



**United Kingdom-New Zealand Environment & Climate Change and Labour  
Sub-Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
24 March 2026**

## **Overview**

The United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand (NZ) held a joint meeting of the third Environment and Climate Change Sub-Committee and the second Labour Sub-Committee under the UK - NZ Free Trade Agreement (FTA) via video-conference on 24 March 2026. The UK chaired the meeting.

### **1. Greetings and Opening Remarks**

The UK and New Zealand exchanged opening remarks and welcomed participants. The two sides reflected on the value of close cooperation as part of their FTA, reaffirming their commitment to strengthening the bilateral relationship and collaborating on Environment, Climate Change and Labour issues.

### **2. Approval of Agenda and Review of Prior Actions**

New Zealand reported progress on actions that were identified at the last meeting, in May 2025. Both sides noted continued engagement between their Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) Domestic Advisory Groups (DAGs), including exchanges linked to the Joint Public Session (JPS).

Cooperation extended into the clean energy partnership, with useful technical discussions on sustainable finance, environmental goods, environmental labelling and green hydrogen policies.

New Zealand highlighted exchanges on domestic environmental policy developments. Both sides acknowledged that while several cooperation areas were advancing constructively, topics such as biodiversity, responsible business conduct and wider resource management remained at an early stage and would benefit from further work.

The UK and NZ underlined the value of maintaining a continued dialogue, to support implementation of the FTA's TSD provisions.



### **3. Public Engagement and Institutional Mechanisms**

#### **Public Submissions**

Both parties reported on submissions received through their respective public submission mechanisms established under the FTA. Whilst the UK have not received any to date, New Zealand reported three submissions were received in 2024 and responded to, with none since.

#### **Joint Public Session**

Reflecting on the JPS held on 16 March 2026, both parties positively reflected on the session and the opportunity to hear directly from stakeholders regarding the implementation of the Environment and Labour Chapters.

There was a brief recap of the key issues raised at the JPS by public stakeholders including the members of both countries' DAGs. This included: cooperation on forestry management and regulation; the UK's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM); and New Zealand's recent climate and energy policy developments (related to oil and gas exploration, biogenic methane reduction targets, investment in natural gas security of supply). It also included: updates on outstanding International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention ratification processes from both parties, the implementation of the gender related provisions; and New Zealand's domestic labour market reforms.

Parties also noted suggestions for potential areas for further cooperation, on energy transition, forestry management, and information sharing on the UK's Employment Rights Bill 2025. Both parties made a note to discuss these items further under the subsequent agenda items.

#### **Future Meeting Arrangements**

The parties also discussed future meeting frequency and came to the consensus that, in line with the Rules of Procedure, the respective UK–NZ Environment and Labour Subcommittees (SC) should meet once every two years, unless determined otherwise.



## **Fisheries Subsidies**

New Zealand provided an update on fisheries subsidies under Article 22.9, referencing that both New Zealand and the UK have submitted the latest required notifications to the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In accordance with Article 22.9's subsidy review clause, New Zealand proposed that the disciplines could be scheduled for review in 2028.

## **4. Trade and Environment**

The SC reviewed implementation progress under the FTA's Environment Chapter. The UK summarised cooperation on sustainable finance, including recent work on green finance frameworks, the UK Peatland Code, water management and catchment approaches. In addition, there have been some in-depth discussions on approaches to environmental and recycling labelling, as well as ongoing exchanges on environmental goods.

New Zealand provided updates on wider green trade work, including cooperation in the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate, work with the UK at the WTO on fossil fuel subsidy reform; and work advancing WTO fisheries subsidies discussions. New Zealand also discussed the Agreement on Climate Change, Trade and Sustainability (ACCTS) with the UK and welcomed ongoing bilateral exchanges with relevant UK departments on energy, agriculture and environmental policy matters.

The UK sought updates on New Zealand's domestic policy approaches to climate change, including on biogenic methane reduction targets, and also on Government investment in oil and gas infrastructure and security of supply. New Zealand provided further context to these policy developments including around New Zealand's primary reliance (around 86-96%) on renewable sources within its electricity system and the policy objectives of avoiding increased reliance on imported coal, managing affordability, and security of supply. New Zealand noted its high-ambition Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) which was informed by the first global stock-take.

New Zealand further updated that its 2050 biogenic methane target sits within its domestic climate framework, alongside net zero goals for long lived gases and emissions budgets. Any changes to the biogenic methane target would not affect New Zealand's international commitments but would be relevant to how those commitments are met domestically. On natural gas (including Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)), the Government has acted to address energy security risks due to declining domestic gas reserves. The proposed LNG import facility forms part of a broader strategy to ensure energy security while supporting New Zealand's transition to an abundant and highly renewable energy system, with costs intended to be recovered from beneficiaries rather than funded by the government.



The UK and New Zealand recognised the value of continuing technical engagement on climate and energy issues. Parties noted that the Clean Energy Partnership (CEP) provided a useful mechanism for practical cooperation and supported efforts to take the partnership forward in a more operational and structured manner.

## 5. Trade and Labour

The UK provided an overview of the Employment Rights Act 2025 and the wider Plan to Make Work Pay which are part of the UK Government's efforts to modernise employment rights, while supporting economic growth and living standards. The reforms focus on strengthening worker voices, improving flexibility, ensuring fair pay, and better supporting working families. The UK also gave updates on flexible working and expanding family friendly rights, including a review of parental leave and the introduction of day one paternity leave from April 2026.

The discussions moved on to workplace disputes. The UK flagged that the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas), the primary body responsible for the prevention of workplace disputes, has seen an increase in disputes since COVID-19, Disability discrimination (particularly related to mental health as a notable driver), and increased use of artificial intelligence by claimants is changing the nature of cases and sometimes making conciliation more challenging.

The UK also provided an update on ongoing analysis to assess whether ratification of ILO Convention 155 (occupational health and safety protections) is possible. New Zealand summarised its recent labour legislation and ongoing assessment of ILO Conventions 138 (abolition of child labour), 87 (right to strike) and 187 (health and safety frameworks). Both sides recognised domestic processes for assessing compliance with ILO standards can require substantial analysis and engagement with stakeholders.

New Zealand updated on its Employment Relations Amendment Act 2026. The Act clarifies contracting arrangements, rebalances aspects of the personal grievance system, reduces complexity at the start of employment relationships and supports wider economic objectives. New Zealand noted the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill is being considered by Parliament and aims to reduce compliance costs, increase certainty for businesses, simplify processes, and support continued reduction of workplace fatalities, injuries, and illnesses. New Zealand will respond in writing to the detailed UK questions already submitted on the Employment Relations Amendment Bill 2026 and the Health and Safety at Work Amendment Bill 2026.



The parties noted shared interests in workplace health and safety, approaches to labour inspection and the sequencing of ILO Convention ratification, and pledged to continue exchanging information on these issues and exploring opportunities for further cooperation under the FTA.

## **6. Next Steps**

The UK and New Zealand would follow up on areas of cooperation identified in the Sub-Committee, including follow-up questions and facilitating engagement between their TSD DAGs (see Annex A).

## **7. Closing Remarks**

Both sides thanked participants for their constructive engagement and reaffirmed their shared commitment to delivering the Environment & Climate Change and Labour provisions of the FTA.



## **Annex A – Summary of Outcomes**

The UK and New Zealand will continue to cooperate bilaterally, regionally and multilaterally to support implementation of the Environment & Climate Change and Labour provisions of the UK-NZ FTA.

### **Institutional Mechanisms**

- Parties to continue information exchange between their respective TSD DAGs, including discussion of possible adjustments to the format of future Joint Public Sessions.
- Parties to continue discussions on scheduling and frequency of future Sub Committees.
- The UK to confirm its position on revisiting the fisheries subsidies Review in 2028.

### **Environmental Policy**

- Parties to continue engaging on environmental goods, including technical discussions and follow up to an upcoming bilateral exchange.
- Parties to maintain engagement on environmental and recyclability labelling in both countries.

### **Clean energy, climate change and wider environment**

- Parties to advance practical cooperation under the Clean Energy Partnership, including developing a more operational programme of work.
- Parties to continue information sharing on domestic climate and energy developments in both countries.
- Parties to explore further exchanges on natural resource management, including areas such as water and catchment management.

### **Labour and ILO Convention Ratification**

- Parties to continue discussions on ILO Convention ratification, including work on occupational health and safety and progress on ratification of relevant ILO Conventions.
- Parties to maintain exchanges on workplace health and safety systems and labour inspection approaches.



## **Annex B – Sub-Committee Agenda**

1. Greetings and Opening Remarks
2. Approval of Agenda and Review of Prior Actions
3. Public Engagement and Institutional Mechanisms
  - a. Public Submissions
  - b. Joint Public Session
  - c. Future Meeting Arrangements
  - d. Fisheries Subsidies
4. Discussion on Trade and Environment
5. Discussion on Trade and Labour
6. Next Steps
7. Closing Remarks