

15 March 2024

9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe 9(2)(a)

## OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

I refer to your official information request of **1 March 2024** for:

- *Any secondary briefing provided by your agency to your agency's minister/s since 27 November 2023*

Manatū Wāhine Ministry for Women has two secondary briefings provided to the Minister for Women in scope of your request:

- Briefing to the Incoming Minister for Women: Pay Transparency
- Briefing to the Incoming Minister for Women: International Engagements

Part of the information you have requested is enclosed (see Appendix One). However, we have decided to refuse your request for information which relates to the Briefing to the Incoming Minister: Pay Transparency, under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Official Information Act.

### **Official Information Act responses**

Please note that this response, with your personal details redacted, may be published on the Ministry's website. If you have any concerns or comments related to this, please let us know by emailing [ministerialservicing@women.govt.nz](mailto:ministerialservicing@women.govt.nz), within two weeks of the date of this letter.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

*M Shortland*

Maxine Shortland  
Director, Corporate Services (Acting)

## Briefing to the Incoming Minister for Women: International engagements

New Zealand is an active participant in international meetings and forums focused on the advancement of women and girls and maintains a strong voice for gender equality and women's empowerment globally.

New Zealand is currently ranked 4<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2023. We leverage this reputation to build strong relationships enabling New Zealand to influence, champion the respect and protection of women's rights, and for you and the Ministry to influence domestically.

The purpose of this briefing is to advise you on upcoming international forums and provide information on New Zealand's international reporting obligations, which the Ministry is responsible for overseeing.

### There are upcoming events that you may wish to attend

There are some key international forums which you may wish to attend. The Ministry will provide you with additional information to support decision making on your attendance, as well as advice and support before the events.

#### **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

*11-22 March 2024, United Nations Head Quarters, New York City, United States*

The Commission on the Status of Women (the Commission) is the principal global body dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The 2024 theme is: *“accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.”*

#### **If you choose to attend, your role is to:**

- Deliver New Zealand's National Statement.
- Attend bilateral meetings with Ministerial counterparts.
- Participate in roundtable discussions.
- Participate in and attend side events or receptions on priority issues.
- Engage with participating non-governmental organisations.

The Ministry supports your attendance during the high-level segments which generally take place during the first week. Up to two Ministry representatives attend.

#### **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Women and the Economy Forum**

*May 2024, Peru*

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) 2024 will be hosted by Peru. One of Peru's key priorities is inclusive trade, particularly focused on women.

Ministers for Women are invited to attend the annual APEC Women and the Economy Forum to discuss initiatives that support women's economic participation.

Peru intend to host the 2024 APEC Women and the Economy Forum jointly with the annual Trade Ministers meeting.

This joint meeting is tentatively scheduled to take place in May.

**If you choose to attend, your role is to:**

- Deliver a national statement which sets out what the New Zealand economy has accomplished for women's economic empowerment in a specific theme area.
- Meet with Ministerial counterparts.
- Participate in meetings and workshops that are arranged by the host economy.

**Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders meeting**

*August/September 2024, location TBC*

The Pacific Islands Forum Women Leaders meeting is one of the annual Pacific Islands Forum Ministerial-level meetings.

The Pacific Islands Forum is the primary Pacific regional organisation for building consensus on a range of key issues including security, governance, economic and trade growth, and sustainable development. The Forum comprises of 18 members.

This will be an opportunity to connect with regional leaders to discuss and progress gender equality and exchange best practice and solutions to shared issues.

**United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

*Dates TBC, United Nations Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland*

New Zealand's latest report on progress towards implementing the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (the Convention) was submitted in July 2023.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (the Committee) is due to examine New Zealand's report in 2024. We will provide regular briefings as this process progresses.

You will have the opportunity to lead the delegation to appear before the Committee at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva. You would present on New Zealand's latest report and answer questions from the Committee.

Delegates from the Ministry and from other government agencies attend the Committee examination to support you.

Non-governmental organisations from New Zealand are expected to be present as they are invited to engage with the Committee and submit shadow reports for the Committee's consideration to support the examination. Non-governmental organisations may meet with the Committee in-person to provide further information.

