



Office of the
MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

SPEECH RELEASE

Speech for delivery to the New Zealand Institute of International Affairs on 28 March 2018

Salutations: [Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Winston Peters, Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen, etc.]

Thank you for the invitation to address your esteemed Institute.

One of the highlights of my experience at the APEC ministerial gathering in Vietnam in late 2017, was my bilateral meeting with the New Zealand Foreign Affairs Minister Winston Peters.

I had a very good relationship with his predecessor, the Honourable Murray McCully, who paid me the honour of accepting my invitation to visit my electorate, Wapenamanda, in the highlands of my country.

So, it was to my delight, that at the APEC meeting, Minister Peters enthusiastically agreed to visit Papua New Guinea as soon as possible.

I note that in his excellent address about New Zealand's "Pacific reset" he referred to the emphasis on frequent ministerial travel to the Pacific, something I strongly support. Nothing cements a relationship more firmly than face-to-face meetings. Believing that, I also quickly accepted his warm invitation to visit New Zealand as soon as possible.

Here I am!

It is a great pleasure to be here. At the many international gatherings I have attended in more than five years as Foreign Minister, I have found that it is the New Zealanders who are among the very first to come up to greet me -- and they bring with them their trademark smiles and genuine friendliness.

And this is how I think of New Zealand-- genuine, friendly and with a can-do attitude. Plus of course, there is the legendary generosity of New Zealanders, demonstrated most recently by their quick and extremely bountiful assistance to us after the recent

devastating earthquake in my country. We are most grateful to the New Zealand Government and people. We will never forget this. And we will also be forever grateful for the major contribution New Zealand is already making -- and will continue to make -- to the APEC summit we are hosting in November.

Ladies and gentlemen, the most important event of our times is the emergence of the global society in which we live.

We see it evidenced in so many aspects of our life.

Just a few examples- --- instant international communications, the ease of world travel, international trade rules, the acceptance that the physical environment has no boundaries

Most importantly we know that scientific research in genetics has proved without doubt that we are all part of the one human family. It is obvious that racism is not only evil and painful, but it is based on ignorance of a fundamental scientific truth.

Accordingly, Papua New Guinea is a strong advocate of a rules-based international order, one founded on justice being accorded to -- and respected by -- all family members. We do not believe that international anarchy or domination by any powerful or authoritarian actor is good for anybody, or the planet as whole. We are not naïve about this. We recognise there are challenges to our global worldview, but we are confident that, despite setbacks, we can achieve and maintain the rules-based order I referred to.

Our process in Papua New Guinea of unifying a multitude of different clans in a country whose people speak more than 800 different languages, is in many respects a mirror of the wider process we see in the global community. We can do it; the world can do it.

Such is our understanding of -- and commitment to -- the idea of a global society, that we have incorporated two themes as key principles driving our foreign policy.

The first is "connectivity". We seek to establish good relationships with as many countries as possible around the world.

The second is a longstanding motto: "Friends to all, enemies of none."

The unifying forces prevailing in the world, are also seen in our region with the recent declaration by the Pacific island countries that we are members of the Blue Pacific, our own region, an ocean continent that stretches like a turquoise necklace across the greatest ocean on the planet.

Instead of land joining together our constituent nations as in Europe, our link is the rich and bountiful sea.

Papua New Guinea is by far the biggest land mass in this ocean continent, and -- with a population of more than eight million -- we have more people than all the other regional countries combined. We are in a key strategic position--next to Indonesia, and on the main shipping and aircraft routes from China and North East Asia to Australia. You could say we are at the front door to Australia. In fact, we can see Australia from parts of our country.

The resources, size and population of Papua New Guinea have impelled us to offer to act in a leadership role.

But do not mistake that role for the traditional type of leadership based on domination, arrogance or a new colonialism. The leadership we are offering is one by which we would extend all the help we can give to develop the potential of the other islands in response to their wishes and requests. Our watchword is cooperation.

It is in this context that I welcome with great enthusiasm, the content of the intelligent and highly relevant speech that Minister Peters delivered in Sydney.

When he said that New Zealand intends to shift the dial and move its Pacific relationship past the donor-recipient interaction into a genuine mature political partnership, I think the whole Pacific rejoiced.

This is exactly the type of relationship we want with the biggest partnership donors to our region, New Zealand and Australia.

Such is the population mix particularly in New Zealand but also in Australia, that it is clear the blue continent has its deepest cultural relations with Australasia, relations with deep roots in history, our economies and our families.

When I look at the mighty All Blacks, for example, I see the genius of the Pasifika heritage in operation.

And when they play a Wallaby team which has such stars as Will Genia of Papua New Guinea, and Israel Folau--with his Tongan heritage, we see how these connections bring joy and admiration, even if the brilliant Will Genia may think the victories are too heavily weighted on one side.

Although traditionally New Zealand has mainly focussed on Polynesia and Fiji, we remember with admiration New Zealand's stirring contributions to, for example, the Solomons and Bougainville.

In a wise response to the new regional realities, Minister Peters is signalling a renewed interest by New Zealand in Melanesia in general, and Papua New Guinea in particular.

Speaking for Papua New Guinea, may I say we welcome this attention with open arms. We recognise it is in our mutual interest.

For New Zealand, I see it is clearly in your interest to have economically developed partners and allies in the Pacific, all with a clear commitment to democracy, transparency and accountability.

The emphasis in Minister Peters' speech on the need for accountability in the Pacific is very timely. As he points out deep pockets—whether corporate, national or multi-national-- can interfere with good leadership and good governance.

It is a struggle that we in Papua New Guinea are facing.

We can work together with New Zealand on this. We recognise your number one ranking in the world as the least corrupt country, an astounding achievement.

And, with the cooperation of New Zealand and Australia we in the Pacific can, --over time -- overcome our current problems and develop our economies to the extent that we reduce the levels of assistance needed. That would be a win-win situation for all of us.

In saying this, I salute Minister Peters for his complimentary remarks about our chief security and development partner, Australia, and saying that the two ANZAC counties need to join together more than ever to face the challenges of regional instability and global uncertainty.

In his speech, he made references to trans-boundary challenges such as crime and border security. We are all in this together, and need to be watchful especially that the pernicious illegal drug industry does not more deeply infiltrate our region.

We must not allow disagreements by some people to detract from efforts to keep our region free from exploitation by people traffickers.

For Papua New Guinea, there are more benefits to a deepening relationship that I can list now, but here are just some examples. Capacity building of our people is of fundamental importance to us. We welcome the training of our diplomatic staff by New Zealand and we look forward to more educational scholarships and exchanges.

Gender equality is an obvious fact of life, but it not widely reflected in practice in our country. Our Government is determined to reverse this. The focus on women and girls is not only important for social justice reasons, but also because it is the key to the future of our country. With full participation of women and girls, standing shoulder to shoulder with men and boys, our country will surge ahead. Without it, our progress will stall.

You in New Zealand are world leaders in gender equality, the first nation where women exercised the right to vote in national elections. Perhaps the experience of New Zealand --including that of the impressive indigenous women and girls of this land--could not only be an example to us but be translated into training programs for our use.

The people in my part of Papua New Guinea, the Highlands, are descended from some of the original agriculturalists of humankind--the history of farming there stretches back an amazing 9000 years.

However, times move on and we welcome Kiwi insight into effective and economic practices in the wide range of agricultural industries for which you have a global reputation for excellence.

Then there is your technical know-how. In my own electorate in the Tsak Valley, we are working with the New Zealand Government and your world experts, to provide a hydro-electricity scheme that will bring power to thousands and thousands.

With electricity, lights can remain on at night, and computers and phones can operate, opening up even the most remote valleys, mountainsides and islands to the global world and its opportunities.

