



International Affairs and Trade Development Interagency Committee

Gavin Newsom
Governor

Dee Dee Myers
Senior Advisor and Director

Emily Desai
Chief Deputy Director

Governor's Office of Business and
Economic Development
1325 J Street, 18th Floor
Sacramento, CA 95814

Monday, May 11, 2026
3:30-5:00 pm

CalEPA – Training 1 East, 1st Floor
1001 I St #1
Sacramento, California 95814

MINUTES

MEMBERS:

Eleni Kounalakis, Chair
Lieutenant Governor,
State of California

Dee Dee Myers, Vice Chair
Senior Advisor and Director,
Governor's Office of Business
and Economic Development

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary,
California Natural Resources
Agency

Toks Omishakin, Secretary,
California State Transportation
Agency

Karen Ross, Secretary,
California Department of
Food and Agriculture

Yana Garcia, Secretary,
California Environmental
Protection Agency

David Hochschild, Chair,
California Energy Commission

Lauren Sanchez, Chair,
California Air Resources Board

Samuel Assefa, Director,
Office of Land Use and Climate
Innovation

**Caroline Thomas
Jacobs**, Director,
Governor's Office of
Emergency Services

Caroline Beteta, CEO,
Visit California



A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Evan Reade, International Affairs Advisor to California Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, called the meeting to order at 3:31 pm. He stated that the Interagency Committee was established by [Executive Order N-08-19](#) to inform the public of recent international activity undertaken by state agencies.

Brenden Jacoby, Foreign Investment Analyst at the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), called roll:

Member	Agency	Present / Representative
Chair Eleni Kounalakis	Lt. Governor of California	Evan Reade
Vice Chair Dee Dee Myers	GO-Biz	Emily Desai
Wade Crowfoot	CNRA	Amanda Hansen
Toks Omishakin	CalSTA	Bonny Nyaga
Karen Ross	CDFA	Not Present
Yana Garcia	CalEPA	Sarah Izant
David Hochschild	CEC	Elsa Beljean
Lauren Sanchez	CARB	Sarah Jo Szambelan
Samuel Assefa	LCI	Abby Edwards
Caroline Thomas Jacobs	CalOES	Yvonne Dorantes
Caroline Beteta	Visit CA	Not Present

The minutes from [October 20, 2025](#), were approved.

B. Chair & Vice Chair’s Opening Remarks

Evan Reade, International Affairs Advisor to California Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, welcomed members of the committee and audience and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to review and inform the public of the state’s recent international activities and gather feedback to guide California’s future international engagements.

Reade began his remarks by discussing the impact of the federal administration’s trade and foreign policy. Since the committee’s last convening, Reade noted that there have been major court rulings, policy reversals, new tariff mechanisms, and continuing geopolitical tensions which have further exacerbated economic and trade uncertainty. For example, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that the President’s reliance on the 1977 International Emergency Powers Act to impose sweeping tariffs across the globe was unlawful. Reade noted that California was among the first to challenge the President’s



authority to impose tariffs under IEEPA, and that the Court's ruling was a clear vindication of Governor Newsom's original lawsuit. In addition to the President's trade policies, Reade discussed the President's recent war efforts in Iran. Reade stated that this war has unsettled relations with our closest allies and has directly increased the price of goods and gas for Californians. According to Reade, the average cost of fuel in California has risen roughly 30% since the start of the war; nationwide, the average increase has been roughly 50%.

Despite these headwinds, Reade noted that California remains a global economic powerhouse. According to figures recently released by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, California's GDP in 2025 was \$4.25 trillion, which represents 13% of the total U.S. economy. The state's growth rate of 5% remains competitive, and California would rank as the world's 5th largest economy if it were an independent nation. Reade stated that since Governor Newsom took office in 2019, California's GDP has grown by \$1.182 trillion.

