

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Pacific Peoples

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Aupito William Sio

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Samoa from 4-7 September 2019, to attend the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) Environment Ministers and High-Level Representatives Talanoa and the opening ceremony for the new Pacific Climate Change Centre (PCCC).

Report

- 2 SPREP hosted its 29th Meeting of Officials in Apia from 3 to 5 September, followed by the Environment Ministers' Session on 6 September 2019. SPREP holds the mandate on environment and climate change related issues in the Pacific. Their biennial meeting provides the opportunity for members to discuss matters including cooperation, new funding and projects being established, access to climate finance, waste management and pollution control, climate data and science services.
- 3 I delivered New Zealand's statement in the opening of the PCCC on 5 September and participated at the Ministers' High-Level Representatives Talanoa on 6 September 2019. I was supported by New Zealand's High Commissioner to Samoa and officials who represented New Zealand at the 29th SPREP Officials Meeting. I also delivered a speech at a Ministerial side event, supported by New Zealand's Department of Conservation (DOC) to profile New Zealand's involvement in Biodiversity and Invasive Species work in the Pacific.
- 4 Additionally I undertook a range of formal and informal bilateral meetings in the margins of the SPREP Talanoa covering areas relevant to my ministerial portfolios of Pacific peoples, Justice and Courts. My first bilateral on 4 September 2019, with Chief Justice Vui Clarence Nelson covered off a range of justice sector issues including child adoption, punishment and abuse that the Acting Chief Justice had raised during a visit to Wellington earlier in the year.
- 5 The opening of the PCCC on 5 September 2019 included key note statements from Hon Tuilaepa Lufesoli'ai Sailele Mailegaoi, Prime Minister of Samoa and HE Maugaoleatuolo Shinya Aoki, Ambassador of Japan to Samoa. I also spoke at the opening and reinforced New Zealand's support for the centre's establishment in partnership with SPREP, Japan and Samoa. I also made reference to New Zealand's contribution to enable the Centre's operations, by providing the necessary human resources to support the Centre to become a leading regional hub for climate change issues.

- 6 I made formal calls to Hon Faaolesa Katopau AINU'u, Minister of Justice, Courts and Administration with adoptions, deportations and judicial support featuring in our discussions. I also met with Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa, Deputy Prime Minister of Samoa and discussed her role as Chair of the 2019 SPREP Environment Ministers and High-Level Representatives Talanoa. Hon Fiame also informed me about her attendance at the recent University of the South Pacific (USP), Special Meeting of Council in late August.
- 7 Other meetings included time with SPREP Director-General Kosi Latu and Australian Assistant Minister for Waste Reduction and Environmental Management Hon Trevor Evans, both meetings were primarily SPREP-related. I also attended a successful evening event hosted by DOC. I introduced the Director General of DOC and highlighted the long track record between DOC and SPREP and the positive cooperation between New Zealand agencies and SPREP.
- 8 On 6 September 2019, I attended the Environment Ministers' High Level Talanoa. The Talanoa theme of "a Resilient Blue Pacific", brought together Ministers and representatives from SPREP's 21 Pacific Island and five metropolitan members to participate in dialogue on climate change, oceans governance, marine pollution and seabed mining. This year a record number of twelve Ministers attended.
- 9 I participated on the panel covering climate change and discussed the topic 'A Just Transition to low emissions climate resilient futures?' I reiterated New Zealand's view on just transitions as an enabler for more ambitious climate action that supports sustainable development and specifically sustainable development goals. I reinforced our commitment to the Paris Agreement and supporting the Pacific in an effort to encourage discussion between my ministerial colleagues on environment and climate change issues.
- 10 Other panellists included, Hon Fiame Naomi Mataafa, the Chair, Ambassador Thomson, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean and respective Ministers and representatives from Nauru, Marshall Islands, Fiji, Niue and France. There was a good range of perspectives and discussion across, subsequent panels on oceans, marine pollution and seabed mining.
- 11 As a member and major funder of SPREP, these biennial meetings provide New Zealand the opportunity to engage with other Pacific Ministers to discuss key regional environmental issues. I believe that New Zealand's ongoing participation at a Ministerial-level is a priority, given our investment and support for preferred multilateral-level organisations in the Pacific.
- 12 SPREP plays a vital role in climate action throughout the Pacific region and provides policy advice to the Pacific Island Forum (PIF) members. Our participation in SPREP is especially important given the 2018 Boe Declaration and the 2019 PIF Communique declaration that "climate change is the single biggest threat to the livelihood, security and Wellbeing of the peoples of the Pacific region." New Zealand and New Zealanders are also included in the group of "peoples of the Pacific region" that is under threat.
- 13 During my visit I also took the opportunity to have breakfast meetings with Supreme Court Justice Mata Keli Tuatagaloa who mentioned her pride at being selected the 2019 New Zealand Prime Minister's Fellow from Samoa and the value of her New Zealand visit in March 2019. I also met with the Minister of Communication and Information Technology, Hon Afamasaga Lepuiai Rico Tupai, who sought support for his digital transformation initiative including a ministerial visit to New Zealand in September.

- 14 I visited staff at the New Zealand High Commission and also Immigration New Zealand (INZ). [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] s6(a) of the OIA 1982 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- 15 On my last day I paid short visits to various NZAID funded activities in Apia and Upolu including viewing the Save the Manumea Mural, undertaking a walking tour of the completed Apia waterfront project and visiting the first of two cocoa (koko) nurseries established under the Samoa Cocoa Industry Development Initiative.

Proactive release

- 16 I intend to release this paper within 30 business days in line with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendation

- 17 I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Aupito William Sio
Minister for Pacific Peoples