

Proactive Release

Date: 21 April 2020

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute have been proactively released by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs:

Report on Overseas Travel: Fletcher Tabuteau MP – Germany, Poland, Austria and Spain, from 9-18 December 2019

(CAB-20-MIN-0084 refers)

Some parts of this information release would not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). Where this is the case, the relevant sections of the Act that would apply have been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the international relations of the New Zealand Government;
- 6(b): to protect the passing of information from another government on a confidential basis; and
- 9(2)(j): to avoid prejudice to negotiations.

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Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Fletcher Tabuteau MP

Portfolio **Foreign Affairs**

On 9 March 2020, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Fletcher Tabuteau MP) under CAB-20-SUB-0084 on his travel, from 9 to 18 December 2019, to:

- 1 Berlin, Germany, to attend the 'Alliance of Multilateralism' meeting;
- 2 Warsaw, Poland and Vienna, Austria for bilateral meetings;
- 3 Madrid, Spain, to attend the Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Fletcher Tabuteau MP

Chair,
Cabinet

**REPORT ON OVERSEAS TRAVEL: FLETCHER TABUTEAU MP – GERMANY,
POLAND, AUSTRIA, AND SPAIN, FROM 9 – 18 DECEMBER 2019**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report concerning the travel that I undertook in my capacity as Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs to Germany, Poland, Austria and Spain, from 9 – 18 December 2019.

2 The trip was successful in accomplishing our various objectives, which were to advance New Zealand's trade, political and strategic interests with important European Union (EU) member states. First, this included demonstrating New Zealand's commitment to multilateralism, and our value as a like-minded partner, by representing the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Berlin at an 'Alliance of Multilateralism' meeting hosted by Germany's Foreign Minister. Second, bilateral visits to Poland and to Austria enabled us to engage at the political level to advance our EU – New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) interests and demonstrate the value of the FTA, s6(a) Third, I represented New Zealand on behalf of Rt Hon Winston Peters at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting of ASEM (the Asia-Europe Meeting) in Madrid. Across the whole trip, I had useful exchanges with more than a dozen EU member states, including at the Ministerial level, to promote our trade interests, in particular.

Germany

3 On 10 December, accepting the invitation to New Zealand's Foreign Minister, I took part in the 'Advocating Human Rights in the 21st century' conference, hosted in Berlin by Germany's Foreign Minister Maas on the occasion of international human rights day. The Conference, convened under the umbrella of the 'Alliance for

Multilateralism', brought together foreign ministers from several like-minded partners, including Norway, Canada and Germany. New Zealand's high-level attendance, which built on a connection formed when Minister Maas raised the Alliance with Minister Peters in the margins of the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Nagoya, was appreciated. It served to demonstrate that New Zealand is committed at a political level to lifting our relationship with Germany, a key EU partner for us, moving forward.

4 The visit was also an opportunity to thank Germany for its support for the EU-NZ FTA and underscore the strategic drivers for its speedy conclusion. My meeting with Volkmar Klein, head of the Pacific Parliamentary Friendship Group, provided some useful insight into the attitudes of the German public to free trade; s6(a)

s6(a)

Poland

5 Our visit to Warsaw on 11 December, coming two months after Poland's general election, provided a timely opportunity to build on existing relationships and to form connections with a new generation of political leaders. We advocated strongly for the EU-NZ FTA, including setting out the broader geostrategic case for the EU to swiftly conclude an agreement with a like-minded, economically "non-threatening" partner in New Zealand. We identified areas of mutual interest on multilateral issues, and shared experiences about regional development strategies.

6 Polish counterparts acknowledged the positive state of the bilateral relationship and the potential to do more together, whether through expanding economic ties or more structured policy dialogue on issues such as the influence of global powers in our respective regions. s6(b)

s6(b)

an issue

that is frequently raised with me by European counterparts.

7 Poland made clear its desire to shore up and expand bilateral relationships and multilateral engagement at a time of challenging regional and global developments. This, and the high value Poland places on existing institutions such as NATO and the EU, reinforces its potential as a friend to New Zealand in the multilateral context, and a mutual supporter of a rules-based global order.

