

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 New Caledonia from 19-22 June 2019 to represent New Zealand at the 11th biennial Ministerial-level Conference of the Pacific Community (SPC).

Report

- 1 The Pacific Community (SPC) held its annual officials-level governance meeting, the Committee of Representatives of Governments and Administrations (the 49th CRGA), followed by the 11th biennial Ministerial-level Pacific Community Conference (the Conference) which was held from 17-21 June
- 2 I attended and participated in the Conference discussions on Friday 21 June and was supported by New Zealand's Consul General to the French Pacific and Acting Second Secretary along with MFAT's Pacific Regional Divisional and Pacific Regional Unit Manager who represented New Zealand at the 49th CRGA meeting held immediately prior to the Conference. This year the Conference focused on the importance of Oceans Science for the sustainable future of the Pacific region.
- 3 The main objectives of my attendance at the Conference were to represent and demonstrate our support for SPC as the Pacific region's premier scientific and technical agency; announce New Zealand's significant support for the establishment of the Pacific Community Centre for Ocean Science (PCCOS); confirm the selection of the next Director General (DG) of SPC; and to foster and strengthen links with other Ministers of the Pacific Islands region.
- 4 Cook Islands Prime Minister Henry Puna presented the keynote address, followed by presentations from Dr Audrey Aumua, Deputy Director General SPC, and Tepaeru Herrmann, Secretary of the Cook Islands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, outlining the importance of the region's culture, food security, economies and environment. Both speakers referred to the role of individual Pacific nations and the region as a whole taking action and influencing global action.

5 A panel discussion chaired by PM Puna followed including the Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa, Fiame Noami Mata'afa, and Ambassador Peter Thomson, United Nations Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and Professor Gilles Boeuf, Lead French Scientist, Sorbonne University, Paris. The panel were unanimously aligned in the need for global action, with the Oceans Sustainable Development goal (SDG14) and the "UN Decade of Oceans Science for Sustainable Development" identified as key priority areas for the Pacific.

6 It was during this session, I announced New Zealand's deep commitment for Pacific oceans science and highlighted that we would be providing support to SPC for the Pacific Community Centre for Oceans Science (PCCOS), noting that good governance and management of the ocean needed to be underpinned by access to reliable scientific data and indigenous knowledge to support sound decision making.

7 A number of other countries made commitments and endorsed the development of a regional strategy for the collection of scientific and technical ocean data and the role of SPC and other CROP (Council of Regional Organisations in the Pacific) agencies for an integrated approach to oceans-focused activities. I participated in forming the Ministerial Statement of the Conference on Ocean Science, which was agreed to convey the key messages from the Conference to Pacific Island Forum Leaders and beyond.

8 The current SPC Director General Dr Colin Tukuitonga completes his term at the start of 2020; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Redacted under section 6(a) OIA 1982.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

9 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Redacted under section 6(a) OIA 1982.
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

10 As a member and major funder of SPC, I believe that New Zealand's presence at the Conference was well received and significant, for reinforcing our deep commitment to Pacific regional processes, and for SPC who play a vital role as the region's lead science and technical agency.

11 During the Conference I also had the opportunity to have informal discussions with the Director of the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), Kosi Latu about their biennial meeting being held in September 2019 in Apia. [REDACTED]
Redacted under section 6(a) OIA 1982.
[REDACTED]

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Redacted under section 6(a) OIA 1982.

- 13 It is worth noting that New Zealand's Ministerial presence and participation at the Conference is important for strengthening our ongoing mutual working relationship with the region. The next Conference is planned for 2021 to be convened in Vanuatu.

Proactive release

- 14 I intend to release this paper within 30 business days 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