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## **Press Release**

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### **United States - New Zealand Council Welcomes USTR P4 announcement**

**Washington DC** - The United States – New Zealand Council today applauded the announcement that in March the United States would join negotiations on financial services and investment with the Trans Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership or “P4” group which includes New Zealand, Singapore, Chile and Brunei.

Council President John Mullen called the announcement a “positive development” and “a logical first step for the United States as it carries out the ‘detailed exploratory process to determine whether it should participate in the full Trans Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership’ mentioned in the USTR press release.

Mr. Mullen noted as especially encouraging that US Trade Representative Susan Schwab emphasized the ‘negotiations as an opportunity to further our engagement with countries committed to high-standard trade agreements,’ and that ‘This initiative also will provide another opportunity for the United States to participate in the regional trade architecture that is emerging in the vitally important Asia-Pacific region.’ New Zealand long has been committed to free trade in the Asia-Pacific and has a record of achieving high quality, comprehensive trade agreements.

The Council and its corporate members have strongly favored the initiation of free trade negotiations between the United States and New Zealand. The United States is New Zealand’s second largest trading partner after Australia. The over \$6 billion two-way merchandise trade between the two countries is almost evenly balanced. New Zealand exports mainly primary products to the US and in return buys industrial and manufactured products such as aircraft, medical equipment, vehicles, and computers. There also is significant trade in services and two-way investment. New Zealand has played a major positive role in the WTO Doha Round. It is ranked at or near the top globally among business friendly nations and in economic freedom. Its environmental and labor standards are among the highest in the world.

Over the past two years, the Council has focused on broadly furthering the relationship between the two countries. Its two Partnership Forum events, in Washington in April 2006 and in Auckland in September 2007, are seen as playing a major role in increasing understanding and communication, and more broadly in the strengthening relationship, manifested over the past two years in closer cooperation in a range of security, political, and economic areas. - End