Given uncertainty at the federal level, Reade emphasized the importance of California's international partnerships. Governor Newsom continues to send a message to our foreign allies that the actions of President Trump do not reflect the views or values of large numbers of Americans. For example, the Governor's participation in events like Climate Week and the Conference of the Parties (COP30) demonstrate California's unwavering commitment to partnering with others around the globe to address climate change. At these events, the Governor signed many MOUs, such as agreements with Chile, Colombia, Nigeria, Kenya, and Brazil. In addition to these climate-focused events, the Governor attended multiple conferences in Europe, such as Davos in Switzerland and the Munich Security Conference. At these events, the Governor met with several foreign government leaders, including Chancellor Merz of Germany and Prime Minister Sanchez of Spain. During the Munich Security Conference, the Governor signed an MOU with the Lviv region of Ukraine, highlighting California's commitment to our Ukrainian allies.

Reade concluded his remarks by noting that California remains open to business and continues to be a reliable partner. As such, the state continues to be actively sought out by our foreign partners. For example, the Governor recently received the Executive Vice President of the European Commission as well as the Italian Ambassador to the U.S. Finally, Reade noted that Lieutenant Governor Kounalakis will soon meet with the President of Catalonia and the Spanish Ambassador to the U.S. Given that these engagements just scratch the surface of California's international involvement, Reade turned to members of the committee to provide updates from their agencies.



Emily Desai, Chief Deputy Director of the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), opened her remarks by stating that the GO-Biz International team has been firing on all cylinders. She framed her remarks around two major buckets of activity: export promotion and foreign investment attraction.

Regarding export promotion, Desai said that GO-Biz continues to monitor and track the effects of tariffs. During a conference last week, Desai spoke with officials from New Zealand and Los Angeles to discuss how tariffs continue to have an impact on consumer costs. Businesses are absorbing the costs of tariffs and have been forced to implement cost-cutting measures. While these impacts may be more subtle than what was originally predicted, Desai said that these costs are still there and that they are very real. Desai lamented how the funding GO-Biz uses to shoulder the risk for small businesses facing tariff impacts has yet to be released by the Small Business Administration. This pool of \$20 million shows signs of being released, however, Desai said that the lack of information from Washington prevents GO-Biz from being certain if the funding will be released to the states. Despite this challenge, GO-Biz has found new mechanisms to support California’s small business exporters. For example, GO-Biz has taken delegations of companies to numerous trade shows, such as Medical Fair Thailand and India, Expo Manufactura in Mexico, and Rebuild Ukraine in Poland. On the margins of Rebuild Ukraine, Desai noted that team members traveled to Ukraine to meet with high-level officials. Desai said it was an honor to visit the region, and thanked CalOES and the Military Department for their work preparing GO-Biz for their visit. GO-Biz toured multiple sites in Ukraine, and Desai said these conversations culminated with an MOU between California and the Lviv region of Ukraine that Governor Newsom signed at the Munich Security Conference.

GO-Biz continues to promote California as an attractive destination for foreign investors. In fact, the team just returned from SelectUSA – the largest foreign investment attraction event in the U.S. GO-Biz led its largest ever delegation to the Summit, as its group of over 30 local economic development partners were able to market their regions to thousands of international companies. Desai noted that SelectUSA is a great opportunity to leverage the state’s convening power and bring regional partners together to sell and pitch California to investors. In addition to SelectUSA, GO-Biz has participated in a series of foreign investment attraction activities. For example, in Asia, GO-Biz has participated in events in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Korea. At InterBattery South Korea, GO-Biz met with battery OEMs and observed the increase in the quantity of companies who were interested in drone battery technology. Finally, Desai concluded her updates on GO-Biz’s foreign investment activity by highlighting a report on foreign investment that GO-Biz commissions annually. According to the report, there are nearly



850,000 jobs in California supported by foreign investment – making California the largest recipient of foreign investment in the U.S.

C. Updates from Committee Members on International Engagement & Priorities

Sarah Izant, Deputy Secretary for Climate Policy of the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), used her remarks to discuss California’s robust climate engagement since the meeting’s last convening.

For example, Izant highlighted California’s presence at COP30 in Brazil, where the state signed MOUs with Chile, Colombia, Nigeria, and the Brazilian state of Pará. Since those signings, CalEPA has turned its attention to implementation, including thinking through work plans and application of state resources. These MOUs cover a wide range of topics; for example, California’s MOU with Chile is focused on decreasing methane emissions and the state’s MOU with Colombia highlights mechanisms to increase biodiversity, clean energy, and nature-based solutions. In fact, Izant recently returned from a trip to Colombia, where she represented the state at a conference about decreasing Colombia’s use of fossil fuels.

