



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

Portfolio **Trade and Export Growth**

On 13 December 2021, Cabinet **noted** the report from Hon Damien O'Connor under CAB-21-SUB-0527 on his travel, from 30 September to 15 October 2021, to:

- 1 Washington DC, United States of America; Stockholm, Sweden; Dublin, Ireland; and Brussels, Belgium for bilateral discussions;
- 2 Paris, France to attend the OECD Ministerial meeting and bilateral discussions;
- 3 Rome and Sorrento, Italy to attend the G20 Trade Ministers Meeting and bilateral discussions.

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively released by the
Minister for Trade and Export Growth

[Restricted]

Office of the Minister for Trade and Export Growth
Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Damien O'Connor

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to the United States, Sweden, France, Ireland, Belgium, and Italy from 30 September to 15 October to further advance the European Union – New Zealand Free Trade Agreement negotiations, to represent New Zealand at the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Italy, and to reaffirm New Zealand's strategic value to the US at the Ministerial level in Washington D.C.

Report

- 1 The primary purpose of my travel was to further advance the European Union-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (EU-NZ FTA) negotiations, and to represent New Zealand at the G20 Trade Ministers' Meeting in Italy, which New Zealand was invited to in our capacity as chair of APEC.

United States

- 2 En route to Europe, I travelled to the Washington D.C. ^{s6(a)} to advance New Zealand's trade and economic relationship with our third largest trading partner. To this end, I met with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Jewel Bronaugh, and Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves.
- 3 Having engaged with Katherine Tai several times virtually this year for APEC ^{s6(a)} our meeting in D.C. was a valuable opportunity to build on our rapport in person. Tai emphasised US commitment to the Indo-Pacific, which I welcomed and identified US hosting of APEC as a critical lever to engage with the region. ^{s6(a)}
- 4 As with my engagement with Tai, my meetings with Bronaugh and Graves were warm in tone. Bronaugh expressed interest in dialogue and information sharing with New Zealand ^{s6(a)}

s6(a)

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Sweden

- 6 My visit to Stockholm from 3-4 October was an opportunity to confirm Sweden's ongoing support and advocacy for conclusion of the EU-NZ FTA. I met with Trade Minister Anna Hallberg, who reaffirmed Sweden's support for the EU-NZ FTA, ^{s6(b)(i)}

I also met with the National Board of Trade, and Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. These discussions further underscored the alignment between New Zealand Sweden on trade issues, both in terms of support for free and inclusive trade, but also the analysis of challenges including WTO reform, geo-strategic competition, and addressing trade and sustainability.

France

- 7 ^{s6(a)} I met with French Trade Minister Franck Riester in Paris on 5 October.

The meeting was an opportunity to establish personal rapport with an important EU Member State in the midst of NZ-EU FTA negotiations.

- 8 The second part of my trip to Paris was for the OECD Meeting of the Council at Ministerial Level (MCM), on 5-6 October. This was the first MCM since May 2019, and was a valuable opportunity for trade and economic Ministers from around the world to gather to discuss our recovery from COVID-19. In addition to delivering interventions at the plenary sessions, I participated in a panel discussion on Building an Inclusive Future at the invitation of the United States, where I shared our experience promoting inclusive growth using fiscal policy and budget tools. I also took part in a number of meetings on the sidelines of the MCM. These had a strong WTO focus, including the WTO Mini Ministerial Dinner, an Ottawa Group breakfast, and a bilateral meeting with the WTO Director-General. I also used the MCM for three engagements on open plurilateral arrangements that New Zealand is leading: Mexico's joining of both the Inclusive Trade Action Group and the Global Trade and Gender Arrangement, and Korea formally commencing its accession process

to the Digital Economic Partnership Agreement. I also chaired a meeting for parties to the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability. The MCM provided a valuable opportunity to connect with my Ministerial counterparts, and reaffirm New Zealand's reputation as a strong supporter of the OECD.

Belgium

- 9 I met with EU Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis in Brussels on 7 October to discuss the NZ-EU FTA. ^{s6(a)}

Ireland

- 10 I visited Dublin for 7-8 October, where I focused on promoting the economic and geostrategic rationale of the EU-NZ FTA. I met with Tánaiste and Trade Minister Leo Varadkar over dinner, where we had an open and free-flowing discussion. ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i), s9(2)(j)}

- 11 The following day I met with my Agriculture counterpart, Minister Charlie McConalogue at the Teagasc Food Research Centre. Our nearly 3-hour engagement focussed on the alignment between New Zealand and Ireland, as well as shared challenges and opportunities in agriculture – specifically relating to sustainable pasture-based farming and regenerative agriculture. ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i), s9(2)(j)}

We finished our meeting with a visit to Castleknock College, to meet with award-winning agricultural science students.

- 12 I also met with Cormac Healy, Senior Director of Meat Industry Ireland, attended a roundtable with key Irish business and trade representatives, and took part in a ribbon tying ceremony with Minister of State for Trade Promotion Robert Troy, to mark the recent acquisition by Titanium Solutions of an Irish competitor (Two Ten Health). All those I engaged with were quick to acknowledge New Zealand and Ireland's shared pragmatism, values, and common goals.

Italy

- 13 My visit to Rome on 11 October proved a valuable chance to emphasise the economic and strategic benefits of the EU-NZ FTA with influential political figures and leading industry and business representatives. I was met with genuine enthusiasm for closer trade and economic during my various engagements, which included breakfast with key Italian and New Zealand

business representatives, a meeting with the Chair of the Italian Parliamentary Select Committee for the Economy, Trade and Tourism, and a lunch with Italian national and European Parliamentarians.

- 14 These engagements were complemented by meetings in Sorrento with Foreign Minister Luigi di Maio, and Under Secretary for Trade Manlio di Stefano. On the EU-NZ FTA, ^{s6(a), s6(b)(i), s9(2)(j)}

s6(a)

I also undertook bilateral meetings with colleagues from Canada, Indonesia, the Republic of Korea, and Spain – all of which were useful opportunities to meet face to face on the sidelines of the G20.

- 15 The main purpose of my visit to Sorrento was to participate in the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers' Meeting (TIMM) on 12 October. New Zealand was invited to attend in our capacity as APEC Chair. There was a strong alignment between Italy's G20 Presidency and New Zealand's priorities as APEC Chair, particularly the focus on trade and health, sustainable and inclusive trade, and supporting the multilateral trading system. I delivered clear messages on the need for practical outcomes on trade and health, disciplines on fisheries and fossil fuel subsidies, and WTO reform. The meeting also usefully profiled New Zealand initiatives on digital trade and the environment.

Proactive release

- 16 This paper will be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO (18) 4, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's website. The paper will be subject to redaction as appropriate on the grounds set out under the Officials Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Damien O'Connor

Minister for Trade and Export Growth