

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Economic Development

Chair, Cabinet

Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Phil Twyford

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet note this report on my travel to Timor-Leste from 27 August to 1 September for the 20th anniversary of Timor-Leste's Independence Referendum from Indonesia.
- 2 Timor-Leste celebrated the 20th Anniversary of the end of the Indonesian occupation, self-determination, and the creation of the independent nation of Timor-Leste.

Report

- 3 I was asked to attend this event on behalf of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs to represent the New Zealand Government. Prior to becoming a Parliamentarian I had been part of the international solidarity movement and campaigned on self-determination for East-Timor while with Oxfam, and also worked there as a consultant after independence. The New Zealand delegation also included veterans from the United Nations Assistance Mission in Timor-Leste (UNAMET), Brigadier Neville Reilly (retired) and Captain Shaun Fogarty.
- 4 The commemorations occurred against the background of Timor-Leste's successful and ongoing efforts to resolve its border disputes with Australia and Indonesia, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Withheld so as to not prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
- 5 The Timorese Government used the occasion to privilege a particular set of relationships: Portugal, Indonesia, participating ASEAN [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Withheld so as to not prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand
- 6 My programme had three objectives:
 - 6.1 to represent the New Zealand Government in the formal commemoration ceremonies;
 - 6.2 to engage directly with Timorese ministerial counterparts on aspects of bilateral cooperation; and
 - 6.3 to profile and support New Zealand's development programme in the country.

7 I met with Minister Fidelis Leite Magalhaes, the Minister of Economic Affairs, Acting Minister of Tourism, Commerce, and Industry, and Acting Trade Minister, to discuss economic development, the diversification of their economy, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Withheld so as to not prejudice the security or defence of New Zealand or the international relations of the Government of New Zealand

8 Minister Fidelis said the Timorese government was committed to bringing Timor-Leste into the WTO within two years. The Council of Ministers would shortly select a lead negotiator. I confirmed New Zealand support to Timor-Leste in this area, including through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade's expertise.

9 I also met with Prime Minister Taur Matan Ruak, former President José Ramos-Horta, Minister of Transport and Communications José Agostinho da Silva Minister who met us at the airport, and Minister for Public Works Salvador Soares at the formal events, among other Timor-Leste leaders.

10 I visited New Zealand funded development programmes in early childhood education, fisheries, agriculture and tourism. I visited a UNICEF supported community pre-school funded through the Partnerships Fund and supported by two VSA volunteers. The community preschools provide much needed education access to rural children.

11 The Timor-Leste Minister of Education, Sports and Youth noted her strong support for this programme when we met briefly at the airport just prior to our departure. She is proposing to visit New Zealand next month to learn more about our approach to early childhood education. New Zealand is the lead donor in early childhood education and is well recognised for the work we are doing.

12 The visits to the coffee and cocoa cooperative and the fish hatchery combined to underline New Zealand's continuing efforts to support economic diversification and improve the well-being of rural communities. Both activities have strong community and government support with coffee one of the leading sectors for future increases in export earnings, including export to New Zealand.

13 My visit to the tourism site in Maubisse highlighted the limited infrastructure currently available to support tourism but also showcased the high potential for economic growth as the country and rural sectors develop. New Zealand is planning to provide further aid programme support to develop the tourism sector.

Proactive release

14 I propose to proactively release this paper within 30 business days with appropriate redactions pursuant to the Official Information Act 1981.

Recommendations

15 I recommend that Cabinet note this report.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Phil Twyford

Minister for Economic Development