



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, October 20, 2025
1:00-3:00 PM

California State Capitol – Room 113
1315 10th St.
Sacramento, CA 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*

Yana Garcia, Secretary,
*California Environmental
Protection Agency*

Toks Omishakin, Secretary,
*California State Transportation
Agency*

Karen Ross, Secretary,
*California Department of
Food and Agriculture*

Lauren Sanchez, Chair,
California Air Resources Board

David Hochschild, Chair,
California Energy Commission

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

Nancy Ward, Director,
*Governor's Office of
Emergency Services*

Caroline Beteta, CEO,
Visit California



A. Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Eleni Kounalakis, Lieutenant Governor, called the meeting to order at 1:01 pm. She 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	Present
Vice Chair Dee Dee Myers	GO-Biz	Emily Desai
Wade Crowfoot	CNRA	Present
Karen Ross	CDFA	Present
Toks Omishakin	CalSTA	Present
Samuel Assefa	LCI	Present
Nancy Ward	CalOES	Yvonne Dorantes
Yana Garcia	CalEPA	Sarah Izant
Lauren Sanchez	CARB	Courtney Smith
David Hochschild	CEC	Elsa Beljean
Caroline Beteta	Visit CA	Not Present

The meeting minutes from [April 21, 2025](#), were approved.

B. Chair & Vice Chair's Opening Remarks

Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis welcomed members of the committee and audience, noting that the goal of this meeting is to bring together all of California's agencies and departments engaged in international activities to ensure cohesiveness in the state's international strategy. Furthermore, she stated that this meeting gives the public an opportunity to provide feedback and input.

The Chair began her remarks reflecting on how the Trump Administration's trade and foreign policy has continued to create economic turmoil and uncertainty in international relationships around the globe, including in California. For example, the Chair noted how a recent threat to impose a 100% tariff on China creates a difficult environment for businesses to plan for their future. In addition, she described the long-term damage tariffs have had on the state's export markets. The Chair noted that California is a major exporter of wine, yet some Canadian stores are pulling American products from their shelves and



canceling purchasing agreements due to anti-American sentiment; she said that these trade relationships could take years to rebuild as customers turn to other suppliers.

Despite challenges, the Chair noted that California remains a global economic powerhouse. She stated that the state's growth rate in 2024 topped the U.S., China, and Germany. California accounts for 14% of U.S. GDP, far exceeding Texas and New York. She stated that California is ranked #1 in the U.S. for new business starts, access to venture capital, and in manufacturing, high tech, agriculture. Finally. She said that California remains the largest consumer market in the nation, home to 32 of the world's 50 largest AI companies.

The Chair applauded Governor Newsom's continued engagements with the state's international partners. Since the last convening of the committee, she said that California has entered into new MOUs with the Netherlands, Belgium, and Kenya. She stated that California remains open for business and will continue to be a reliable trade partner. To illustrate this commitment, Governor Newsom hosted a Belgian Economic Mission to California earlier this month, led by her royal highness Princess Astrid and attended by 515 delegates – this is the largest foreign delegation California has hosted since 2018.

The Chair concluded by noting that she looks forward to hearing about the new agreements undertaken by various California agencies as well as hearing about any international travel and events undertaken by these agencies.

Emily Desai, Chief Deputy Director of the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), began her remarks by highlighting how shifting federal dynamics have impacted GO-Biz's work. For example, Desai described how significant staffing reductions at the U.S. Commercial Service, potential cuts to the federal State Trade Expansion Program grant, and increased tariffs and trade barriers have impacted California's small businesses.

Despite federal challenges, Desai stated that California is continuing to forge international partnerships and build bridges for companies in our state. She shared that Director Myers joined the Governor in hosting the Belgian Economic Mission, where she signed an MOU promoting trade, commercial engagement, and innovation between the state and Belgium. Desai also noted that California is following through on its previous commitments demonstrated by recent engagements with Sweden and Australia on clean energy.

