**SUBMISSION TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS DEFENCE AND TRADE SELECT COMMITTEE**

**NEW ZEALAND’S RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA**

**COMMENTS MADE BY NZIBF ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, GABRIELLE RUSH**

**IN PRESENTING THE NZIBF SUBMISSION TO FADTC ON 4 AUGUST 2011**

Thank you for the opportunity to present the NZIBF submission today. My name is Gabrielle Rush and I am the Associate Director of the International Business Forum. Can I convey apologies from my Executive Director, Stephen Jacobi, who was unable to be here today.

You have the NZIBF submission before you and I do not intend to go through every aspect of it. Suffice to say, NZIBF joins other submitters who believe that enhancing New Zealand’s relationship with India should be a key foreign and trade policy goal for the Government.

There are three key points which NZIBF would like to make.

First, NZIBF believes New Zealand’s relationship with India can be transformed by a high quality, comprehensive FTA which addresses barriers at, and behind, the border. Our submission, and those of the NZ India Business Council, Fonterra, Beef+Lamb NZ, and others set out in some detail the sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) and other regulatory issues that currently impede or prevent New Zealand exports to India. A well-negotiated comprehensive FTA will go a long way to better secure New Zealand’s interests in this regard.

Second, NZIBF believes more government resources are required to further develop the relationship with India including more seconded staff at the New Zealand High Commission in New Delhi. Feedback from the business community suggests that the New Zealand High Commission is not sufficiently resourced. NZIBF understands the constraints on government spending particularly at this time but a High Commission containing eight seconded staff of which only three are MFAT diplomatic staff, we would submit, is insufficient if the government is serious about accelerating progress in this important relationship.

Third, NZIBF believes India requires the sort of structure for high-level strategic business engagement such as New Zealand has for Australia, the United States, Japan and Korea. There is a real need to build and maintain a very high level constituency of business leaders, academics, politicians and officials who are aware of New Zealand, convinced of the value of stronger links between the two countries, and can help influence policy making that helps secure New Zealand’s broader interests. This is the sort of strategic dialogue that the United States has established with its US India CEO Forum and Australia has recently re-established with its Australia India CEO Forum. Members of both these forums include many of the most senior business leaders in both countries.

The value of high level strategic dialogues is clear from New Zealand’s experience with the United States New Zealand Partnership Forums, Japan New Zealand Partnership Forums, Australia New Zealand Leadership Forums, and Korea New Zealand Business Round Tables.

Just as the Government cannot advance New Zealand’s relationship with India alone, business cannot establish a high level strategic dialogue in India without the support of the Government. The NZIBF has developed a strategy to establish a strategic business dialogue with India. In implementing this, the NZIBF looks forward to working closely with the New Zealand High Commission, relevant government agencies, and with other members of NZ Inc. including the India New Zealand Business Council, and key stakeholders.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report to you today.