CalEPA has been a partner to other MOUs as well, including agreements with the German state of Baden-Württemberg and with the United Kingdom. These MOUs were the result of years of partnerships, and Izant stated that she is excited for the collaboration that the agreements will bring. Izant said that the work plan for the MOU with the UK is already in an advanced stage, as CalEPA is focused on laying out where their team wants to focus on over the next few months.

Izant concluded her remarks by discussing a few other events CalEPA has participated in since the meeting’s last convening. For example, CalEPA attended the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership convening as well as a series of events during San Francisco Climate Week. In addition, CalEPA has held a series of events in partnership with Mexico, including the launch of a binational working group on energy and the environment. This event featured attendees from UC Alianza MX, UC Berkeley, the CEC, CARB, and other key partners. Izant credited these working groups for providing structure for CalEPA’s international work.



Amanda Hansen, Deputy Secretary for Climate Change of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), discussed existing and new mechanisms with which CNRA is working with international partners to advance climate action.

For example, Hansen stated that CNRA team members have doubled down on their work with Denmark to increase water resilience, traveled to Greece to share best practices with Greece's Climate Corps, worked with leaders from Quebec on biodiversity, and engaged members of the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership to protect communities against extreme heat. In addition to these ongoing initiatives, Hansen stated that CNRA joined the International Union for the Conservation of Nature – the world's largest environmental protection organization. Hansen also discussed multiple activities related to CNRA's effort to scale nature-based solutions. For example, CNRA has engaged Brazil, Canada, Chile, and New South Wales to improve forest health and reduce wildfire risk; in addition, their team has been working with provinces throughout China to work on projects related to reducing flood risk.

Other recent international engagements include Secretary Crowfoot's attendance at COP30 and the Local Leaders Forum in Brazil; the latter event was a conference for subnational leaders to discuss climate action in the run up to COP30. In addition, the Secretary was an active participant at events during San Francisco Climate Week. In regard to upcoming engagements, Hansen stated that CNRA will represent California at the UN Biodiversity Conference in Armenia. At this event, CNRA will aim to strengthen relationships with our international partners.

Abby Edwards, Senior Deputy Director of the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), discussed LCI's recent engagements, including their implementation of California's climate adaptation MOUs. For example, Edwards discussed LCI's work with African nations and the Netherlands as well as participation at events during San Francisco Climate Week. For example, Director Assefa attended the California-Africa Climate and Economic Forum, an event hosted by CalSTA, and discussed international investors' interest in choosing California.

Regarding upcoming events, Edwards noted that LCI will be hosting a delegation of folks from the Netherlands to discuss smart and air mobility; this delegation will bring together partners from the private sector, NGOs, and government officials to extend actions outlined in the California-Netherlands MOU. In addition, LCI may host an extreme heat forum in the coming months, as many of LCI's international conversations have been centered on this



topic. Finally, Edwards said that LCI will be publishing its 5th California Climate Change Assessment report, which has received lots of interest from international partners given the federal government's lack of action in this space.

Sarah Jo Szambelan, International Advisor of the California Air Resources Board (CARB), organized her updates of CARB's international engagement by topic area, starting with carbon pricing.

Szambelan stated that Executive Officer Steven Cliff recently traveled to Florence, Italy, to participate in the Florence Process, an event hosted by the European Union's Institute of Climate Week. At the event, Cliff discussed California's Cap-and-Invest program with government officials from around the world and listened to takeaways from similar carbon pricing programs deployed in different countries. Additionally, Szambelan said that CARB will be traveling to a joint meeting of the International Carbon Action Partnership and Carbon Pricing of the Americas. At the meeting, CARB will discuss how to make the best carbon pricing system as possible. Relatedly, CARB continues to represent the Governor at the Forest and Climate Task Force; later this month, CARB will send folks to a convening of these stakeholders to discuss the importance of forests in establishing a fair carbon pricing system and how to collaborate with indigenous populations.

In regard to CARB's activity related to methane, Szambelan noted that California continues to support the subnational Methane Action Partnership. For example, Board Member Cliff Rechtschaffen spoke at an event during San Francisco Climate Week related to this topic, where he met with representatives from various countries and discussed California's usage of satellites to track and detect methane in the agriculture, oil and gas, and landfill sectors.

