

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Civil Defence

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Kris Faafoi

I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Tokelau and Samoa from 2 October 2018 to 7 October 2018. The main purpose of my visit was to advance the resetting of New Zealand's relationship with Tokelau. My visit was the first to Tokelau by a Minister of the New Zealand Government since Prime Minister Helen Clark's visit in 2004.

Report

- 1 From 4-6 October, I led a delegation to visit the atolls of Tokelau – Fakaofu, Nukunonu and Atafu. The delegation included the Administrator of Tokelau and officials from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT), the Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management (MCDEM), the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF), MetService and Maritime New Zealand. Two media representatives accompanied the delegation.
- 2 My visit reaffirmed the Government's stepped up commitment to Tokelau, as part of the Pacific Reset, which has been reflected in decisions to scale up the role of Administrator and boost our development assistance to \$87 million over the next three years. Bilateral meetings on each of the three atolls allowed the Administrator and I to reinforce New Zealand's strategic priorities for its engagement with Tokelau – which are to:
 - Strengthen Tokelau's governance and management practices;
 - Improve the quality of Tokelau's core public services (education, health, transport and telecommunications); and
 - Strengthen Tokelau's environmental management and resilience to the impacts of climate change.
- 3 On each of the atolls I met with Tokelauan Ministers and atoll leaders. I stressed the importance of the Pacific Reset in having honest and open conversations and developing a clearer understanding of what was needing to be done and how New Zealand could partner with Tokelau. I emphasised that Tokelau needs to think as a single nation, not three separate atolls.
- 4 The visit served to underscore that the relationship is deepening, strengthening and entering a period of increased stability, with leaders from all three atolls expressing sincere gratitude for New Zealand's development assistance, as well as signalling areas for prospective future investment.
- 5 Tokelauan Minister of Finance Sio Perez felt that the Pacific Reset had sent a clear message to Tokelau of the importance New Zealand placed on partnership with

Realm countries in particular, and requested that the Principles of Partnership between New Zealand and Tokelau be renewed.

- 6 I reinforced the importance of disaster risk management in Tokelau. My visit coincided with the delivery of emergency relief supplies (including chlorine tablets, mosquito nets and generators) from New Zealand in order to provide immediate relief in the event of a sudden onset disaster, before international assistance arrives.
- 7 The visit reaffirmed that responding to the challenges of climate change and preparing for natural disasters nears the top of Tokelau's concerns. New Zealand has already commenced work to gather the data on coastal hazards required to determine how best to support Tokelau to increase resilience to risks. It will be important to move swiftly from information gathering to detailed design and action, because requests to New Zealand for support are expected to be significant. Tokelau, as a territory of New Zealand cannot access alternative forms of international climate finance.
- 8 Tokelauan leaders called for New Zealand to provide increased support in a number of areas including:
 - establishing partnerships with local government and deepen partnerships with New Zealand ministries and agencies
 - responding to the challenges of climate change and natural disasters
 - responding to fire emergencies within homes
 - replacing the Fakaofu school boat
 - expanding Tokelau's housing construction assistance
 - renovating the Atafu hospital
 - s6(a)
 - establishing a radio/broadcasting service
 - preserving Tokelauan culture and language.
- 9 Some of these requests may require New Zealand input, and many of them could be managed by the Village Councils.
- 10 The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) had a naval vessel, the HMNZS Otago, already operational in the region and it supported the travel of the delegation. The Otago's crew providing a valuable and significant role in supporting the delegation with the formal welcome and closing ceremonies, as well as undertaking work projects on each atoll.
- 11 Prior to the Tokelau visit, on 2 October 2018, I met with Hon Fiāme Mata'afa, Samoa's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Natural Resources and Environment. This provided an opportunity to discuss New Zealand and Samoa's joint commitment to disaster risk management in Samoa and the Pacific, and to acknowledge Samoa's regional leadership in climate change – particularly through the leadership of Prime Minister Tuila'epa during his tenure as Chair of the Pacific Islands Forum. Discussions also covered my visit to Tokelau and its objectives.

Fiame noted her desire to join Prime Minister Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern should she undertake a visit to Tokelau in 2019.

- 12 I also visited and toured the Samoan National Emergency Operation Centre, where I emphasised New Zealand's ongoing commitment to disaster risk management in Samoa and observed how the National Disaster Management Office coordinates responses for national scale disasters. Recent media reports have noted that Eastern Polynesia (from Samoa to Cook Islands) face increased risk this season.
- 13 New Zealand's Acting High Commissioner hosted an evening function that was well attended by Samoan Government ministers and officials, corporate and NGO representatives, and representatives from the Tokelau Apia Liaison Office.
- 14 The Prime Minister intends visiting Tokelau within this term of Government. Her visit, coupled with the Minister of Foreign Affairs initiative to strengthen engagement with the Pacific Realm Countries, provides an opportunity for New Zealand to support Tokelau with advancing initiatives in priority areas including good governance, climate change, health and education.

Consultation

- 15 Foreign Affairs and Trade has been consulted on this paper.

Proactive release

- 16 I propose to release this paper proactively in part.

Recommendation

I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Kris Faafoi

Minister of Civil Defence

