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**PRESS RELEASE**

**NZ-UK Free Trade Agreement: “a missed opportunity”**

Today’s announcement of the free trade agreement with the United Kingdom was described by Pita Tipene as “a missed opportunity to set a new bar for honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi”.

“Māori should have been celebrating this trade deal as a high point that sets a new bar for a 180-year relationship with the Crown, a model for how Māori rights and responsibilities are protected in these agreements,” said Mr Tipene. “That hasn’t happened and it’s a missed opportunity. If not with this FTA, when?

Ngā Toki Whakarururanga is an entity being established following the lengthy Waitangi Tribunal inquiry on the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA). The co-Convenors are Pita Tipene and Moana Maniapoto.

“Since the Tribunal hearing, we’ve been working with trade officials to build a better Tiriti-based relationship where they understand their Tiriti obligations and where we have a real voice at the negotiating table,” says Ms Maniapoto

“We give them credit for trying but much of what we see in this FTA is just symbolic. There’s a Māori Trade chapter with no teeth where the UK even says it’s not committing to actually do anything.”

Ngā Toki are concerned a raft of other chapters threatens fundamental Māori rights and values, especially those on intellectual property, digital trade and foreign investment. The Waitangi Tribunal’s report last year on the TPPA/CPTPP said the need to protect matauranga Māori from digital trade rules was so fundamental it shouldn’t be traded off against any other interests, that the Crown had breached its Tiriti obligations.

“It’s done the same thing again here,” says Ms Maniapoto. “As for Māori making economic gains from the FTA, the only figure we’ve seen, from research for the Taumata, is a $13 million increase in GDP for a Māori asset base of $68 billion. In today’s terms that is about ten Auckland houses.”

“These are intergenerational responsibilities we carry,” adds Mr Tipene. “We are determined to hold the Crown to account over Tiriti obligations in the next deal with the European Union and beyond. Māori need an independent seat at the negotiating table so we can speak for ourselves and protect our rights and interests.”

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