Austria

8 While in Austria from 11-13 December, we had useful engagements with influential figures in the caretaker Austrian Government on our bilateral relationship and the value to that country of the EU-NZ FTA. This included an encouraging and substantive meeting with the Minister for Economy and Digital Affairs, Elisabeth Udolf-Strobl (whose portfolio includes trade). s6(b)

s6(b)

9 In our various engagements in Vienna, Austrian government and industry contacts continued to voice support for the FTA. However, there was some uncertainty at the time about where the incoming government would land on trade policy. Following our visit, in January – after three months of negotiation – the Conservative Party (ÖVP) and Austrian Green Party finalised a coalition agreement to form a new government. The coalition agreement states that the Austrian government will support EU trade policy that works on ‘comprehensive agreements’.

s9(2)(j)

10 We also had worthwhile engagements on regional economic development in Austria, visiting Burgenland near the Hungarian border to hear their insights on the region’s success story based on sustained regional funding inputs. In a meeting with the Governor, he discussed what was needed to address the region’s declining population rates, including the critical need to ensure quality provision of core

services. In light of New Zealand's own priorities with respect to rejuvenating the regions this exchange with the politically well-connected Governor was a useful one.

11 Our Embassy in Austria is accredited to several other EU member states in central Europe, but our diplomats also undertake significant multilateral work, with Vienna being one of the four headquarters of the United Nations (along with New York, Geneva and Nairobi). While in Vienna, I took the opportunity to call on the Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO) to underscore New Zealand's long-standing support for the Organisation, and Treaty, at a time when the international disarmament and non-proliferation system is under pressure. This effort to engage at the political level was clearly appreciated.

Spain

12 During the final leg of the visit, I represented New Zealand at the Asia-Europe Foreign Ministers' Meeting (ASEM FMM14) that took place in Madrid from 15 - 16 December 2019, under the theme "Asia and Europe: together for effective multilateralism". The incoming EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, chaired the meeting. Around two-thirds of the 53 ASEM members were represented by foreign ministers, reflecting that the meeting remains the only dedicated engagement for European and Asian leaders to engage en masse.

13 ASEM members declared strong support for the international rules-based order in addressing both trade and climate change, at a time in which the multilateral system was under strain. On trade, Ministers delivered consistent messaging on the need to uphold, strengthen and reform the rules-based multilateral trading system with the WTO at its core. Many Ministers underscored the importance of the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism, urging countries to overcome the impasse in the appointment of members to the Appellate Body. On climate change, Ministers called for implementation of the Paris Agreement, but the scope of ambition differed markedly. s6(a)

s6(a)

s6(a)

14 In delivering New Zealand's statement, I focused my remarks on climate change and trade, including calls for reform of both fossil fuel and fish subsidies. On climate change, I emphasised that it had disproportionate effects on many of the least developed countries of the world and that New Zealand felt a deep sense of responsibility in this respect to our fellow Pacific Island nations in particular. Pacific Islanders were facing an existential crisis with the threat of rising sea levels. They were bearing the brunt of our global addiction to fossil fuels. I also talked about the steps our Government was taking, including the passing of the Zero Carbon Act, which will drive us towards our goal of net zero carbon by 2050, while ensuring it is just and inclusive.

15 The ASEM foreign ministers' meeting also proved worthwhile to attend for the high number of useful bilateral meetings that we held, including with countries where political-level contact is usually limited. We were able to advance New Zealand's priorities through bilateral meetings with several partners, including Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania and Spain (with whom I signed an information sharing agreement); as well as meet with the Australian representative in the margins. It was clearly useful in securing meetings and pull-asides with foreign ministers and other EU representatives to be represented at this meeting at a political level.

Proactive Release

16 I plan to release this paper in part within 30 business days. All redactions will be made in line with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

17 I recommend that Cabinet **note** this report.

Fletcher Tabuteau MP
Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Proactively released by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs