



## Proactive Release

The following Cabinet paper and related Cabinet minute have been proactively released by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, on behalf of Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister:

Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister

Date of release: 21 February 2020

The following documents have been included in this release:

***Title of paper: Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern  
(CAB-19-SUB-0681 refers)***

***Title of minute: Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister  
(CAB-19-MIN-0681 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 section of the Act that would apply has been identified. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

### Key to redaction code:

- 6(a): to avoid prejudicing the international relations of the New Zealand Government.

Office of the Prime Minister

Chair, Cabinet

## Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Bangkok, Thailand from 3-5 November 2019 to attend the East Asia Summit (EAS) and related meetings.

### Report

- 1 The main purpose of my travel was to attend the East Asia Summit (EAS). The Summit remains the essential platform that aims to collectively address the challenges and key strategic risks in the Indo-Pacific region, and at which New Zealand is one of the few non-ASEAN countries represented. Issues commonly raised by leaders in the Summit were the South China Sea, the Korean Peninsula, and the plight of the Rohingya, <sup>s6(a)</sup> [REDACTED]. Leaders adopted three statements on: sustainability, illicit drugs, and transnational crime. The Summit also saw discussions on the broader themes of sustainable development and climate change, although on the latter issue New Zealand was one of only four countries that referred to this as a strategic risk for the region.
- 2 The discussions on the South China Sea focussed primarily on the Code of Conduct that China and ASEAN are negotiating. As was the case in previous years, countries' interventions came from two very different perspectives. Several, including New Zealand, saw developments in the South China Sea as a concern. This group emphasised the importance of freedom of navigation and overflight, and the need for the Code of Conduct to be consistent with international law and to respect the rights of third parties. <sup>s6(a)</sup> [REDACTED]
- 3 Discussions on the Korean Peninsula confirmed emerging fault lines between those including New Zealand who sought full denuclearisation, and those who advocated for dialogue and a softer approach to the DPRK. Most interventions on the Rohingya focused on improving their humanitarian situation, and ensuring conditions existed for people to return safely and sustainably to Rakhine. <sup>s6(a)</sup> [REDACTED]
- 4 A common theme of several Leaders' interventions was also the need to preserve the international-rules based system, including the World Trade



Organisation. <sup>s6(a)</sup>

- 5 In the margins of the EAS I announced the conclusion of two substantial trade deals, alongside the Minister for State for Trade and Export Growth, the Hon Damien O'Connor. These were the upgrade to our Free Trade Agreement with China, which I announced with Premier Li, and the conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), at a Summit with the Leaders of all countries participating in RCEP (the 10 ASEANs, plus Australia, New Zealand, China, Korea, Japan and India).
- 6 The upgrade ensures that our FTA with China resumes its place as the "high water mark" amongst China's FTAs and FTA upgrades, as well as contributing to positive momentum to the bilateral relationship. Amongst other things, the upgrade will deliver greater market access for some wood and paper products. <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- 7 Chinese Premier Li Keqiang began our bilateral meeting by emphasising in front of the media that the conclusion of the upgrade negotiations would not just bring benefits to our two countries, but also send a signal to the region and the world that both countries had decided to embrace free trade.
- 8 <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- For New Zealand, India's participation was important strategically, but also commercially given India is the only RCEP party with which we do not already have an FTA.
- 9 After many hours of negotiations, including by Minister O'Connor, Leaders concluded a statement in the name of all 16 RCEP participating countries, including India, but which recognises that only 15 countries had concluded text-based negotiations and market access. The statement noted that India had significant outstanding issues, which remain unresolved. New Zealand officials will continue to work with India with a view to concluding market access negotiations, hopefully next year.
- 10 Nevertheless, this reflects a significant achievement after seven years of negotiations. RCEP includes 7 of New Zealand's top 10 trading partners, and together RCEP countries take 61 percent of our goods exports and 50 percent of our services exports – although both figures will be lower if India does not end up being part of the deal.

- 11 In addition, ASEAN Leaders agreed to New Zealand's proposal to hold an ASEAN-New Zealand Commemorative Summit in Viet Nam in April 2020, to mark 45 years of our dialogue partnership. This was welcome news as it is usually ASEAN's practice to hold summits with partners either in the other country (Australia hosted an Australia-ASEAN Summit in 2018) or during its end of year Summit (October/November), but the latter would likely have presented issues in relation to the New Zealand general election. <sup>s6(a)</sup>
- 12 I held full bilateral meetings with a number of key partners, including Premier Li of China, the Prime Ministers of Malaysia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, the United States' National Security Adviser, as well as informal engagements with several other leaders, and I delivered a keynote address at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit (ABIS).
- 13 The East Asia Summit <sup>s6(a)</sup> provides New Zealand with an ability to discuss key challenges in the region with major regional leaders each year, and a space New Zealand can work in to try to build stronger support for collective action on issues of strategic importance, such as climate change.

**Proactive release**

- 14 This paper will be proactively released, subject to any necessary redactions.

**Recommendation**

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Prime Minister



# Cabinet

## Minute of Decision

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*This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.*

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### Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister

**Portfolio**                      **Prime Minister**

On 16 December 2019, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Prime Minister under CAB-19-SUB-0681 on her travel, from 3 to 5 November 2019, to Bangkok, Thailand, to attend the East Asia Summit and related meetings.

Michael Webster  
Secretary of the Cabinet

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**Hard-copy distribution:**  
Prime Minister  
Deputy Prime Minister

Proactively released by the Prime Minister