Czech Republic
27. Denmark
28. Djibouti
29. Dominica
30. Dominican Republic
31. El Salvador
32. Equatorial Guinea
33. Estonia
34. Fiji
35. Finland
36. France
37. Georgia
38. Germany
39. Ghana
40. Greece
41. Guinea-Bissau
42. Holy See
43. Honduras
44. Hungary
45. Iceland
46. Iraq
47. Ireland
48. Israel
49. Italy
50. Japan
51. Jordan
52. Kazakhstan
53. Korea, South
54. Kuwait
55. Kyrgyzstan
56. Latvia
57. Liberia
58. Libya
59. Liechtenstein
60. Lithuania
61. Luxembourg
62. Madagascar
63. Malaysia
64. Malta
65. Marshall Islands
66. Micronesia, The Federated States of
67. Moldova
68. Mongolia
69. Montenegro
70. Morocco
71. Netherlands
72. New Zealand
73. Nigeria
74. North Macedonia
75. Norway
76. Oman
77. Palau
78. Panama
79. Papua New Guinea
80. Paraguay
81. Philippines
82. Poland
83. Portugal
84. Qatar
85. Romania
86. Samoa
87. San Marino
88. Saudi Arabia
89. Serbia
90. Singapore
91. Slovakia
92. Slovenia
93. Spain
94. Sri Lanka
95. St Lucia
96. St Vincent and the Grenadines
97. Sweden
98. Switzerland
99. Tajikistan
100. Thailand
101. The Gambia
102. Togo
103. Tonga
104. Trinidad and Tobago
105. Tunisia
106. Türkiye
107. Turkmenistan
108. Ukraine
109. United Arab Emirates
110. United Kingdom
111. United States of America
112. Uzbekistan
113. Vanuatu
114. Vietnam
115. Yemen
116. Zambia



NEW ZEALAND
FOREIGN AFFAIRS & TRADE
Manatū Aorere



15 December 2025

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

19 December 2025

Niue Renewable Energy Project – Funding Approval

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE To seek approval for an additional s9(2)(j) in funding for the Niue Renewable Energy Project, to replenish the total contingency to 15% of the budget for energy generation.

Recommended referrals

Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs

For information by

19 December 2025

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
Zoe Coulson-Sinclair	Acting Divisional Manager	Pacific Polynesia and French Pacific	s9(2)(a)
Carlana Sneesby	Niue Programme Manager	Pacific Polynesia and French Pacific	

Minister's Office to complete

Approved

Noted

Referred

Needs amendment

Declined

Withdrawn

Overtaken by events

See Minister's notes

Comments

Niue Renewable Energy Funding Approval

Key points

- In May 2024 you approved NZ\$20.5 million of International Development Cooperation (IDC) funding for the Niue renewable energy project. Approval is now sought to increase financial authority s9(2)(j) to replenish contingency funds for this project. s9(2)(j) . This is within your delegation to approve.
- The project scope includes a 2.79 megawatt (peak) solar array, 8.19 megawatt (hours) of battery storage and upgrades to the electricity network to enhance safety and resilience. The new solar generation system will save 816,000 litres of fuel per year and achieve 80% renewable energy generation for Niue.
- The project has completed around 30% of the solar generation component. The original December 2025 project completion date has been delayed until mid-2026 due to challenges for the Government of Niue in sourcing workers and equipment to finalise preparing the site.
- The project contingency was originally set at 15% of the total budget in line with the Ministry's standard business practice for higher risk projects. The contingency was partially used to engage an external specialist for the engineering, procurement and construction contract. The provider selected was able to provide a solution that reduced the overall project risk.
- s9(2)(j)
This would mean we are able to quickly respond to any further unexpected costs and ensure we do not lose momentum and complete the project in a timely way. Any contingency funds not required would be redirected to other IDC activities.
- The funds would come from the IDC baseline and no additional resources are required.

