

NZ US Council/US NZ Council

Media Release

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Partnership Forum Adds to Momentum for stronger NZ US relationship

The second United States New Zealand Partnership Forum concluded last night with delegates acknowledging that it had meaningfully strengthened relationships between the two countries and agreeing that a further Forum would be held in Washington DC in early 2009.

US NZ Council President John Mullen said the 2007 Forum had a major impact on those attending.

“The Forum saw the most influential delegation of American leaders ever to come to New Zealand. The net result will be of huge benefit to the bilateral relationship which is already the strongest it has been in a long time,” Mr Mullen said.

“New Zealand presented itself as smart, innovative and outward looking. The US delegation is genuinely excited about future prospects. There is a warmth and level of comfort in the relationship that is very encouraging. We look forward to the third Forum in Washington and to building on the momentum that has been created by the Auckland event.”

NZ US Council Executive Director Stephen Jacobi echoed that sentiment saying:

“We are two countries with common values and aspirations. We differ on some issues, but the Partnership Forum showed that we can acknowledge differences and work around them.”

Mr Jacobi said one particularly positive development was the call by some US delegates that the next Forum should also include discussion of the security situation in Asia and the Pacific, without this leading to a re-examination of the nuclear issues on which both countries retained positions of principle.

“This is welcome recognition that the elephant has finally left the room, even if we can see where its footprints have been”.

Mr Jacobi said that securing a free trade agreement remained a key objective for New Zealand but that political realities in the US meant there was a need for patience.

He said the Forum showed that even without an FTA there were areas of trade policy that could be worked on now between the two countries as well business opportunities to be pursued.

“Finding a way to build a bridge between CER (Australia and New Zealand) and NAFTA (North America Free Trade Agreement) and New Zealand’s “P4” free trade partners - Chile, Singapore and Brunei - was one suggestion aired at the Forum, as was the need for even closer co-operation to conclude the faltering WTO negotiations”.

“At the enterprise level, the Forum examined several examples of business partnerships driven by innovation in sectors like biotech, dairy products, creative industries and information technology. We also looked at how business in both countries is responding to the challenge of sustainability and found that common

approaches are being pursued. A session on renewable energy uncovered another area in which there is much common ground and scope for co-operation”.

John Mullen agreed that the two countries had very similar views on many trade and commercial topics.

“While New Zealand is not a major market for the US, the Forum demonstrated that size is not an impediment to business development. Innovation and creativity are more important. Moreover, many American delegates emphasised that the future of the US lies in Asia and New Zealand is an important and dynamic player in the region. A future FTA with New Zealand would also mean we can put in place arrangements and model behaviours that we would like to see adopted in other agreements both in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.”

John Mullen said that an important take-home of the Forum was that the next 18 months leading up to a change in Administration in the United States and the 2009 Forum was a vital period for consolidating the relationship.

“The connection between people that something like the Forum fosters is pivotal to that,” Mr Mullen said.

“That happened here in Auckland. There was energy in the room and the corridors. Not only will participants at this Forum stay connected but arrangements such as the one, signed at the Forum, allowing New Zealand students to work in the United States for a longer period of time will also be very helpful. We need to build connections with a new and younger generation of leaders and this will be a focus for both our Councils in the period leading up to the Washington Forum in 2009”, concluded Mr Mullen.

For further information

Stephen Jacobi, NZ US Council, cell + 64 294 725 502

Daniel Herd, Consultus, cell 027 694 3574

About the US-NZ Council – www.usnzcouncil.org

The US-NZ Council is a private non-profit organization founded in 1986 and headquartered in Washington DC. Its mission is to foster and strengthen United States-New Zealand relations through enhanced communications, encouraging the expansion of trade and commercial ties, and facilitating cultural exchanges between the two countries. The Council works closely with the US business community with interests in New Zealand, and maintains close contacts with officials of both governments and New Zealand’s Washington Embassy. The Council organized the first ever US NZ Partnership Forum held in Washington DC 20-22 April 2006.

About the NZUS Council – www.nzuscouncil.com

The NZ US Council is a non partisan body funded by both business and the Government to promote New Zealand’s broader relationship with the US. Two way trade with the US is valued at over \$8 billion and the US is a leading source of investment, innovation and business ideas. The New Zealand Government with the support of the Council continues to make New Zealand’s case for an FTA with the United States.

About the US NZ Partnership Forum -

http://www.nzuscouncil.com/index.php/section/2007_partnership_forum

The 2007 US NZ Partnership Forum was held in Auckland 9-11 September 2007. Full details including names of those attending are available on the website along with addresses to the Forum which have been made public. The Forum took place under Chatham House rules. The Forum was addressed by the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Rt Hon Helen Clark, by the US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Ambassador Christopher Hill and the New Zealand Ministers of Trade and Foreign Affairs, Hon Phil Goff and Hon Winston Peters. The Ambassadors of the United States and New Zealand, HE Bill McCormick and HE Roy Ferguson also addressed the Forum. The Forum’s discussions were co chaired for the United States by Ambassador Clayton Yeutter and Governor Tom Vilsack and for New Zealand by Rt Hon James Bolger and Rt Hon Mike Moore. The agreement to extend the time

period for working holiday visas for New Zealand tertiary students visiting the United States was signed at the Forum on 10 September.