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BUSINESS FORUM WELCOMES ASIA WHITE PAPER

The New Zealand International Business Forum today welcomed the release of the Government's White Paper "Our Future with Asia" and committed itself to play its part in developing stronger Asian linkages.

The International Business Forum is a collaboration of senior New Zealand business leaders working to expand New Zealand's international business opportunities. The Forum's membership includes New Zealand's leading exporters to Asia including in the dairy, meat, seafood, horticulture, technology, services and manufacturing industries.

Executive Director Stephen Jacobi said: "It's nothing new that New Zealand has a direct stake in the ongoing stability and prosperity of the Asian region. But what this report quite rightly calls for is a more integrated approach between government, business and civil society to developing increasing engagement in the region. The pace of change in the region and the increasing competition, particularly from Australia, Chile and the EU, means we need to develop a greater sense of urgency about key Asian relationships".

Mr Jacobi supported the Government's view that there can be no single approach to dealing with the region.

"We need a more sophisticated and differentiated strategy for Asia. The Forum is prepared to meet this challenge by working with the Government and others to identify the key priorities."

Mr Jacobi said the International Business Forum's top priority was Japan. Planning was already advanced for a high level relationship building event to be held in Japan in early 2008.

"Japan is an old friend which should not be neglected as we look for new partnerships in the region. Japan's economy is already the world's second largest economy. New Zealand needs to revitalise its relationship with Japan. As has been done with Australia and the United States, our Tokyo event will bring together government, business and civil society leaders from both countries to move this key relationship forward."

Mr Jacobi said the Forum also saw the relationship with Korea as strategically significant for New Zealand's future and it supported existing business strategies with China and ASEAN.

"The free trade negotiations with China and ASEAN, and the prospect of a future negotiation with Korea, mean that New Zealand business needs to be prepared both for

increased competition but also to address new opportunities in those markets. Ultimately our aim should be for New Zealand to be a founding member of a new economic community in the wider Asian region, as has been mooted by Japan and others”, concluded Mr Jacobi.

For further information:

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About the NZ International Business Forum

The Forum is a business organisation which aims to generate wealth for New Zealanders by helping ensure that New Zealand enterprises are fully integrated and engaged in the global economy and New Zealand’s global competitive position is maximised. To enable New Zealand business to exploit new opportunities in international markets, the Forum provides leadership, works with companies and other business organisations to implement key projects and articulates New Zealand’s international business priorities to both the New Zealand Government and stakeholders. NZIBF brings together business leaders from some of New Zealand’s largest internationally oriented companies together with the country’s principal business organisations. Collectively, these business leaders from the dairy, meat, seafood, kiwifruit, software and services industries represent companies and sectors with a combined turnover in excess of \$20 billion. The business organisations represent New Zealand’s export, manufacturing and services sectors. Launched in June 2007, NZIBF is the first time that business leaders of this calibre have come together with the sole focus of expanding New Zealand’s international business.