The Chief Deputy Director stated that GO-Biz has continued to execute trade missions in strategic markets and sectors, including Medical Fair Thailand, Semicon West in Arizona, Global Energy Show Canada, and the Paris Air Show.



Desai noted that California continues to be the number one state for attracting investment from around the world. She shared GO-Biz's recent data on foreign direct investment (FDI) in California, which reveals that FDI supported over 814,000 California jobs in 2024. She stated that GO-Biz led the state's largest-ever delegation to the SelectUSA Investment Summit – the nation's premier event for attracting FDI.

Finally, Desai discussed how GO-Biz has supported the state's immigrant communities. Over the past two years, GO-Biz has awarded \$8.4 million to 22 local governments and 19 nonprofits who have helped more than 70,000 immigrants navigate economic development resources. She also thanked CDFA for their collaboration on an initiative to support businesses affected by federal immigration enforcement.

C. Updates from Committee Members on International Engagement & Priorities

Wade Crowfoot, Secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA), began his remarks by acknowledging the importance of California's leadership in the climate space, then proceeded to highlight examples of how California has led on these issues since the committee's last convening.

For example, the Secretary described CNRA's engagements with the Mediterranean Climate Action Partnership, a coalition of 15 governments across five continents that share a similar climate and face similar climate threats such as wildfire, drought, and extreme heat. This partnership is the first coalition of its kind to organize governments by the type of climate threats that they face. Since the committee's last meeting, the coalition met in Western Cape, South Africa, and has three key focus areas: combatting wildfire, drought, and heat waves. Secretary Crowfoot stated that he hopes that the coalition will host a meeting in Southern California in 2026.

Secretary Crowfoot also highlighted a recent MOU that the state signed with the nation of Brazil, jointly spearheaded by CalEPA and CNRA. He noted that CNRA has been working with the Green Consortium of Brazilian Governors, a coalition of 21 Governors across Brazil. Secretary Crowfoot highlighted that CNRA took part in a virtual exchange with these governors this past August.

The Secretary also shared a progress update on the various partnerships that CNRA has with Chinese provinces. Last month, Secretary Crowfoot met with the Minister of Agriculture for Hainan, a province in Southern China. He also highlighted CNRA's recent



engagements with the government of Denmark. He stated that, because of the recent MOU agreement with Denmark, CNRA has adopted a technology to better monitor the state's groundwater.

Secretary Crowfoot shared that California will soon join the Nature Congress, a global body headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. He explained that the Congress brings together governments from around the world to work on conservation issues. He stated that California is one of the first subnational governments in the world to join this partnership. Furthermore, he shared that California's network of marine protected areas was recently added to the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Green List.

Finally, Secretary Crowfoot stated that CNRA will be attending the Conference of Parties (COP) in Brazil, which is the annual convening under the United Nation's treaty to combat climate change. He noted that some CNRA staff will be arriving in Brazil early to participate in the Local Leaders' Forum, a global summit of subnational governments, regions, states, and cities focused on implementation of COP's climate goals.

Karen Ross, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), stated that California is the largest agricultural exporter in the nation; however, the Secretary acknowledged that California's agricultural industry has been significantly challenged by tariffs.

Despite these challenges, the Secretary shared that CDFA has continued to host inbound buying missions from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Korea, and Taiwan. She shared that a recent buying mission resulted in 750 new connections for California businesses. Furthermore, the Secretary shared an update on the recent trade shows that CDFA has participated in. She said that CDFA sent delegations to Morocco this year, which is a growing market for dried fruit and nuts. She added that CDFA participated in the Gulf Food show, which is the world's largest food show, as well as the Seoul Food and Hotel Show. Finally, CDFA participated in several events with the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Japan, and India. Secretary Ross shared that CDFA will participate in a trade show in Mexico next month.