Bernadette Cavanagh
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Niue Renewable Energy Funding Approval

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------------|
| 1 | Approve s9(2)(j) Project, s9(2)(j) to the Niue Renewable Energy components of the budget. | Yes / No |
| 2 | Note that if the additional contingency funds are not required, they will be redirected to other IDC activities. | Yes / No |
| 3 | Note the additional costs will be met from within the International Development Cooperation baseline. | Yes / No |
| 4 | Refer a copy of this submission to the Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Climate Change. | Yes / No |

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: / /

Niue Renewable Energy Funding Approval Report

Project summary

1. The Niue Renewable Energy Project was announced in June 2024 during the New Zealand Prime Minister's visit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of self-government in free association with New Zealand. It includes a 2.79 MWp solar array, 8.19 MWh of battery storage and upgrades to the electricity network to enhance safety and resilience. It is a key priority for the Niue Government as it is anticipated to result in savings of 816,000 litres of fuel per year and achieve 80% renewable energy generation for Niue. In addition, it is expected to save 2,202 tons of carbon dioxide equivalent in year one alone and assist to meet Niue's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
2. The original funding for this project of NZ\$20.5 million was approved by you in May 2024. Due to unexpected upfront costs to the contract, as well as project implementation delays, we are seeking a top-up to the contingency funds for the project. s9(2)(j)

Project risk impact on programme strategic risk

3. The additional funds are critical to mitigate the project risk of being unable to respond to any unanticipated essential costs in a reasonable timeframe, now that the project is well into implementation.
4. The risk of delay and increased cost were recognised in the project's high-risk profile given the small workforce, limited equipment, remote location and challenging supply chains to Niue. When this risk was realised, the original contingency funds served to minimise impacts of the delay with completion now slated for mid-2026, but for the same reasons the project risk remains high.
5. It is recommended the contingency funds are replenished to derisk the impacts of any further cost and time overruns.

Options considered

6. The Ministry's standard practice for infrastructure projects is to allocate a 10–15% contingency for the total project budget. The original business case recommended a 15% contingency be applied to solar generation components of the project as it was recognised as a high-risk infrastructure project that required ongoing risk management and monitoring.
7. The current remaining contingency is s9(2)(j) . Further planned contract variations are anticipated to absorb the current remaining contingency leaving nil contingency for the remainder of the project.
8. Nil contingency for this period has been assessed as carrying high reputational risk and a lesser amount than this request could necessitate a second request for additional contingency top up, increasing administrative burden.
9. The recommended amount of s9(2)(j) further contingency provides the greatest assurance that additional funding is available to complete the generation components of the project. There are no current plans for the additional contingency, rather it is designed to

Niue Renewable Energy Funding Approval

provide security to allow for project completion. If not required, the funding will be redirected to other IDC activities.

Resourcing

10. There are no new financial impacts on the Crown budget as the increased costs can be met within existing baselines. The decision to allocate these funds to this activity does not impact on other priority work, nor does it require additional staffing or diversion of staff from other work.

Released under the Official Information Act

Meeting Brief: Lord Fakafanua [Faka-fah-nu-ah], Tonga Prime Minister

Time and date (NZT): Sunday 25 January, 2:00pm NZT TBC



Lord Fatafehi Fakafanua [address as: Prime Minister Fakafanua] was appointed Prime Minister on 18 December 2025. He has taken on two Ministerial portfolios: Meteorology, Energy, Information, Disaster Management, Environment, Climate Change (MEIDECC); and Police, Fire and Emergency Services and Prisons. He previously held the role of Speaker.

He went to King's College in Auckland and he completed a Master of Arts in Diplomacy, Law and Business at the O.P. Jindal Global University in India. His younger sister is Crown Princess Sinaitakala Tuku'aho, making him brother-in-law to the Crown Prince.

You last met him in-person in the margins of PIF in Tonga in August 2024.

Key objectives

- Build on your relationship with Fakafanua and reiterate New Zealand's commitment to our partnership with Tonga.
- Understand Fakafanua's priorities for the upcoming PIF Troika meeting and register your concerns regarding the PIF Communique language matter. [s6(b)(i)]
- s6(a)

Discussion points

Bilateral Relationship

- Congratulate Fakafanua on his appointment as Prime Minister and becoming the youngest ever Prime Minister of Tonga.
- Note his leadership as Speaker of the House sets him up well for his new role and thank Fakafanua for his stewardship on the construction of the new Tongan Parliament, a significant partnership between New Zealand, Tonga and Australia.
- New Zealand wants to continue to be a reliable and trusted partner on bilateral and regional issues. Seek Fakafanua's perspective on the relationship.

