



Proactive Release

The following document has been proactively released by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), on behalf of Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister:

Report on Overseas Travel - Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Hon Simon Watts - April 2024

The following documents have been included in this release:

Title of paper: Report on Overseas Travel - Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Hon Simon Watts - April 2024 (CAB-24-SUB-0184 refers)

Title of minute: Report on Overseas Travel - Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Hon Simon Watts - April 2024 (CAB-24-MIN-0184 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.

Key to redaction code:

- section 6(a), to protect the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand.

Office of the Prime Minister

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Hon Simon Watts – Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines – 14 – 20 April

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on Minister Watts' and my travel to Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines, from Sunday 14 April to Saturday 20 April.

Report

- 1 We committed in our reset of New Zealand's foreign policy to an uplift in engagement in Southeast Asia. With its rapid growth rates and burgeoning middle class, this region will be a future growth engine for us – the more so because we have the right trade architecture already in place. s6(a)
[Redacted]
- 2 With that context in mind, this Mission achieved its objectives:
 - 2.1 With new leaders emerging in Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines, we built relationships that will pay dividends in time, agreeing with all three to make a step change in our respective bilateral relationships;
 - 2.2 With a 24-strong business delegation, we promoted New Zealand as a source of innovation as well as highlighting our traditional export strengths, while also profiling ourselves as an attractive destination for tourism, study and investment; and
 - 2.3 s6(a) [Redacted] we had frank conversations about the challenges facing the region, and reinforced our credibility as a security partner.
- 3 Four themes were evident in all three countries.
- 4 First, with growth rates averaging above 5% per year, the countries of Southeast Asia represent big opportunities for New Zealand. The business delegation was especially energised by the untapped opportunities they discovered. As we enhance our international connections, we need to put more effort into Southeast Asia to realise our Export Double goal and to attract quality foreign direct investment.
- 5 Second, in Southeast Asia, growing prosperity is only possible for as long as the region remains stable and secure. s6(a)
[Redacted]

s6(a)

With economics and security so clearly intertwined, it is in our interests to be more forward-leaning in contributing to sustaining a secure region as a public good.

- 6 Third, there is a lot that we can learn from Southeast Asia. Singapore's story is remarkable, with much to be learnt from their strategizing and planning. A country like Thailand challenges us to think harder about how we can move more quickly in big projects from idea to execution. The Philippines, in the way it is dealing with serious challenges to its interests in the South China Sea, is an example to learn from about navigating a difficult strategic environment.
- 7 Finally, it was evident that New Zealand showcases itself best when we draw on all the tools in our toolkit. With Ministers, business and Māori unifying, we told a powerful story about who we are as a nation at Gala events in each location. Businesses, ranging from Air New Zealand through Morrisons, were able to profile their capabilities by doing deals. We showcased New Zealand through traditional and social media channels. By being there, Paulo Garcia MP, the world's first Filipino-born member of another country's legislature, told a story of the diversity of our nation, of which we were all rightfully proud.
- 8 With all three countries, New Zealand will need to make the running in following through and ensuring that the signalling demonstrated by the visit is supported by meaningful action. The highlights from each country are summarised below.

Singapore

- 9 With Prime Minister Lee, we agreed to 'substantially elevate' our bilateral Enhanced Partnership with Singapore. We added a new 'Supply Chains and Connectivity' pillar focused on supply chain resilience and food security. We agreed to reinvigorate cooperation on the green economy in commercially realisable areas. We focused on strengthening our defence and wider security links.
- 10 The Prime Minister also met Lawrence Wong on the day it was announced he would, on 15 May, become Singapore's next Prime Minister. By both acknowledging PM Lee's extraordinary tenure and cementing the intent to elevate the relationship with incoming PM Wong, continuity is locked in.
- 11 The Prime Minister and accompanying business delegation made the most of being in a regional hub, promoting New Zealand to a set of major investors, meeting with major multinationals like ANZ and Google.

Thailand

- 12 With Prime Minister Srettha, we committed to achieving a Strategic Partnership between our two countries by 2026; and to tripling two-way trade by 2045. While enthusiastic about doing more in the defence relationship, PM

Srettha's principal focus was on expanding our two countries' economic relationship: whether by recommencing direct flights or enhancing our strong agricultural trade, whether by doing better in education or helping Thailand with its energy transition challenge.

- 13 A number of private sector MOUs were witnessed by the two Prime Ministers, including by: NZ Aero; Massey University; DSH Systems Ltd and SEEN Safety Ltd.

The Philippines

- 14 With President Marcos, the Prime Minister agreed to elevate the bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Partnership by 2026, and to set a shared goal to grow trade by 50% by 2030. It was agreed that work towards concluding defence institutional arrangements, including signing a Mutual Logistics Supporting Arrangement (MLSA) this year, and a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) as soon as possible.
- 15 Business outcomes included a signed strategic cooperation arrangement between NZTE and the Philippines largest conglomerate Ayala Group, a tri-country (New Zealand, Philippines, Japan) hydrogen cooperation arrangement, NZTE-facilitated deals in agriculture and Ease of Doing Business/regulatory reform, and investment into the Philippines renewable energy sector.

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 Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement
Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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.

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon and Hon Simon Watts - April 2024

Portfolio **Prime Minister**

On 27 May 2024, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Rt Hon Christopher Luxon under CAB-24-SUB-0184 on his travel, together with Hon Simon Watts, from 14 to 20 April 2024, to Singapore, Thailand, and the Philippines for bilateral visits and to meet with business leaders.

Diana Hawker
for Secretary of the Cabinet

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