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Dear Friend of New Zealand

I would like to report to you on the visit last month by the New Zealand Prime Minister to Japan. Given your involvement with New Zealand and your interest in New Zealand/Japan relations, I hope this report will be of interest to you and your colleagues.

The Prime Minister of New Zealand, the Rt Hon Bill English, visited Japan 16-18 May. It was his first visit to an Asian country since becoming New Zealand Prime Minister in December 2016. Prime Minister English was accompanied by his wife, Dr Mary English, by the New Zealand Minister of Trade, Hon Todd McClay, and by a delegation of senior New Zealand business people.

The Prime Minister's visit was brief, but he was able to do a great deal while he was in Japan.

On 17 May Prime Minister English met with Prime Minister Abe. They had a summit meeting and a joint media conference and then Prime Minister Abe hosted a dinner for Prime Minister English and his delegation at the Prime Minister's Official Residence. The two Prime Ministers issued a joint statement. I have attached a copy of that statement to this letter. As the statement describes, they talked about a number of regional issues. They also expressed their determination to implement the Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement. And they discussed many of the elements that make up our rich and successful bilateral relationship.

Prime Minister English also met with a group of senior Diet members from the New Zealand Friendship League in the Japanese Parliament. He met with Governor Koike and discussed plans for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. He met with the President of the Rugby World Cup Organising Committee and witnessed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two leading sports agencies, Sport New Zealand and Japan's Sports Agency. He announced that the All Blacks will play a match against Japan in Japan in 2018.

Prime Minister English addressed a lunchtime business audience at a function co-hosted by the New Zealand Embassy and the Australia New Zealand Chamber of Commerce in Japan. He met separately with some Japanese companies that are planning new investments and projects in New Zealand. He joined a round-table discussion on renewable energy, a new area of cooperation developing between New Zealand and Japan.

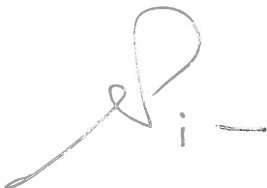
On his second day in Japan, Prime Minister English travelled to Hokkaido, to gain a further understanding of the relationship from a viewpoint other than Tokyo. In Sapporo he met with Governor Takahashi and discussed the wide range of cooperation between New Zealand and Hokkaido. He also witnessed the signing by Governor Takahashi and myself of a Memorandum of Understanding between the New Zealand Embassy and the Hokkaido Prefectural Government. He met with a large group of people representing all the different parts of Hokkaido's economy and society with which New Zealand has developed strong links.

Prime Minister English then visited the Ecorin Village and sheep farm in Eniwa. He saw Hokkaido agriculture at first hand, and was briefed on recent developments in agriculture cooperation between New Zealand and Japan, including in the dairy, sheep meat and kiwifruit sectors.

It was an honour for me and for my New Zealand Embassy colleagues to host Prime Minister and Dr English in Japan. It was a short but very effective visit. We are very grateful to Prime Minister Abe for the time he personally devoted to the visit. We are also very grateful for the many colleagues and friends of New Zealand in Japan who helped to make the visit a success.

If you have any questions about the visit or about other aspects of New Zealand's work with Japan, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached on the following email address: stephen.payton@mfat.govt.nz. Please also follow the work of the New Zealand Embassy on Facebook at: <https://ja-jp.facebook.com/nzembassyjapan/>.

With warm regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Payton', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Stephen Payton
New Zealand Ambassador to Japan