CARB has been active in the transportation sector as well. For example, CARB will attend the Transportation Decarbonization Summit hosted by International Coalition of Clean Transportation. This event brings together public and private sector actors that seek to accelerate the development of global markets for zero emission vehicles. In addition, CARB continues to work with partners in Mexico and Canada on reducing emissions, working lands, and methane. For example, CARB continues to run its Cap-and-Invest program with Quebec and is working to improve air quality with partners in Baja California.

Szambelan concluded her remarks by noting that CARB is developing work plans for a series of MOUs, including agreements with China, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, Colombia, Brazil, Sweden, Norway, New Zealand, Kenya, Nigeria, and more. Finally,



Szambelan said that CARB looks forward to participating in New York Climate Week later this year as well as events surrounding the next COP.

Elsa Beljean, Senior International Advisor of the California Energy Commission (CEC), opened her remarks by thanking the Lieutenant Governor for her leadership in expanding California's international engagements. Since October 2025, Beljean said that the CEC has been working hard to create a focused strategy for California's energy future, and insights learned from international partners have been crucial to the formation of this strategy. For example, the CEC currently has five MOUs in development; one should be confirmed and signed this year. Beljean said that many of these partnerships directly relate to reliability, affordability, economic opportunity, and impact on communities.

To this effect, Beljean highlighted Mexico's Secretary of Energy, who recently launched regulations requiring bidders on energy projects to incorporate feedback from potentially affected communities. The CEC recently attended a conference hosted by UC Alianza MX, where the team highlighted how the CEC is incorporating equity into its programs; specifically, Beljean discussed the CEC's Justice Access Equity Diversity Inclusion Framework. In addition, Beljean said that the CEC recently attended a roundtable in Monterrey discussing how Mexico can lead a clean economy by 2050.

In addition to Mexico, Beljean noted that China has been one of the CEC's close partners. Many of the CEC's engagements with China relate to clean energy deployment and energy innovation. Beljean noted that the CEC receives many high-level delegation requests from China, and that the CEC is seizing the opportunity to work with these stakeholders. For example, the CEC hosted a high-level delegation from the National Development Reform Commission, an organization that had previously signed an MOU with California.

Beljean discussed engagement with a variety of other countries as well. For example, she congratulated the United Kingdom on its recent MOU with California, stating that many California agencies have been working closely with them for a while. In addition, she discussed CEC's collaboration with CARB and the CPUC related to the Danish Energy Agency; many of these conversations relate to energy efficiency and offshore wind. Also, she gave kudos to Norwegian Consul General Kirsten Hammelbo for her continuous partnership, the implementation of the Norway-California MOU, and her championing of sustainable ocean solutions; CEC Chair David Hochschild attended a Norwegian event related to these topics earlier this year. Regarding Norway, Beljean stated that the CEC has had a few bilateral meetings relating to floating data centers; given California's strength in



AI, Norway wanted to hear the CEC's thoughts on this concept. Furthermore, Beljean discussed CEC Commissioner Nancy Skinner's recent delegation to South Korea, which focused on fusion transportation, innovation, hydrogen, and transportation electrification.

Finally, Beljean recapped the CEC's engagement with India. CEC Commissioner Andrew McAllister recently traveled to New Delhi, where he had high-level meetings related to electricity systems and renewable energy integration; in addition, McAllister attended and spoke at an energy conference related to AI. Beljean stated that the CEC may sign an MOI with the Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission – California's first subnational agreement with an entity in India.

Beljean concluded her comments by restating the importance of international partnerships. These exchanges help practical solutions move forward, and without these collaborations California would not be able to put its values out into the world.

Yvonne Dorantes, Deputy Director of Legislative and Governmental Affairs of the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), began her remarks by celebrating the new CalOES Director, Caroline Thomas Jacobs. In addition, Dorantes noted that while there have been significant milestones since October 2025 related to wildfire recovery in Los Angeles, she focused the majority of her comments on issues related to emergency preparedness rather than responsiveness.

In regard to preparedness, Dorantes said that CalOES hosted a virtual flood management webinar in collaboration with the California Department of Water Resources and the Aga Khan Development Network. This webinar hosted 100 volunteer emergency personnel across five different time zones, featuring representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, India, and Syria. In addition, Dorantes discussed CalOES's support efforts for Hurricane Melissa; in coordination with the LA County Fire Department, California deployed 34 highly trained urban search and rescue personnel to the support efforts and assisted heavily with public information efforts. In addition, Dorantes noted that CalOES signed a Letter of Protocol with the French Director General for Civil Protection and Crisis Management; in October, CalOES will meet with the team in France to discuss lessons learned from the 2024 Olympics in Paris and how they could be applied to Los Angeles 2028.

In continuing her discussion of preparedness efforts, Dorantes discussed CalOES's efforts preparing for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Paralympic and Olympic Games.



Dorantes stated that CalOES is leading the special events task force that convenes local, state, and federal emergency management and security partners to align all preparedness efforts across these large-scale events. In practice, this has resulted in CalOES outreach to consular partners – such as Mexico, Switzerland, Australia, and the United Kingdom – to share best practices and enhance preparedness. Furthermore, CalOES led an emergency exercise in Los Angeles alongside more than 20 Consulates to strengthen coordination and communication; this exercise simulated a mass casualty event at LAX. In addition, Dorantes said that CalOES has performed multiple operational walkthroughs of stadiums, such as the LA Memorial Coliseum and SoFi Stadium; these conversations discussed Heads of State security, game schedules, and logistics. Finally, Dorantes said that CalOES participated in a Consulate workshop that was also hosted by the San Francisco Department of Emergency Management and the City of Santa Clara; the workshop discussed operational protocol for a mass casualty event.

Shifting away from global games preparedness, Dorantes stated that CalOES has been monitoring the geopolitical conflict with Iran via the California Cybersecurity Integration Center and the State Threat Assessment Center; in addition, CalOES has stood up the fuels task force to monitor gas-related problems in California. Furthermore, Dorantes stated that CalOES hosted a U.S. Department of State-sponsored delegation visit with 15 representatives from 12 African countries to discuss emergency management with a heavy focus on critical infrastructure protection. Dorantes said that the State Warning Center continues to track and share data on cross-border pollution; she will attend the California Border Relations Council meeting later this month to provide updates on spillage in the Tijuana River.

Dorantes concluded her remarks by thanking the interagency for adhering to CalOES's protocols for traveling safely and hosting travelers safely from foreign countries. She reminded staff that the State Threat Assessment Center is always available for security services. Finally, while CalOES is spending the bulk of its time preparing for the major global games, Dorantes said that CalOES is always preparing for all potential hazards, such as the upcoming fire season.

Bonny Nyaga, International Policy Advisor of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), used his remarks to discuss the California-Africa Climate and Economic Forum, an event CalSTA hosted in late April, as well as broader international activity that CalSTA has engaged in.



Nyaga said that the California-Africa Climate and Economic Forum was a great success. The forum was a partnership between CalSTA, the UC Davis Global Center for Clean Transportation, and the Bay Area Council and built on the building blocks of the first iteration of the forum in 2025. According to Nyaga, the forum featured 340 registered participants and over 270 attendees. Attendees included California officials, academic leaders, private sector partners, and dignitaries from African countries such as Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia. Nyaga said that the convening deepened relationships and moved forward work that CalSTA has been working on for multiple years. For example, the forum featured discussions surrounding clean transportation, sustainable aviation, clean energy development, community development, agricultural resilience, and climate finance. In addition to the forum, CalSTA hosted the African dignitaries at multiple site visits, such as Rivian, the San Francisco Airport, and UC Davis.

Nyaga stated that the forum was valuable because it connected climate ambition with economic opportunity. Some stakeholders have asked Nyaga, “why Africa?” In response, Secretary Omishakin emphasized that the effects of climate have no borders; in fact, its most severe impacts are felt by regions that have contributed the least to global emissions. This makes international partnerships not optional, but essential. Furthermore, Africa’s young and expanding population presents major opportunities for trade and sustainable development. Given that the United Nations predicts that one in four people in the world will be African by 2050, engagement is strategically important for both climate leadership and economic partnership. Nyaga concluded his discussion of the forum by thanking interagency members, legislative staff, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Governor for their support throughout the planning and execution of the event; for example, Assemblymember Matt Haney presented a resolution that established a sister state relationship between California and Lagos State in Nigeria.