## **We work to protect and advance the interests of women and girls internationally**

The Ministry plays an important role representing the interests of New Zealand women and girls in international meetings and negotiations where women's rights and interests are discussed.

New Zealand's reputation on gender equality means we have a strong voice to advocate for the advancement of women and girls and the protection of rights.

We work closely with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and international partners to improve women's social and economic outcomes, including providing gender analysis and advice to support trade negotiations and to advance commitments on issues including:

- Sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Comprehensive sexuality education.
- The elimination of gender-based violence.
- Meaningful participation in leadership and decision making.

This is in line with New Zealand's commitments to Goal 5: Gender Equality of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Beijing Declaration and the Convention.

The Ministry contributed to the development of a gender equality chapter in the United Kingdom - New Zealand Free Trade Agreement which entered into force on 31 May 2023.

It is the first New Zealand bilateral Free Trade Agreement to have a standalone chapter on gender. Both countries commit to implement the agreement in a way that advances women's economic empowerment and gender equality. The agreement acknowledges the specific interests of wāhine Māori and aims to support them to benefit more fully from trade opportunities.

The Ministry also assisted with negotiating articles addressing gender equality in the European Union - New Zealand Free Trade Agreement. The Agreement was signed on 9 July 2023.

It is New Zealand's first Free Trade Agreement to contain enforceable outcomes on trade and gender. Both parties are required to ensure women have equitable opportunities to benefit from the Agreement and sets up structures to work with Māori partners.

## **We work to advance the economic participation of women in the Asia Pacific region**

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) promotes free trade across the Asia Pacific region. APEC brings together 21 member economies to tackle challenges and help each other prosper.

The Ministry works with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade to lead New Zealand's participation in the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy.

This is one of APEC's 16 working groups. The overarching goal is to advance the economic participation of women and to coordinate gender activities across the other APEC working groups.

This includes supporting representation at the annual Ministerial-level Women and the Economy Forum where APEC ministers, senior business leaders, and experts take stock of actions underway to progress women's economic empowerment in the region.

## **New Zealand has international reporting obligations**

New Zealand has signed and ratified several international instruments on the status of women and gender equality, some of which we report against.

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (the Convention) is an international convention often referred to as the 'Bill of Rights for women and girls'. It aims to eliminate sex-based discrimination that hinders the recognition, access, enjoyment, and exercise of women's and girls' social, cultural, political, and economic rights.

The Convention consists of a preamble and 30 articles, where it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end discrimination.

New Zealand has ratified the Convention and must report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discriminations Against Women (the Committee) every four years on our progress implementing the Convention.

The Committee is due to examine New Zealand's latest report in 2024. The next report is due July 2027.

### **Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women**

Human rights treaties can be followed by 'Optional Protocols' which may provide for procedures about the treaty or address a substantive area related to the treaty. Optional Protocols to human rights treaties are treaties in their own right, and are open to signature, accession or ratification by countries who are party to the main treaty.

By ratifying the Optional Protocol, a State recognises the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women – the body that monitors States parties' compliance with the Convention – to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction, and to conduct inquiries. It sits alongside the Convention itself as a kind of enforcement mechanism.

New Zealand ratified the Optional Protocol in 2000.

## **United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security**

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, adopted in 2000, was the first of a series of Resolutions that collectively are known as the 'Women Peace and Security Agenda.'

### **Together these resolutions set out four 'pillars' of priority issues:**

1. Prevention of violent conflict.
2. Meaningful participation of women at all levels of peace and security governance.
3. Protection of rights for women and girls in fragile, conflict and post-conflict situations.
4. Ensuring women's engagement and addressing their needs in peacebuilding, relief and recovery.

Security Council Resolutions are considered binding international law. New Zealand's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security explains how New Zealand will implement the United Nations Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace and Security. The First National Action Plan covered the period 2015 - 2019.

The Ministry is working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as well as other government agencies and non-governmental organisations, to update and implement New Zealand's Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan.