



## **Joint summary of the first UK-New Zealand Joint Public Session**

**30 April 2025 (Virtually in UK and New Zealand)**

The first Joint Public Session under the Environment and Labour chapters of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the United Kingdom and New Zealand was held on 30 April 2025 via videoconference.

The session followed the first Sub-Committee on Environment and Climate Change and the first Sub-Committee on Labour which were held on 13 March 2024 and 11 April 2024 respectively, and preceded the second Environment Sub-Committee held on 6 May 2025. The UK hosted the event which was co-chaired by the chairs of the New Zealand and UK domestic advisory groups and moderated by the Chair of the UK Domestic Advisory Group (DAG).

The governments presented a joint statement on the first meetings of the Environment and Climate Change Sub-Committee and Labour Sub-Committee which updated participants on outcomes and progress following the sub-committees in 2024 and provided dialogue prompts for the session.

### **1. Opening Remarks**

The moderator welcomed participants, and introduced the first Joint Public Session under the UK-New Zealand FTA. The agenda was briefly presented, highlighting the volume of pre-submitted questions received.

The UK and New Zealand DAG chairs emphasised the importance of stakeholder involvement in trade and sustainable development, encouraging active engagement and dialogue.

Government representatives reaffirmed their commitment to constructive exchanges with civil society and the public, recognising the role of open dialogue in policy discussions.

### **2. Dialogue on Trade and Environment**

This session commenced with a cross-cutting discussion of the role of standards bodies within the provisions of the Environment Chapter of the FTA.

A productive dialogue was held on a broad range of topics and encompassed questions on legislation including the New Zealand Fast-track Approvals Act (2024), the repeal of the New Zealand Natural and Built Environment Act (2023) and a reversal of the ban on oil and gas exploration in New Zealand. Stakeholders raised further concerns over the environmental impact of offshore mining in New Zealand, and noted that this may impact future development of offshore wind projects. In response, the New Zealand Government provided

an overview of legislated requirements, encompassing provisions to ensure Māori consultation, and the UK Government reaffirmed a commitment to clean power goals.

Further discussions were held on coal and agriculture, with stakeholders raising concerns over the environmental impact of both sectors and their impact on commitments to the Paris Agreement. In the agriculture sector, on-farm emissions and measurements were highlighted by stakeholders as a potential area for joint co-operation. The New Zealand Government provided a detailed overview of domestic methane reduction measures including a voluntary partnership with farmers. The UK Government also recognised the reduction of agricultural emissions as a critical area of focus. Both countries noted that further cooperation on agricultural emission reduction could be beneficial, as well as considering the standardisation of data reporting methodologies internationally.

Both governments responded to questions relating to sustainable forest management and fisheries subsidies, welcoming further developments in both areas and a mutual interest in progressing World Trade Organisation efforts to tackle Illegal Unregulated and Unreported fishing.

The UK Government provided an overview of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism policy, an environmental measure aimed at tackling carbon leakage. Responding to further questions raised by stakeholders, both governments recognised the value of efforts to limit fossil fuel subsidies.

### **3. Dialogue on Trade and Labour**

Stakeholders from the UK and New Zealand engaged in a productive session on trade and labour. Civil society representatives expressed an interest in the New Zealand Government's approach to modern slavery, following concerns raised that legislation is not currently being progressed. The New Zealand Government highlighted its use of non-statutory measures and its encouragement of voluntary business measures, whilst the UK Government presented its transparency approach to tackling modern slavery in global supply chains.

Discussions also covered on-going efforts on the topic of gender equality. The UK Government highlighted cooperation efforts that have taken place under the Trade and Gender Equality Chapter, including through the Trade and Inclusive Trade Sub-Committee. Both UK and New Zealand governments acknowledged the value of these dialogues and expressed an openness to discussing this topic further under relevant Sub-Committee discussions.

A point was raised on the intersection of international labour conventions on compliance with the FTA. The UK Government highlighted the importance of trading partners' ratification of ILO fundamental conventions. The New Zealand Government shared its plans regarding the ratification of remaining ILO fundamental conventions.

Civil society representatives brought attention to the impact on Māori workers of the recent New Zealand Government proposal to remove the requirement of government agencies to require the living wage in contracts for cleaning, catering and security guard services, and suggested further discussions and information sharing between the UK and New Zealand on the relationship between poverty reduction, economic equity and decent work, and government procurement.

Civil society representatives further expressed reservations on recent changes in New Zealand labour protections, particularly with regards to health and safety reforms. The UK reaffirmed its commitment to ongoing cooperation with New Zealand, including discussions on workplace protections under Article 23.5.2, and both governments welcomed the points raised on the topic of workplace health and safety and its associated challenges in the gig economy and online work, as a potential area to further explore.

#### **4. Conclusion and Closing Remarks**

The moderator encouraged participants to continue engagement beyond the forum, either directly with government representatives or through the two DAGs.

The DAG chairs acknowledged the wide-ranging discussion, noting the role of civil society in holding governments accountable and the ongoing collaboration between UK and New Zealand advisory groups.

Government representatives thanked the moderator and participants, reaffirming their commitment to transparency and discussions under the FTA framework.