PIF and Pacific Regionalism

- Understand Fakafanua's objectives and approach for the upcoming PIF Troika meeting in Brisbane.

- s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- s6(a)
- s6(a), s6(b)(i)
- Note that the New Zealand Prime Minister will join Palau President Whipps on the PIF Troika in August. The Troika ensures the effective delivery of Forum Leaders' decisions. We will be using this platform to support Palau in its hosting year and reset PIF norms with respect to our engagement with partners.
- Acknowledge Tonga's role in regional peace and stability through its role in the PIF Troika.

Geostrategic environment

- The growing influence of global powers in the Pacific region has significant implications for smaller island nations. Highlight Tonga holds a significant position in the Pacific in an increasingly complex regional and global environment.
- Maintaining strong, independent security architecture across Government and working together with regional partners to address security concerns will help ensure Tonga's sovereignty and regional influence is protected.
- New Zealand supports Tonga in navigating these challenges s6(a)

International Development cooperation (IDC)

- Enquire about Fakafanua's plan to develop and grow Tonga's economy.
- Affirm New Zealand's commitment to supporting Tonga's economic and social resilience. New Zealand's development cooperation with Tonga is NZ\$156 million over 2024-2027 and are open to discussing priorities.

23 January 2026

Informal Note — Forum Dialogue Partner and Observer Tiering

Background

New Zealand has long advocated for a reformed Forum partnership mechanism that:

- addresses the growing number and diversity of Forum partners in a cohesive way
s6(a), s6(b)(ii)

2 In 2024, Forum Leaders decided to tier Forum Dialogue Partners and Observer organisations into two partnership streams: Strategic Partners and Sectoral Partners. Strategic Partners will be expected to attend the Forum at Ministerial level and are proposed to have direct access to Leaders. Sectoral Partners are proposed to engage with Forum Ministers and officials. Forum Development Partners (i.e. Taiwan) will be unaffected by these reforms.

Status of the tiering process

3 While decisions on the partners in each stream were not finalised ahead of the 2025 Forum in Honiara, Leaders agreed a Partnerships Policy that enshrined the tiering principle and detailed next steps.

4 New Zealand has worked with other Forum Members to draw up criteria for the two partnership streams. The four criteria are:

- connections to the region, including development assistance, trade and investment and people to people links;
- commitment to the region, including diplomatic presence and engagement with regional organisations;
- shared interests on international issues and use of global networks and international memberships to support Forum priorities; and
- commitment to engage the full Forum Membership, using existing regional mechanisms and with a focus on joint delivery and collective outcomes.

s6(a), s6(b)(ii)

s6(a)

Released under the Official Information Act

Pacific Regional Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
30 January 2026

s6(a)

Released under the Official Information Act

Informal Note — Tokelau: Current Developments

Summary

- This Informal Note provides a summary of recent developments in the Tokelau relationship ahead of the Governor-General's visit to Tokelau to mark the centenary of New Zealand's administration on 11 February 2026.

Current political landscape

- Tokelau's General Fono elections, scheduled for 29 January 2026, have been postponed due to logistical issues (ballot papers not arriving in time from Apia). A new date has yet to be set, but is likely to be in February, either side of the Governor-General's visit.
- Tokelau officials are currently planning consultations on all three atolls on a range of topics, including Tokelau's self-determination options, with a view to launching a new Tokelau National Strategic Plan in July.
- We have lodged an invitation for the Ulu and other Council members to visit New Zealand in mid-late April, to be confirmed following the Tokelau election.