In my country, we can witness the full range of a society in development. Just one example. It was not until the 1930s that the outside world became aware of the big

population in the Highlands region. There are many who continue to live a traditional lifestyle and who are moving into modernity step-by-step.

Yet there also are a range of people from that region who have become some of the most skilled businesspeople in our country, and there are quite a number who are flying the biggest passenger aircraft in the world, the A380s, for airlines in the Middle East.

With capacity building programs—via trade schools, computer-assisted learning, and university education—who might we find in the far reaches of our country?

New Zealand gave birth, in a rather remote corner, to Ernest Rutherford, one of the greatest scientists in the history of humanity. What may we find in our country, what contributors to science, the arts, and medicine? Education and opportunity is the key.

I mentioned the emergence of a global society as the signature of our era.

There are two associated factors in our modern world which are relevant in terms of Minister Peters' recent address.

The first is the increasing awareness of threats to the physical environment, which is in fact one global environment.

Papua New Guinea has abundant natural resources – gold and copper, oil and gas, the biggest rainforests in the world after the Congo and Brazil, seas teeming with fish. Sustainable development is important to us. We have not always been successful.

We welcome Minister Peters' reference to the fight against climate change. This problem is seriously affecting the Pacific island states, countries that played no role in creating the problem. Let us work together on resilience measures.

New Zealand also has vast experience in the sustainable management of its native forest. We welcome advice.

Papua New Guinea is the guardian of one third of the world's supplies of tuna, the fish that feeds the world. Despite our efforts, we are still the targets of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. We need help in finding and apprehending the rapacious criminals who are threaten the sustainability of this fish stock.

There is a frightening prediction that the huge amount of plastic in the oceans could treble in a decade. None of it is the fault of the Blue Pacific but we have to try to cope with this pollution. A world effort is needed to remove the plastic.

The third great theme of our age is the rise of China.

We welcome the emergence out of poverty of this great nation. The immense hard work and intelligence required to accomplish this feat deserves the admiration, respect and best wishes of us all.

We welcome last week's firm statement by Chinese President Xi Jinping that China will never seek hegemony or engage in expansion. Respect for the rights of other

nations and regions in a rules-based international order are vital for the peace and security of all.

We encourage China to play an appropriate role in ensuring peace and stability in our region, along with our allies Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America.

We also admire China's attempts to combat corruption, which is vital domestically and internationally.

At our independence in 1975 we firmly proclaimed our adherence to the One China policy and we will always continue to do so. We are trading more and more with all parts of China, including Taiwan.

We have been most pleased to see China's interest in assisting Papua New Guinea to develop our infrastructure, including buildings, roads and the like.

We continually work to improve the selection of suitable projects, quality control and accountability. We try to be as careful as possible with all prospective development partners, including China, to ensure we are not disadvantaged, that we only agree to financial arrangements that will benefit our country in the long term.

At the recent Waitangi Day celebrations in Port Moresby, I suggested that the words of your national anthem should be extended as a guide to us all in the Pacific and indeed the world.

The entreaties in that anthem are aimed at guarding us from "strife and war". It refers to meeting in the "bonds of love".

May I now refer to another famous New Zealand song, "Maori Battalion".

The words of that song refer to two great characteristics that I have identified in the New Zealand nation—"staunch and true". These virtues seem to apply to all sides of the political divide when it comes to commitments to friends.

I experienced this dealing with Murray McCully, and I see these attributes underlying the wonderful address this month by my counterpart, Minister Winston Peters. I commend his speech to the attention of all.

Finally, may I extend an invitation to all of you all to visit my country, to roam far and wide, and see the amazing flora and fauna, including our famous birds of paradise.

Come and witness our flamboyant cultures, costumes and dances, hear our drums and flutes, see our carvings.

Come and receive the precious gift that lies at the traditional heart of our many cultures—the warm hospitality of our people.

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