



New Zealand and the European Union

Priorities for future
cooperation

New Zealand and the European Union: priorities for future cooperation

In 1999 a Joint Declaration on Relations between the European Union and New Zealand was agreed. Since it was signed, New Zealand and the European Union have maintained a strong programme of consultation and cooperation across a range of areas. In recent years Presidency Consultations at Ministerial level, High-Level Consultations and Agricultural Trade Talks have provided regular opportunities to exchange views, address concerns and explore scope for enhanced cooperation. We have consolidated the relationship with the Veterinary Agreement and found new areas in which to cooperate. However until recently other areas of the relationship, such as science cooperation, have not progressed as we had earlier intended.

The Joint Declaration set out some common goals and outlined priority areas for cooperation. Five years on, it is appropriate to review the relationship and refine priorities in the light of experience and changing international circumstances.

The review was decided on in the context of a period of intensified high-level exchanges between New Zealand and the European Union. Visits to New Zealand by Commissioners Nielson, Lamy and Patten preceded that of Prime Minister Helen Clark to Brussels in April 2003. Since then, the New Zealand Ministers of Research, Science and Technology, and of Education have had discussions in Brussels aimed at exploring options for enhancing cooperation in specific areas and Commissioner Nielson visited New Zealand in February 2004.

It comes on the eve of an historic enlargement of the European Union, at a time of change in Europe. Whatever the final outcome of the process of constitutional change currently underway, a European Union of 25 members will remain committed to dialogue and engagement with partners such as New Zealand with which it shares a wide range of interests. The European Commission's decision to open a Delegation office in Wellington early in 2004 is evidence of that commitment which is much appreciated by New Zealand.

As reaffirmed in the 1999 Joint Declaration, New Zealand and the European Union share a commitment to democratic values, the protection of human rights and free market principles – indeed, the importance both sides attach to the protection of human rights has recently led to agreement on a regular dialogue on human rights issues. The current exercise is aimed at developing further specific, concrete proposals for cooperation based on the shared interests outlined in the Joint Declaration. At the same time, consolidation of the relationship between New Zealand and the European Union in the form of a Framework Agreement is a possibility for the future which will be kept under review.

Global and regional security

In today's increasingly volatile and complex international environment both sides attach value to the more frequent contact which has taken place between the New Zealand Prime Minister and the President of the Commission in recent years, as well as to the dialogue between the European Union and New Zealand under the twice-yearly High Level Political Consultations involving the New Zealand Foreign Minister, the EU Presidency, the Commissioner for External Relations and the Council's High Representative. The two sides envisage that regular, high-level exchanges will continue. These exchanges will be reinforced by the discussions which take place between the European Union and New Zealand in the context of international meetings and negotiations.

We expect that contact between the New Zealand Prime Minister and the President of the European Commission will continue on a regular basis.

We will maintain twice-yearly High Level Political Consultations in Troika format.

We expect that high levels of political and senior official dialogue will be maintained in the event of institutional changes within the European Union.

We will seek to enhance the opportunities for high-level dialogue through bilateral Ministerial and Commissioner visits, new forms of dialogue and in the context of international meetings and negotiations.

The Asia-Pacific region, the stability and prosperity of which is a priority for both sides, is the focus of political and security cooperation between New Zealand and the European Union. We will continue to consult closely on the broad range of issues affecting the peace, stability and prosperity of the wider region with a particular interest in developments in East Asia and the Pacific. We recognise the unique challenges facing the small island states in the Pacific, and the need for engagement with them to realise stability and economic development in the region. In particular, developments in the political, economic and security situation in the South Pacific in recent years have highlighted the need for a more intensive dialogue, stretching beyond New Zealand's year as chair of the Pacific Forum. We see value in exploring options for collaboration in the areas in particular of preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention and post-conflict political and social restoration. There may well be experience in other parts of the world on the part of EU members that could be of benefit in formulating approaches or solutions to some of the political and security problems now occurring in the Pacific region.

We will make full use of the twice-yearly High Level Political Consultations of the annual European Commission/New Zealand High Level Consultations and other opportunities, such as the post-Forum dialogue, to exchange views and information on global issues, the Asia-Pacific region and EU/European/Wider

Europe issues. We will supplement this with a regular information exchange through the New Zealand Mission to the EU and the European Commission Delegation.