Governor-General visit

- The Governor-General is scheduled to visit Tokelau's three atolls on 11-13 February on board HMNZS Canterbury, starting in Fakaofu (the southernmost atoll) where the current Ulu o Tokelau is based, before moving on to Nukunonu and Atafu.
- The primary objective of the visit is to reinforce New Zealand's commitment to Tokelau, as a part of the Realm of New Zealand, on the centenary of New Zealand's administration, and at a time of growing geopolitical tension and uncertainty in the region.

s6(a), s9(2)(ba)(i), s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(h)

s6(a), s9(2)(ba)(i), s9(2)(f)(iv), s9(2)(g)(i), s9(2)(h)

Air Services

- We advised the Government of Tokelau in late 2025 of the New Zealand Government's decision not to progress with the establishment of air services to Tokelau at this time. s9(2)(ba)(i)
- The NZ\$3 million spent on development of the project since 2020 is considered appropriate given the scale, complexity, and risk of the project and the need to give decision makers confidence around costs.
- s9(2)(f)(iv), s6(a)

Other development priorities

- Work continues on delivering against a pipeline of significant and complex infrastructure projects in Tokelau. This includes an upgrade to Tokelau's renewable energy systems (planned completion by end 2026), replacing the bridge in Nukunonu (temporary replacement expected by mid-2026), repairing a damaged domestic internet cable (planned by mid-2026), and designing and delivering cost-effective emergency shelters (design work underway).
- s6(a), s9(2)(ba)(i)

Polynesia and French Pacific Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
30 January 2026

s6(a), s9(2)(ba)(i), s9(2)(f)(iv)

Contingency media points: Air services

- The project is not progressing because of the high cost and the constrained fiscal environment facing the New Zealand government.
- s9(2)(f)(iv)
- Just over \$3 million was spent developing the project. This preparatory work was necessary to ensure decision makers had full and accurate information when considering whether to go ahead with such a complex project.
- [if needed] The \$3 million includes costs associated with feasibility, geotechnical investigations, design, business casing, costing, and procurement planning.

Contingency media points: Tokelau election

- We are aware the election has been delayed, because severe weather has impacted the delivery of election materials. We are waiting for a new date to be set.

Meeting Brief: Hon. Simon Kofe, Tuvalu Minister for Transport, Energy, Communication and Innovation

Time and date (NZT): Wednesday 5 November, 12:30pm NZT



Hon. Simon Kofe [address as Minister Koh-feh] is the Tuvalu Minister for Transport, Energy, Communication, and Innovation. He was Minister for Foreign Affairs, Justice, and Communication in the previous Government before resigning in July 2024 to focus on finalising reform of Tuvalu's Constitution. He is a champion of climate action and addressed COP26 and COP27, to worldwide acclaim, emphasising the realities of climate change on small island states. Before entering politics, Kofe was a senior magistrate. Kofe holds a Master of Laws in International Maritime Law, a Professional Diploma in Legal Practice and a Bachelor of Law from the University of the South Pacific.

Key objectives

- Demonstrate New Zealand's commitment to Tuvalu by highlighting our support to Tuvalu's priorities within Minister Kofe's portfolio, including the Vaka digital cable and aviation security
- Listen to points the Minister wishes to raise regarding labour mobility while noting the existing schemes we have in place for Tuvalu as a close partner in the region

Discussion points

s6(a)

- Note you enjoyed meeting Prime Minister of Tuvalu at the Financing for Development conference earlier this year. ^{s6(a), s9(2)(f)(iv)}

Development support

- Reflect on our efforts to address key development priorities set out by the Government of Tuvalu under Tuvalu's 21 point plan. Over the 2024-2027 triennium, New Zealand has allocated NZ\$80.5 million of funds to development activities in Tuvalu. New Zealand is pleased to bolster economic resilience in Tuvalu through reform-linked budget support, contributions to the Tuvalu Trust Fund and comprehensive support to Tuvalu's Fisheries Department (the cornerstone of its economy).

Digital connectivity

- Welcome the recent successful connection of the Vaka Cable in Tuvalu. Note the importance of digital connectivity. New Zealand was pleased to have contributed US\$5 million to the project, alongside Australia, the US, Japan, and Taiwan.
- Seek the Minister's views on the opportunities this increased connectivity presents for Tuvalu and how it may enable future development.

People-to-people links

- Underscore the strength of our people-to-people relations and note the important contribution of the Tuvaluan diaspora to New Zealand [*approximately 149 RSE workers, over 4000 Tuvaluans in New Zealand, concentrated in Auckland*].
- Note that Tuvaluans have a number of mobility pathways open to them in recognition of our close relationship, including 75 Pacific Access category visas and access to the RSE scheme.
- We are open to feedback on how we can support Tuvalu to make the most of these schemes. We are currently awaiting a formal request to fund an RSE support officer based in Tuvalu's Department of Labour.
- [*if raised – recent Amnesty International report focused on climate displacement in Tuvalu and Kiribati*] Note that officials are aware of this report and met with Amnesty International to share information about the available migration pathways to New Zealand, and New Zealand's support to the Pacific, including Tuvalu, to prevent displacement due to the impacts of climate change and sea-level rise.

Visas and immigration settings

- We are making improvements to New Zealand's immigration settings. Recent improvements include:
 - Pacific nationals are now eligible for a two-year, multiple-entry visitor visa.
 - Pacific nationals travelling from Australia with a valid Australian visa can enter New Zealand for up to 3 months using an NZeTA, without needing a visa.
- We are also improving processing times for visas. The average processing time for visitor visa applications from the Pacific for the last three months was five working days. INZ has a dedicated email address for people from the Pacific who need to request an escalation of their application should they need to travel urgently for a family member's funeral or something similar.

Labour mobility

- New Zealand funds a programme supporting Pacific countries to tackle the complex issues of people movement in the context of climate change. In Tuvalu, the programme is supporting community awareness raising, development of a climate mobility framework or guideline, and a Migration Preparedness Information Package.

Transport

- New Zealand is pleased to continue to provide aviation security training, advisory, and regulatory support to Tuvalu, with the Civil Aviation Authority's capacity-building efforts set to continue under a newly approved phase from 2025 to 2030. Tuvalu was an active participant in MFAT's multi-country Pacific Maritime Safety Programme (PMSP) between 2023-2025, which promotes safe, reliable, environmentally sustainable, maritime transport services that connect Pacific Communities and markets while meeting international standards.

Please note: This date is an error, the correct date should be 2019-2023.

Briefing: Hon Simon Watts

Meeting: Meeting with Hon. Dalton Tagelagi

Date:	14 November 2025
Time:	3.45pm-4.15pm
Venue:	The Horizon Hotel, 85-93 Hobson Street, Auckland – The Welcome Room
Advisor:	Jess Rowe is the MFAT Private Secretary for MCC
Meeting contact:	s9(2)(a)

Purpose

- Add ballast to the New Zealand-Niue relationship at senior levels; and
- To discuss climate priorities, including COP, and areas for cooperation.

Background

Development Cooperation

- New Zealand's total country aid flow to Niue for this triennium (FY24/25 - FY26/27) is \$123mil, including \$23.9 million of climate finance support (of which \$20.5 million is for the Renewable Energy project).
- MFAT supports a range of climate change and biodiversity activities in Niue, both through bilateral and regional programmes. Activities in implementation cover thematic areas such as renewable energy generation, climate mitigation, meteorological and early warning support, invasive species management, climate mobility, policy strengthening, and water security.

Bilateral Realm partnership

- Niue is self-governing in free association with New Zealand. As a Realm country, our bilateral partnership with Niue is one of our closest in the region, underpinned by constitutional responsibilities, development cooperation, cultural and historical ties.
- As part of our constitutional arrangement, New Zealand's provides economic and administrative assistance to Niue and is responsible for Niue's security and defence. Niueans are New Zealand citizens and move frequently between New Zealand and Niue. Niue has a population of 1,600 people, with a New Zealand based diaspora of around 35,000 people.

COP31

- Australia and Turkiye continue to remain at an impasse on the issue of COP31 host, s6(a)
- COP30 is the last opportunity to avoid a no-deal situation with COP31 reverting to Bonn. COP30 occurs from 10-21 November in Brazil.
- Pacific Islands Forum Leaders and Foreign Ministers (including New Zealand) reaffirmed their support for the COP31 bid in joint statements at this year's PIF meetings in August and September. Leaders also endorsed COP31 Pacific Partnership governance arrangements, including the establishment of a Pacific Senior Officials Taskforce (PSOT) under the oversight of Climate Change Ministers. There is also strong support in WEOG for the bid.

COP30

- COP30 is currently taking place in Belem, Brazil from 10-21 November. The multilateral system faces significant headwinds, and COP30 needs to demonstrate our commitment to the global climate response and to the Paris Agreement working effectively. It is likely that while collective

NDCs will further limit warning, they will not 'add up' to limiting warning to 1.5°C – and COP30 and potentially COP31 will be expected to respond.

Attendees



Hon Dalton Tagelagi (pronounced Tung-eh-lung-ee) was elected Prime Minister by the Niue Legislative Assembly in June 2020 and was subsequently re-elected unopposed to the Assembly at the 2023 election. He appointed his Cabinet in May 2023, the first gender-balanced Cabinet in Niuean history.

You last met Prime Minister Tagelagi in Sydney at the Pacific Climate Change Ministers meeting.

Prime Minister Tagelagi is in Auckland to attend the inaugural annual Leaders' meeting with Prime Minister Luxon on 13 November. He will also meet with a range of other Ministers.

Suggested discussion points

- Ask how Prime Minister Tagelagi found the Pacific Climate Change Ministers meeting in Sydney,
- The Blue Pacific has been central to action on climate change – whether this has been on 1.5 degrees, on sea level rise, or on the ICJ Advisory Opinion. Reiterate that New Zealand stands with Australia and other Pacific Islands Forum members – we are fully committed to the bid to host a Pacific COP31 in 2026.
- Reiterate New Zealand remains committed to the international system delivering on the promise of the Paris Agreement. We take its obligations seriously. Enquire what Niue's priorities are for COP30.
- Enquire of Prime Minister's broader climate change and environment priorities.
- Congratulate the Prime Minister on the Niue Ocean Wide Trust receiving a \$6.5million grant from the Bezos Earth Fund (in addition to the NZ\$2 million provided by New Zealand in 2024). What are the next steps for the work of the Trust?
- Highlight New Zealand currently supports a number of climate change and biodiversity activities in Niue, including the Climate Finance Capacity Support Programme, the Renewable Energy Project, Niue Ocean Wide, and work on sustainable agricultural practices.
- Acknowledge the steady progress of the \$20.5 million New Zealand-funded renewable energy project and enquire about any further ambitions Niue holds for renewable energy.
- s7(b)(iii), s7(b)(i)

- s7(b)(iii), s7(b)(i)

Informal Note — Update on the Operating Model Review of the IDC Programme

Context

- The Ministry established a Baseline Review Programme in 2024 to ensure it could deliver its core functions within the budget baseline. It explored options on how to sustainably reduce our baseline budget to meet Government expectations.
- As part of this broader programme, the Ministry's Pacific and Development Group (PDG) embarked on an Operating Model Review (OMR). The OMR aimed to bring PDG's structure into closer alignment with recommendations of the Activity-based Review (2024). This included clarifying roles and responsibilities, improving policy and programming alignment, and improving international development cooperation delivery performance.
- PDG's new organisational structure and operating model takes effect on 2 March 2026. Key PDG management roles have now been filled across the eight Divisions within the Group. From 2 March a period of evolution will commence to embed the structural changes and the operating environment.

The new operating model

- In November 2025 the Ministry completed an operating model review. The review confirmed PDG would retain sole responsibility for delivering the IDC Programme, but with a new structure that includes:
 - a new central division focused on development policy and IDC Programme performance management (financial and impacts)
 - a division focused on humanitarian work and global development planning and programming
 - three divisions focused on Pacific foreign policy, planning and programming
 - three divisions focused on IDC activity design and delivery.

Staffing

- A recruitment process has been undertaken to ensure the new operating model is staffed with the necessary skillsets operating in the most applicable role.
- Despite an overall reduction in positions there are 36 permanent position vacancies for recruitment in the new structure. This is because of strong vacancy management prior to the organisational change, utilising fixed term and acting resource instead of permanent appointments. This is exclusive of the rotational vacancies in PDG.
- The bespoke volume recruitment approach aims to recruit for all specialist positions at once, this will ensure the structure is in place as soon as possible (approximately six months earlier than via standard position recruitment processes).
- The Ministry is recruiting externally for positions which require technical expertise currently not sufficiently available within the Ministry for example in some Humanitarian roles.

Evolving our ways of working

- Following the structure taking effect the programme will move into a new phase which will include longer-term initiatives that continue to evolve the operating model.
- The new operating model, supported by a future-ready workforce will see strengthened strategic alignment, increased efficiencies, and savings to the Ministry's baseline. It will achieve greater integration of development and foreign policy to ensure the IDC programme remains an integral pillar of New Zealand's foreign policy and continues to contribute to the Ministry's strategic objectives and New Zealand's interests.
- During the transition period our ways of working will continue to evolve supported by a comprehensive transition and implementation plan to ensure the success of the new structure and operating model.
- As of Monday 2 March 2026, the new structure and operating model will be fully operational, with in-flight adjustments made under business-as-usual processes.
- Reactive media lines are provided below in case of media interest in this ongoing work.

Office of the Deputy Secretary
Pacific and Development Group
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
2 March 2026

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Appendix 1: MFA reactive media lines

- In 2024, I directed the Ministry to undertake a review of the IDC Programme. I released the results of that review in February last year.
- I expect the Ministry to implement the recommendations of that review, to strengthen the productivity, performance and efficiency of the IDC Programme.
- The Ministry has responded to the recommendations and has made some structural changes. Changes ensure that the IDC programme remains an integral pillar of New Zealand's foreign policy and continues to make a significant contribution to the Ministry's strategic objectives and New Zealand's interests.
- On 2 March 2026 the Ministry implemented its structural changes to allow a future-focused operating model which will strengthen its contribution to the Ministry's strategic objectives and New Zealand's interests.
- As these are operational decisions, any further questions should be directed to MFAT.

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20 November 2025

Minister of Foreign Affairs

For approval by

10 December 2025

University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment

BRIEFING Decision Submission

PURPOSE To approve an extension for the current New Zealand Representative to the University of the South Pacific Council.

Contact details

NAME	ROLE	DIVISION	WORK PHONE
Karen Murray	Divisional Manager Development People and Planet	Development People and Planet	s9(2)(a)
Rosie Zwart	Unit Manager, Education, Equity and Inclusion	Development People and Planet	

Minister's Office to complete

- Approved
- Noted
- Referred
- Needs amendment
- Declined
- Withdrawn
- Overtaken by events
- See Minister's notes

Comments

University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment

Key points

- This paper seeks approval to extend the contract of the New Zealand Representative on the University of the South Pacific (USP) Council, Emeritus Professor Pat Walsh, by 17 months until 30 June 2027.
- Professor Walsh has served as the New Zealand Representative to USP Council since 6 November 2019. Professor Walsh has more than 25 years' experience in leadership and governance roles, including as the Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University of Wellington from 2005-2014. He is highly regarded and has performed strongly in this role. In addition to his role as the New Zealand representative, Professor Walsh also holds the roles of Deputy Pro-Chancellor (DPC) and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC).
- Professor Walsh's term was first renewed on 30 October 2022 and is now set to expire on 31 January 2026. Extending his contract will enable Professor Walsh and New Zealand to see USP through a critical transition period as it searches for a new Vice-Chancellor and President (VCP).
- Until a new VCP appointment is made, Professor Walsh is a member of the Interim Management Group led by the Pro-Chancellor, which is delegated with the authority to oversee USP operations. Professor Walsh is also on the Search Committee for the new VCP. These additional duties are undertaken in Professor Walsh's capacities as DPC and Chair of the ARC.
- If a new alternative New Zealand Representative to Council was appointed at this time, New Zealand would no longer participate directly in the Interim Management Group or the appointment of the new VCP. s9(2)(g)(i)
- If approved, Professor Walsh's payment will remain at 50% of the fee rate band as per the Cabinet Fees Framework. This is a total of s9(2)(a) , plus travel and meeting expenses. Professor Walsh's fees and expenses would be funded from the existing International Development Cooperation baseline.
- If Professor Walsh's contract is extended, we will search for a new Council Representative in 2026. Officials will collaborate with Universities New Zealand for the selection process.
- If approved, the Ministry will write to Professor Walsh confirming his contract extension to 30 June 2027.

