



Proactive Release

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

Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon Dr Shane Reti – August 2024

The following documents have been included in this release:

Title of paper: Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon Dr Shane Reti – August 2024 (CAB-24-SUB-0430 refers)

Title of minute: Report on Overseas Travel: Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon Dr Shane Reti – August 2024 (CAB-24-MIN-0430 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.

~~Restricted~~

Office of the Prime Minister

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Office of the Minister for Pacific Peoples

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Rt Hon Winston Peters, and Hon Dr Shane Reti – August 2024

- 1 This paper recommends that Cabinet note this report on travel to attend the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Leaders' Meetings in Nuku'alofa and Vava'u, Tonga. The Prime Minister travelled from 27 to 30 August 2024 (inclusive) and the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Pacific Peoples travelled from 24 to 27 August 2024 (inclusive).

Report

- 2 The purpose of the travel was to enable senior New Zealand participation in the PIF Leaders' Meetings, hosted by the Kingdom of Tonga. The visits included bilateral programme elements for all three Ministers.

53rd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meetings in Nuku'alofa and Vava'u, Tonga

- 3 Founded in 1971, the PIF is the top political and economic organisation in the Pacific region. The PIF is central to New Zealand's engagement in the Pacific s6(a) A strong and unified PIF underpins our region's voice, agency, and ability to navigate the plethora of 21st century challenges we face.

- 4 The PIF Leaders' Meetings were held on 26-30 August 2024. All Forum Leaders attended in person except for Kiribati (due to the proximity of its election). The PIF Leaders' Meeting is a vital platform for Leaders to convene and discuss the many and varied challenges that Pacific countries face together. It is in New Zealand's strategic interests to be present and actively engaged in this high-profile and substantial annual meeting.

- 5 The Prime Minister attended the core elements of the PIF Leaders' Meetings – notably the PIF Leaders' Plenary, the Retreat in Vava'u and the Dialogue with Forum Partners. In the margins of these meetings, the Prime Minister engaged in bilateral meetings with Leaders from Tonga, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, and Solomon Islands. Throughout the week, the Prime Minister also used the opportunities of lunches and dinners to conduct a series of informal engagements with fellow Leaders and Forum partners,

including dinner with the Tuvaluan Prime Minister, and to build connections with counterparts.

- 6 The Deputy Prime Minister, accompanied by the Minister for Pacific Peoples, represented the Prime Minister for the first three days of the Forum Leaders' Meetings (25-27 August 2024). This included participating in the dialogue with the United Nations Secretary-General and a meeting with the Polynesian Leaders' Group. The Deputy Prime Minister also engaged in bilateral meetings with the Ulu o Tokelau; the President of the Government of New Caledonia; the European Commissioner for International Partnerships (Cabinet-level); the Azerbaijani Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources as COP29 President-designate; the Serbian Foreign Minister; and the Singaporean Second Foreign Minister.
- 7 The Prime Minister's participation, bolstered by the presence of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Pacific Peoples, sent a strong signal of New Zealand's commitment to the Forum and its standing as our region's preeminent political body, as well as our commitment to advancing serious policy issues with fellow PIF Leaders. At the top of that list for New Zealand was promoting the concept of PIF centrality, similar to the long-standing notion of ASEAN centrality, which reinforces the vital and indivisible role of the Forum – both for our own systems and for partners outside the region.
- 8 Attendance at the PIF Leaders' Meetings built on efforts over the past eight months to sustain our deep and comprehensive focus on the Pacific, working closely with Pacific Leaders, Australia, and other like-minded partners to protect our influence and interests.
- 9 In addition to transporting five Pacific Leaders on the Deputy Prime Minister's Royal New Zealand Airforce flight to Tonga and three Pacific Leaders on the Prime Minister's flight back to Auckland, New Zealand also arranged dedicated flights to and from Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands. In total, New Zealand facilitated eleven Leaders to the PIF this year, which significantly enhanced participation and contributed to our overall strategy of ensuring all sub-regions of the Pacific feel connected to the PIF. New Zealand's efforts were greatly appreciated by all.

Bilateral programme elements

- 10 The Prime Minister, alongside his Tongan counterpart, refreshed the principles and priorities of the bilateral relationship for the next four years through the New Zealand-Tonga Statement of Partnership. Other bilateral activities included launching the *Women in Rugby* initiative, lunch with the Lord Speaker, visits to a primary school and a watermelon farm, both recipients of New Zealand overseas development assistance. The Prime Minister's bilateral programme and visit to Tonga concluded with hosting the Crown Prince and Princess as guests of honour at an alumni reception.

- 11 The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Pacific Peoples met with Lord Vaea, Minister of Internal Affairs, and launched the “Weather Ready Pacific Radar” with the United Nations Secretary-General and the Director General of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, to improve connectedness during natural disasters. Hon Dr Minister Reti participated as a panellist in a UNCEF health-focused side event and had a second bilateral meeting with Tonga’s Minister of Health.

Proactive release

This Cabinet paper would be proactively released as per Cabinet Office Circular CO(23)04, on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade website. Proactive release is subject to redaction as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon
Prime Minister

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon Dr Shane Reti
Minister for Pacific Peoples



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: Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon Dr Shane Reti – August 2024

Portfolios **Prime Minister / Foreign Affairs / Pacific Peoples**

On 11 November 2024, Cabinet **noted** the report from the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, and Hon Dr Shane Reti under CAB-24-SUB-0430 on their travel, between 24 and 30 August 2024, to Tonga, to attend the Pacific Island Forum Leaders' Meeting.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

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