

# Peters - Closing of the US-NZ Partnership Forum

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**Speech: New Zealand Government**

Rt Hon Winston Peters  
Minister of Foreign Affairs

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Speech Notes

Closing of the US-NZ Partnership Forum

Lumley Centre  
Level 20, 88 Shortland Street  
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Forum Chairs – Ambassador Yeutter [Yiter], Governor Vilsack, Rt Hon Jim Bolger and Rt Hon Mike Moore – Ministers and Parliamentary colleagues – Ambassador William McCormick, Under Secretary Rey, Director Wilder – distinguished guests – ladies and gentlemen; this is the conclusion of the second New Zealand – United States Partnership Forum here in Auckland.

There are two aspects of the relationship between New Zealand and the United States that we should never underestimate. One is the longstanding friendship between our two peoples dating back to pre-colonial times and certainly confirmed during the friendly invasion of World War Two. The other is that we share common values, a common heritage, and very many common interests.

This morning's service is a case in point – in stark contrast to the 9/11 conspiratory theorists. One supposes that they would have interpreted Ambassador Yeutter's reflections that the Oppenheimer Funds Management evacuation practice 3 weeks before 9/11 as one more link in the evidential chain implicating a cabal within the administration. It is the worst kind of research, where the theorists sets out the dots and invites the reader to connect the lines. There is no connection of course but in their frenetic suspicion of everyone in Government, decent, courageous, loyal personalities are collectively maligned and we should co operate to resist that whenever and wherever it emerges.

Given our common outlook on most issues, it's not surprising that with pressing global challenges – such as climate change, the war on terrorism, countering nuclear

proliferation, or major peace-keeping operations – there is also close New Zealand – United States cooperation. That is hard to over estimate.

Our Government is therefore delighted with the progress that the two countries have made since last year's Partnership Forum and the Prime Minister's visit to Washington DC earlier this year. The relationship is in excellent shape. Indeed, His Excellency Ambassador William McCormick has described it as the best as it has been in decades. And we agree.

However, the relationship still needs careful nurturing and leadership from both sides. Any relationship is strong when we are doing worthwhile things together. We cannot take it for granted.

Earlier this year at an address to the Orewa Rotary Club I noted that commentators in this country are sometimes quick to focus on American vulnerabilities, lashing out hardest when the United States is confronting difficulties, rather than being more understanding, as friends should be at such times.

Reflexive and ill-considered anti-Americanism is simply tall poppy cutting at its worst. But there are some who seem to believe that any support for US policy – even when patently in line with our own policy and interests – is to compromise an independent foreign policy. That is a simplistic and hollow view.

The truth is that there are few countries closer to New Zealand across a broad range of policy positions than the United States – as expected when there are shared values and commitment to democratic principles.

It's worth restating this message here today because of the United States' special role in global affairs – because of the burden it must carry – and the criticism that it inevitably draws from certain quarters.

New Zealanders need to keep their broad relationship with the United States in perspective – a perspective that tells us that we have few closer friends or partners in the world.

Likewise, given the large asymmetries at play in the relationship, there is always work to be done in the United States in making sure that New Zealand, there, is considered as the sum of all of its parts and not for any singular issue.

In facing up to differences on policy and managing these sensibly, we need to work to ensure that the inevitable divergences that arise do not overshadow the good work that our two governments do together.

In this respect, progress over the last twelve months has been especially helpful – because both Governments have agreed to focus on a forward-looking positive relationship and not to let the few historical differences dominate the relationship and overshadow all

other areas where we share very similar perspectives. The New Zealand Government is hopeful that this pattern will continue.

This Forum has in itself been very helpful in identifying new areas for partnership and finding ways to strengthen existing relationships.

One way is the facilitation of people to people links and the new work and travel arrangements announced at the start of this forum is significant.

These kinds of exchanges lead to life-long friendships – and in reality, a relationship between two countries is only as strong as the tangible friendships and partnerships that actually link those countries together.

Another step is the real progress in recent years in the field of education – both in the expansion of the Fulbright programmes and in the popularity of New Zealand as a destination for US students.

We're pleased that there is an upward trajectory in the number of tertiary students coming from the United States.

New Zealand places special value on the Fulbright programme. New Zealand Fulbright alumni have gone on to productive careers in both countries. Examples include Nobel Prize winning scientist Alan MacDiarmid and former Prime Minister and Ambassador to the United States Sir Wallace Rowling. Our current New Zealand Ambassador in Washington, Roy Ferguson, is a Fulbright Alumni.

Next year Fulbright New Zealand turns 60 – and we look forward to joining with the United States in celebrating this milestone.

Our hope is that you delegates will consider new strategies to enhance people to people links. Commerce between the two countries is highly relevant. The United States is firmly positioned as New Zealand's second largest individual trading partner, evidence of the centrality of business in the relationship and the great potential for our Governments to further leverage off existing and emerging commercial relationships.

One day we will have a Free Trade Agreement – the other half of the one we've had for two decades. It will augment the relationship and other opportunities that the two Governments might explore.

New Zealand and the United States have an excellent friendship, heightened now, but the beneficiary of many decades of co operation. There are less than ten democracies with an unbroken record of term elections for the last one and a half centuries. The United States and New Zealand are two of them. We should be proud of that.

Indeed, the two countries both cherish their freedom and democracy, and have a long and proud history of working together to help others who aspire to embrace democracy, the rule of law, and good governance.

Those three elements are not for compromise. In the long road to freedom they form the critical trinity for expanding the economic and social uplifting of humanity. Surely that is the most serious purpose of good Government.

We want to do more to strengthen our relationship because we see in the United States a kindred society.

We bid a warm farewell to the United States delegation to the 2007 United States – New Zealand Partnership Forum. Thank you for the investment in time that you have made to travel here and congratulations to all delegates for your attendance at this increasingly important event.

ENDS



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