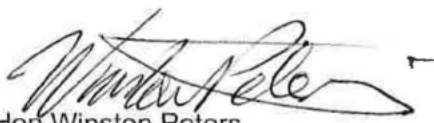


Bernadette Cavanagh
for Secretary of Foreign Affairs and Trade

University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment
Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- | | | |
|---|---|----------|
| 1 | Approve an extension to 30 June 2027 for Professor Pat Walsh as New Zealand's representative on the University of the South Pacific Council. | Yes / No |
| 2 | Note that there are no resourcing requirements for the Ministry attached to this extension. | Yes / No |



Rt Hon Winston Peters
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Date: 20/11/2025

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University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment Report

1. The University of the South Pacific (USP) is a vital regional institution, uniquely positioned to ensure that Pacific people have access to education delivered through Pacific approaches and within a Pacific worldview. New Zealand currently has over NZ\$60 million of active funding agreements with USP, to support the long-term objective of a high-quality, affordable, and effectively governed regional tertiary education institution for the Pacific region.¹
2. The New Zealand Representative to the USP Council is an important role for promoting New Zealand's interests in the Pacific. New Zealand is represented in two key USP governance forums: the main governing Council, and the University Grants Committee (which is a Council sub-committee). These two separate positions are Ministerial appointments.
3. New Zealand's current representative, Emeritus Professor Pat Walsh, was appointed on 6 November 2019. His three-year term was renewed on 30 October 2022 by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, in line with the Cabinet Fees Framework guidelines. Professor Walsh's contract expires on 31 January 2026.
4. Professor Walsh has more than 25 years' experience in leadership and governance roles, including as the Vice-Chancellor of Victoria University of Wellington from 2005-2014. He has previously been on several Boards in New Zealand. This has included being Board Chair of the following: Academic Quality Agency; the Industry Training Federation; Agri One Ltd; Copyright Licensing New Zealand and the Tertiary Education Commission Sector Reference Group. He was a former member of the Ministry's Audit and Risk Committee. He was a New Zealand representative to the USP Grants Committee from 2014-2017. He is currently active on one Board, Save the Children New Zealand.
5. Professor Walsh has performed his role as New Zealand's representative on the USP Council with a high level of professionalism s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a). He has been an effective representative to advance New Zealand's interests and is well regarded by other USP Council members. As well as holding the substantive role of New Zealand's Representative, Professor Walsh also holds the positions of Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.
6. USP is currently in a critical leadership transition period. Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Pal Ahluwalia, resigned from his position and finished on 29 August 2025. A new Vice-Chancellor needs to be recruited, which is likely to take at least 12 months.
7. The USP Council has agreed not to appoint an Acting Vice-Chancellor and President. Instead, an Interim Management Group (IMG) has been established and delegated with the authority to oversee USP operations for the next 12 months until a permanent appointment to Vice-Chancellor is made. Professor Walsh is part of the IMG, in his role as Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.
8. As well as being on the IMG, Professor Walsh has also been appointed to the Search Committee for the new Vice-Chancellor. s9(2)(g)(i), s6(a). Continuity and stability are critical during the transition period of leadership at USP.

¹ This includes funding through the Core Partnership Agreement for NZ\$35million and through a variety of other Activities such as; Tupu (Building Teacher Capacity for inclusive Education); the Centre for Sustainable Futures; the Pacific Ocean Climate Change Assessment project, and the placement of Manaaki scholars at USP.

University of the South Pacific Council: Ministerial Appointment

9. It is recommended that Professor Walsh's contract be extended until 30 June 2027 to cover the period during which USP are recruiting a new Vice-Chancellor and while Professor Walsh is on the IMG. This will be the final extension of Professor Walsh's contract and he has indicated he would like to finish in the role in 2027.
10. If approved, Professor Walsh's remuneration for this role will remain at 50% of the fee rate band in the Cabinet Fees Framework for the remainder of his contract. The fees would total s9(2)(a), exclusive of GST. The contract also includes costs such as international travel, per diems and expenses to attend USP Council meetings.
11. Officials will commence the search for a new Council Representative in 2026, working with Universities New Zealand.

Resourcing

12. The extension of Professor Walsh's contract as the New Zealand Representative to USP Council would be funded under the International Development Cooperation Programme baseline. This position falls within the Group 3a Level 3 General Governance body category of the Cabinet Fees Framework.
13. This extension has no people implications for the Ministry, nor is the reprioritisation of any work required.

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