

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Pacific Peoples

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to the Cook Islands from 14-17 March 2019 to attend the Climate Change Development and Resilience Roundtable hosted by the Cook Islands Government from 14-15 March 2019.

Report

- 1 The Climate Change Development and Resilience Roundtable meeting was held across two days and was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown. The aims of the event were to share their new Climate Change Country Programme 2018-2030 which outlines their priorities for climate change; present a range of concept notes that support the delivery of the Country Programme and for donors to signal support for areas of potential cooperation.
- 2 Participants at the Roundtable included current and potential future development partners of the Cook Islands including donor countries Australia, China and Japan, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Green Climate Fund (GCF) and key partners the Pacific Community (SPC), Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- 3 The primary objectives of my attendance and participation at the Roundtable were threefold: to demonstrate New Zealand's support for the Cook Islands particularly as they graduate from Overseas Development Assistance status at the end of 2019, demonstrate our commitment to climate change action, and to gain a better understanding of their priorities.
- 4 I delivered New Zealand's keynote speech during the opening session on Thursday 14 March. I acknowledged the Cook Islands' Government for their leadership in setting itself ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement and for holding the Roundtable as it was an important step in ensuring that there were concrete plans and means to achieving their goals. I outlined New Zealand's focus on partnering with the Cook Islands' particularly in the areas of adapting to the impacts of climate change such as improving water and food security, strengthening ecosystems and improving disaster resilience.
- 5 Prior to the Roundtable, the Cook Islands Government had distributed reading material to all participants including their comprehensive Country Programme that was developed with assistance from GCF. I believe the intentions were for donor countries and key partners to have identified specific areas where they would be keen to invest/partner up however, during the plenary, the majority of statements delivered by each donor country and key partners outlined what each was doing in the climate change space and it was mainly through bilateral meetings and informal discussions with officials that we were able to get more detailed information on key partners areas of interest.

6 Of particular noting, were the discussions with GCF representatives including the Director Mitigation and Adaptation Division German Velasquez. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] s6(a) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

7 The Roundtable also provided an opportunity for me and High Commissioner Tessa Temata to meet with Prime Minister Henry Puna and a number of senior government representatives including Deputy Prime Minister Mark Brown and his Secretaries for Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs and Health. We discussed the bilateral relationship [REDACTED] s6(a) and I received an update on measures they were taking to address an outbreak of dengue fever they were experiencing. The conversations and mood was upbeat and positive and all expressing their satisfaction with the working relationships that Cook Islands departments have with New Zealand counterparts.

8 As the first day of the conference drew to a close, the events in Christchurch had started to filter to the Cook Islands. I remained to attend the second day and the Roundtable commenced with a minute of silence for Christchurch with those in attendance passing on their condolences and thoughts for New Zealand.

Proactive release

9 I intend to release this paper in part within 30 business days with redactions made in line with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement
Hon Aupito William Sio
Minister for Pacific Peoples