In regard to other international engagement, Nyaga stated that CalSTA hosted Ghana Ambassador Victor Emmanuel Smith in Los Angeles earlier this year, as well as a Ghanaian delegation in Sacramento; this delegation featured private sector conversations with Secretary Omishakin. In addition, CalSTA hosted a delegation from Brazil's equivalent to the DMV in order to discuss infrastructure planning, autonomous vehicles, and traffic safety. Finally, Nyaga stated that he looks forward to participating in the upcoming California Border Relations Council in San Diego.

D. Closing Remarks from the Chair & Vice Chair



Evan Reade, International Affairs Advisor to California Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis, expressed his appreciation for the work California's agencies are doing. For example, he applauded CalSTA's work engaging Africa and was proud that California has engaged a wide array of countries including China, Mexico, Canada, Denmark, Germany, UK, Ukraine, India, and Norway. Despite uncertainty driven by actions by the federal government, Reade is confident that California's actions demonstrate to our allies that California wants to cooperate, shares their values and interests, and will continue to be a reliable and stable partner.

Emily Desai, Chief Deputy Director of the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), used her closing remarks to express gratitude for the interagency staff who have worked on international projects throughout the Newsom Administration. She stated that GO-Biz team members are putting together processes to ensure the continuation of these activities under the next Administration and that she looks forward to the final convening of the Committee later this year.

E. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

F. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:43 pm.



APPENDIX I: Submitted Remarks from Secretary Karen Ross, California Department of Food and Agriculture

Secretary Karen Ross was unable to attend the committee meeting on behalf of the California Department of Food and Agriculture so she submitted her remarks via email in lieu of delivering them in person.

Secretary Ross thanked the Lieutenant Governor for her continued leadership and emphasized the importance of California's global engagements – a charge that the California Department of Food and Agriculture has championed thus far in 2026. For example, the Secretary noted that CDFA has been proud to participate in the International Year of the Woman Farmer, declared by the United Nations for 2026. The designation recognizes women's essential role in agriculture worldwide and reflects a global commitment to equity, visibility, and opportunity across food and farming systems. The resolution highlights the critical contributions women make to food security, sustainability, and economic resilience. As part of this effort, CDFA has worked with a number of food and ag organizations to highlight women farmers.

Since the committee's last meeting, CDFA has continued to prioritize trade development activities, climate smart agricultural initiatives, and international collaborative events to further the promotion of food and agricultural products of the state:

- **Trade development:** CDFA has organized a series of engagements that connect foreign buyers and California suppliers. For example, CDFA hosted inbound delegations of fruit and nut farmers from ASEAN and India in November, as well as outbound delegations to Gulfood Inbound in Africa in February. Since October, CDFA's trade events have engaged more than 127 businesses, resulted in approximately 800 individual business meetings, and are projected to result in direct sales for California businesses.
- **Climate Smart Agricultural Initiatives:** Following CDFA's mission to Brazil in July 2025, the organization is preparing for a visit to Australia in August. They are coordinating with the Governments of Queensland and Victoria to explore agricultural technology, sustainable production, and soil health innovations. This mission will serve as the seventh Climate Smart Agricultural Mission since 2019. CDFA has focused international climate efforts on information sharing and collaboration among governments, farmers, and academic institutions to address global agricultural production challenges related to climate change.
- **International Collaboration:** In addition to attending COP30 in Brazil in November 2025, Secretary Ross had the pleasure of attending the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture mission to Thailand. The Secretary also hosted bilateral meetings with representatives from Bolivia, Catalonia, Democratic Republic of Congo,



and Ireland. In May, the Secretary will join her counterparts from Oregon and Washington State to discuss Pacific Northwest wine collaboration with career agricultural officials in British Columbia.