Development Cooperation

In promoting economic development in the Pacific and elsewhere, both the European Union and New Zealand recognise the importance of cooperation and harmonisation between aid donors. The New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) and the European Commission are collaborating in the key sector of education through the Pacific Regional Initiatives in Basic Education (PRIDE) managed by the University of the South Pacific, but covering all 14 Pacific Forum island states, and individual projects in countries such as the Solomon Islands.

Periodic consultations in Wellington and Brussels as well as in the field, will be held on a flexible and sustainable basis to exchange information and views on development issues, particularly in relation to the Pacific Islands, and to identify further areas for both policy and practical collaboration. One such area is that of trade facilitation, where both New Zealand and the EU support Pacific Islands programmes aimed at building capacity and promoting economic growth.

Trade

We shall continue to work closely together in the WTO to strengthen further the multilateral trading system and to achieve the ambitious outcomes agreed in the Doha Development Agenda (DDA). Our priorities and our positions may differ in some areas, but we are both committed to taking a constructive approach aiming for progress in 2004. Welcoming recent EU agricultural reforms, we agree that progress in this area is crucial to the DDA negotiation. We shall actively cooperate to achieve a positive outcome in the negotiation by seeking improvements on the market access side of the agenda and by developing further trade rules in the WTO framework. We also agree to work actively together to help the Doha mandate deliver its development benefits.

We are committed to maintaining the integrity of our trading relationship, consistent with multilateral principles, and to resolving bilateral concerns constructively. In this context, the annual Agricultural Trade Talks are an important vehicle for ensuring views on key bilateral and global issues relating to agricultural trade are exchanged at a senior level.

We have in place agreements dealing with two key aspects of our trading relationship – sanitary measures and mutual recognition – and will continue to deepen cooperation in these areas and to explore opportunities for other agreements where these can usefully supplement existing dialogue.

We welcome the recent entry into force of the Agreement on Sanitary Measures Applicable to the Trade in Live Animals and Animal Products (the "Veterinary

Agreement”) and agree that we should work to maximise its potential benefits to facilitate reciprocal trade. Similarly, we need to work together to ensure that the Agreement on Mutual Recognition in Relation to Conformity Assessment between New Zealand and the European Community (the “Mutual Recognition Agreement” – MRA) delivers improved certainty to exporters of products covered by the agreement. This will require the respective governments to identify ways in which the MRA processes for taking and communicating decisions can be streamlined and made less formal.

New Zealand and the Commission will continue to look for areas of economic policy in which, due to our mutual interests and priorities, both would benefit from exchanging views and identifying areas of practical cooperation.

New Zealand and the Commission will exchange views, during the course of 2005, on developments in regulatory and competition policy approaches as part of building our trade and economic linkages.

We will keep under review the possibility of negotiating a broader framework for trade and economic relations in the future.

Environment

Recent discussions between New Zealand and Commission officials on environmental issues have led to an enhanced appreciation of shared objectives. The value of reinforced cooperation has been recognised, in particular on the new issues of sustainable energy (including for climate change reasons) and the sound management of chemicals. We will now examine closely how cooperation can best be improved, with particular attention to possible joint projects in these two new areas.

An expert-level meeting will be held in the course of 2004 to develop more detailed proposals for cooperation on issues relating to chemicals.

Close contact and cooperation will be maintained on climate change issues, including the post 2012 framework and in the area of renewable energy.

Fisheries

The sustainable management of fisheries on a global basis is an issue of concern to both New Zealand and the European Union, given increased illegal, unreported and unrecorded fishing.

A regular dialogue on fisheries-related issues will resume in 2004. Further dialogue meetings will be held on a flexible basis, with the aim of consulting closely every 18-24 months at venues and dates convenient to both sides.

Transport

Air services provide a vital link between New Zealand and Europe, and New Zealand attaches importance to achieving more liberal air services arrangements with the European Union. There are currently 12 bilateral air services agreements in place between New Zealand and member states of the European Union. Findings of the European Court of Justice have paved the way for an EU-wide approach to be taken to air services. Officials are exploring the scope for a regional agreement on air services between the Commission on one side and New Zealand, Australia and Singapore on the other, we expect that negotiations will get under way between the parties during 2004.

Science, Technology and Innovation

The visit to Brussels by the Minister of Research, Science and Technology and a delegation of researchers in June 2003 has given impetus to increased cooperation between New Zealand and the European Union in the fields of science, technology and innovation, consistent with the 1991 NZ/EU Arrangement for Scientific Cooperation.

A Science Counsellor will be appointed to the New Zealand Mission in Brussels for a three year term from April 2004 to work with the Commission and Member States to promote science, research and innovation links between New Zealand and Europe, particularly in the context of Framework Programme 6.

The New Zealand Ministry of Research Science and Technology (MORST) and the Royal Society of New Zealand will establish a clearinghouse facility and information network in New Zealand to support the Science Counsellor and to ensure that information about opportunities in Europe for science collaboration with New Zealand are fully publicised and disseminated to interested parties.

The Commission will work with New Zealand science agencies to ensure optimal New Zealand participation in EU science related activities including with a view to developing further mechanisms to facilitate cooperation between New Zealand and the EU.

The Commission will assist New Zealand to promote FP6-related opportunities for New Zealand researchers, including as evaluators and under the Marie Curie actions.

As part of its remit, the new EC Delegation in Wellington will seek over the next few years, inter alia, to identify ways to promote more business to business contacts with a view to stimulating closer business community links and a more intensive exchange of ideas on innovation, technology and investment.

Education

Extensive linkages already exist between New Zealand and European educational institutions. Following discussions in Brussels between the Commission and the New Zealand Minister of Education in October 2003 the two sides agree that education cooperation should be enhanced through promoting student mobility and exchanges. This will include the implementation of a pilot project on higher education cooperation in parallel with preparation for New Zealand's participation in Erasmus World. Both sides also agreed to initiate a process of regular policy dialogue and to consider the possibility of concluding an agreement on education cooperation in due course.

New Zealand and the Commission will together progress the education pilot project during the first half of 2004, jointly funded to a total of NZ\$1.2 million (Euros 600,000) over three years, with a view to commencing implementation by October 2004.

Staff and student exchanges under the auspices of the New Zealand National Centre for Research on Europe are an important part of the academic connections between New Zealand and Europe. Both sides recognise the contribution made by the Centre, with the support of the Commission, to promoting interest and expertise in the European Union within New Zealand.

Parliamentary Relations

Regular exchanges between the European Parliament and the New Zealand Parliament are an important dimension of the overall relationship between New Zealand and European institutions and contribute to a broader understanding of the relationship on both sides.

The two Parliaments will maintain their current programme of regular reciprocal visits by Parliamentarians.

The New Zealand Mission to the EU in Brussels and the EC Delegation in Wellington will maintain close relations with the respective Parliaments to provide information on developments in the relationship and identify opportunities to increase contact and mutual understanding.

With the assistance of the Australia and New Zealand Delegation in the European Parliament, New Zealand will continue to place two graduate student interns, selected and funded by the NCRE, on short term internships with MEPs every year. The Commission will give consideration to enhancing the ability of the NCRE to fund additional or longer internships within the European Parliament.

People-to-people links

The incorporation of the Schengen Agreement into EC law has the potential to cut across the visa-free arrangements New Zealand has with all current EU members, which permit New Zealanders to spend up to three months visa-free in each member state. The European Union recognises the difficulties this could pose for travelling New Zealanders, and is working with New Zealand to reach a solution, based on reciprocity, which would allow New Zealand tourists to stay in the Schengen area for longer than three months without a visa.

New Zealand and the Commission will consult regularly on progress towards reaching a solution regarding the rights of New Zealand visitors to visa-free access to the Schengen area, with a view to finding a satisfactory outcome as soon as possible.

Of importance in terms of mutual understanding are the reciprocal arrangements New Zealand has with many European Union countries which enable young people to visit for up to a year and take up work and study options while doing so – the so-called Working Holiday Schemes. The two sides recognise that the visits which take place under these schemes represent a significant investment for the future. New Zealand now has such arrangements with 9 countries in Europe, is negotiating with a further 8 and looks to conclude schemes eventually with the majority of members of the enlarged European Union.

The placement of New Zealand officials as interns in the Commission contributes to a better understanding of the functioning of the European Community within New Zealand government agencies.

The Commission will cooperate with New Zealand to enable the placement of New Zealand officials on short term internships with the Commission on an occasional basis, funded by New Zealand, subject to the identification of a suitable position.

New Zealand confirms that it would accept Commission officials on a similar basis.

Review

New Zealand and the Commission will regularly monitor progress in implementing the actions agreed in this review. In three years we will again conduct a comprehensive review of practical steps to develop greater co-operation and maintain close consultation between New Zealand and the European Union.