

**SPEECH AT THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS FAREWELL RECEPTION FOR THE GOVERNOR  
GENERAL AND SIR DAVID ON 23 SEPTEMBER, 2021**

Your Excellency, Dame Patsy Reddy, Tena Koe!

Mr Rod Harris, Chief of Protocol, and your Colleagues from the Protocol Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade.

Ladies & Gentlemen; Talofa Lava & Tena Koutou Katoa!

On behalf of our Diplomatic Corps Family, their Excellencies the Ambassadors & High Commissioners, and our Spouses (also known as our Bosses!) I would like to say 'Thank You' to Your Excellency (Dame Patsy Reddy) for accepting our invitation to join us this evening. It is most unfortunate that Sir David is unable to be with us – we wish His Excellency a speedy recovery and good health!

This is a Special Occasion, as it is the first (and unfortunately the last) opportunity for our Diplomatic Corps family to host your Excellency. For many of us, we have been privileged to be hosted by your Excellency and Sir David on many occasions in the past.

We have been honoured to celebrate and share with you both many happy memories. We have also been touched and comforted by your presence and kind words at a number of sad occasions, such as the Christchurch shooting in 2019.

It is fair to say that we have found your generous and friendly hospitality to be very inspiring and heart-warming – for which we thank you. Your ready accessibility to the Members of our Dip Corps Family is something that we will always remember and cherish.

When we first arrive in Aotearoa, you warmly welcome us and our families when we present our Credentials to your Excellencies. At the Waitangi Day celebrations, Your Excellency and Sir David not only host a Special Reception for our Diplomatic Corps in Waitangi but you also invite us to your National Day Receptions at Government House here in Wellington.

Before COVID-19, you had often invited us to join Your Excellencies in welcoming Heads of State when they visit New Zealand. And, during these Receptions you have always made the effort to meet and greet each and every one of us. When our terms in New Zealand come to an end, you are always available to see us and say farewell.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has now affected the way we work and the way we live our daily lives. The challenges surrounding the timing for this event is a prime example of the uncertainty that we will continue to face.

Up until Monday this week, we were unsure whether we will go ahead with our Reception or not? Thank you for your patience and for granting us this privilege to host you and say goodbye.

For many of the countries that we represent, we have had hundreds, even thousands of our peoples whose lives have been lost as a result of COVID-19.

As if COVID-19 is not enough, we are seeing huge devastations caused by the adverse effects of Climate Change.

Unprecedented flooding, bush fires, earthquakes, cyclones and tornadoes are just some of the many causes of the destructions we are now witnessing on a more regular basis. Most, if not all, of our economies are getting deeper and deeper into recession and the forecast is for things to get much worse for many more years to come.

We again commend New Zealand for the great job that Your Excellency (as the Head of State) and the Government have done (and continue to do) to try and prevent the spread of this deadly virus here in Aotearoa.

New Zealand continues to be the envy of many countries as, until four weeks ago, most businesses were operating and people were able to move around freely.

For the Members of our Diplomatic Corps Family, we are very fortunate and blessed to be living here in New Zealand at this time where we are all safe and able to again visit and enjoy a meal with one another.

Our 'Bosses' have enjoyed very much Sir David's company during the times when they hosted His Excellency for lunch. I heard from Joyce that they loved his friendly, down-to-earth and warm personality and especially his sense of humour. Honestly, on the days when our spouses host Sir David, I have never seen Joyce get so excited about going out for lunch and looking so happy on return!

Dame Patsy, it has been an honour and privilege for our Diplomatic Corps Family to share this journey with yourself and Sir David - especially for a number of us who have been here longer than five years!

We pray that New Zealand will continue to remain safe from the coronavirus as well as from other natural disasters.

We also pray for ALL the countries of the world, especially the countries that we represent, so that the vaccines that are now being rolled out will help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and allow people to go back to living their normal daily lives again.

Finally, and on behalf of our Dip Corps Family, I would like to acknowledge that (from our perspective) your Excellency (Dame Patsy) and Sir David have both been great leaders, excellent role models and wonderful ambassadors for New Zealand over the past five years.

I have no doubt that our Diplomatic Corps Family and all the People of New Zealand will miss your Leadership and your Friendship.

We wish Your Excellency, Sir David and your family all the very best in the next chapter of your lives.

*No Rei Ra, Tenā Koutou, Tena Katou Katoa!*

**SOIFUA MA IA MANUIA**