The Secretary closed her remarks by discussing gratitude for her engagements with Mexico. In January, she spoke at a meeting of the Binational Ag Working Group, a joint collaborative program between the University of California and the Casa de la Universidad de California in Mexico. She joined a panel discussion and press conference about women farmers to celebrate the International Year of Women Farmers hosted by Mexico City's Central Market. During the trip, she met with a team of experts with SENASICA, Mexico's agriculture and rural development agency. The purpose of the meeting was to learn more about the efforts of government and ranchers in Mexico to address a significant and dangerous invasive pest for the cattle industry. The pest, New World screwworm, continues to advance toward the U.S.-Mexico border. It is the ongoing collaboration between federal and state governments, on both sides of the border, that is working to maintain existing quarantines and "free from" zones.



APPENDIX II: Submitted Remarks from CEO Caroline Beteta, Visit California

CEO Caroline Beteta was unable to attend the committee meeting on behalf of Visit California so she submitted her remarks via email in lieu of delivering them in person.

Visit California's strategy is simple: stay visible, stay relevant, and stay conversion-ready so California is positioned to accelerate as conditions improve. According to CEO Beteta, international travel to California is projected to grow 3.9% in 2026. This figure reflects stabilization and recovery from softer 2025 levels, though not yet a full return to prior peaks. While global travel demand remains uneven due to policy uncertainty, CEO Beteta stated that California continues to outperform because our brand remains one of the strongest and most resilient travel brands globally. Furthermore, she noted that in periods of uncertainty, consistency matters. Maintaining California's presence internationally protects long-term demand, market share, and industry competitiveness.

Visit California's strategic priorities include:

- **Close the “consideration gap.”** Research shows many international travelers are open to California but are not yet moving from “interested” to “booked.” Visit California's upcoming programming is focused on removing barriers and increasing confidence to travel now.
- **Reframe value, not price.** California is often perceived as expensive. Rather than competing on discounting, CEO Beteta is reinforcing value through emotionally resonant storytelling, once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and multi-region itineraries that justify the investment.
- **Lead with California's culture and identity.** California's strongest differentiator internationally is California's cultural depth: creativity, diversity, innovation, openness, food, sports, music, wellness, and outdoor lifestyle. Visit California is moving beyond transactional destination marketing toward storytelling that communicates how California feels and what it represents.
- **Restore traveler confidence.** Entry uncertainty and broader U.S. perceptions continue to create friction. Working alongside U.S. Travel Association and Brand USA, Visit California is proactively communicating accurate information and using trusted voices and firsthand experiences to reassure travelers that California remains welcoming and accessible.

CEO Beteta shared the following updates to Visit California's regional programming:

- **Asia:** In South Korea, Visit California launched culinary and influencer programming tied to California agriculture, education, sports, and culture — reaching millions through



highly localized storytelling. In Japan, the organization is leveraging the massive popularity of professional baseball through MLB-themed influencer road trips and upcoming sports media itineraries across Sacramento, San Francisco, and San Diego. In China, Visit California is participating in America 250 and Independence Day roadshow programming to deepen trade and consumer engagement while expanding digital booking-pathway partnerships.

- **Europe:** Across the UK, France, Germany, Italy, and the Nordics, Visit California recently hosted immersive “Playful Journeys” road trip experiences for top-tier media to reinforce California’s leadership as the ultimate self-drive destination. In the UK, integrated campaigns with Virgin Atlantic Holidays and Sky Media are tapping into FIFA World Cup momentum through connected TV, social, and conversion-focused partnerships. We also hosted the first winter edition of the California Luxury Forum in North Lake Tahoe, bringing elite buyers from 11 global markets to experience California luxury, ski, and national park product firsthand.
- **Canada and Mexico:** In Canada, Visit California partnered with Visit Anaheim on sales and media missions in Vancouver and Calgary to strengthen frontline advisor confidence and reinforce California demand through sports and hosted media experiences. In Mexico, Visit California is significantly expanding sports and media partnerships, including collaborations with Aeroméxico, Expedia, TV Azteca, and upcoming sports-themed media activations tied to FIFA momentum and California fan travel itineraries.
- **India:** India continues to represent strong long-term opportunity, particularly among affluent younger travelers. In May, Visit California launched NBA House in Mumbai — an immersive basketball and lifestyle activation introducing California culture to India’s next generation of international travelers. The organization is also building FIFA-focused partnerships and customized football fan itineraries through DreamSetGo and other strategic partners.