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09 January 2015

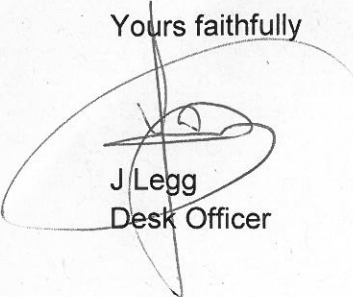
Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 22 July to the Foreign Secretary about your appointment as Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the UK for the Hereditary Kings and Queens of the Cook Islands. As desk officer with responsibility for the UK's relationship with New Zealand, I have been asked to respond.

Our position is that since the Cook Islands are not an independent sovereign state, based on the constitutional and legal position of the Cook Islands in relation to New Zealand, the UK Government is unable to recognise your appointment. You rightly point out that in 1901 the Cook Islands were annexed to New Zealand and in 1965 joined in "free association" with New Zealand. The nature and extent of these continued links with New Zealand mean that the UK does not recognise the Cook Islands as a State under international law. You will of course be aware that the UK does not currently have diplomatic relations with the Cook Islands for the above reason.

This clarification of our position does not in any way weaken the UK government's commitment to pursuing close co-operation with the Cook Islands government on issues of mutual interest.

Yours faithfully



J Legg
Desk Officer