The Secretary discussed her participation in a recent Climate Smart Ag Policy mission to Brazil, where she explained that Brazil has shown leadership in sustainable and biological solutions to pest control. She shared that the agency is also continuing to collaborate with Denmark, noting that CDFA has had an agricultural MOU with Denmark for many years.



Last month, Secretary Ross participated in a United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization Meeting in Rome, which focused on sustainable lifestyle transformation. CDFA was able to meet with the Director of Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Environment Office about how subnational governments can help fill the void of leadership in the absence of federal government participation at climate-focused tables.

Secretary Ross closed her remarks by reminding participants that the FIRA trade show is happening in Woodland, CA, on October 21st – 23rd.

Toks Omishakin, Secretary of the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA), stated that CalSTA has engaged with ten countries since the committee's last convening, including four countries that the state has never engaged with before. All four of these countries are on the African continent.

For example, the Secretary discussed the California-Africa Climate and Economic forum that CalSTA hosted in April. This convening brought together leadership from California, Nigeria, and Kenya to discuss a future partnership. Later in the summer, the Secretary traveled to both Nigeria and Kenya; on this trip, the Secretary signed an MOU with the President of Kenya – the first binational agreement between California and an African Country. He emphasized that the continent of Africa has lots of untapped potential, including its vast supply of critical minerals and its robust agriculture sector.

In addition, Secretary Omishakin shared that CalSTA held a meeting with the Port of Shanghai to advance efforts around maritime decarbonization, met with the Czech Republic's Minister of Transportation to discuss autonomous vehicle regulations, and held a rail decarbonization forum in Los Angeles with the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, and Transportation.

Secretary Omishakin finished his remarks by sharing that CalSTA has completed one of the main arterials that will connect California to Baja California, Mexico. He explained that CalSTA still needs to build the remaining vertical infrastructure to support the movement of vehicles between the two regions. Secondly, he noted that CalSTA still needs to create a revenue-sharing agreement between the two regions, as well as begin construction for a new facility for vehicles to travel through. He stated that these will be upcoming priorities for the agency in the months ahead.



Samuel Assefa, Director of the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), opened his remarks by thanking Secretary Omishakin, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Governor for supporting the agency's recent engagements with Kenya and Nigeria. Secretary Assefa stated that he was proud to take part in this effort.

In August, Secretary Assefa led a delegation of thirty Californians to take part in an advanced air mobility mission in the Netherlands. This delegation served as a deliverable of an MOU that CalSTA and LCI jointly signed with the Netherlands several years ago. The Secretary highlighted that, during the mission, several nongovernmental organizations from California and the Netherlands signed an agreement to improve collaboration on advanced air mobility.

In September, Secretary Assefa participated in an International Field Study in Vienna to explore the country's successful social housing model. He noted that 50% of Vienna's housing is considered affordable housing; the Secretary said that their model could provide important lessons for California.

Finally, Secretary Assefa discussed several upcoming international engagements. He noted that partners at UC Davis are planning a follow-up trip to Nairobi in November to execute the agreement made between California and Kenya; in collaboration with LCI, UC Davis will establish a research institute in Nairobi. Furthermore, Secretary Assefa stated that he will meet with the Consulate General of the Netherlands in San Francisco next week to further discuss air mobility efforts and finalize an action plan for the next few years.

Yvonne Dorantes, Deputy Director of Legislative and Governmental Affairs at the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), opened by affirming that California's strength is in its partnerships, both domestic and abroad. Dorantes stated that CalOES has engaged over 152 delegates from 18 different countries since the committee's last meeting in April.

First, Dorantes highlighted the California-Mexico Border Relations Council Meetings, a key forum for CalOES to engage with our partners in Mexico. She emphasized that since disasters are not bound by borders, building cross-border relationships is a priority for CalOES. Regarding further collaboration with Mexico, Dorantes stated that CalOES deployed critical support to Tecate, Mexico, in June when fires broke out in the area. She also shared that CalOES participated in the Labor Rights Week at the Mexican Consulate, where the agency provided emergency response resources in Spanish. Finally, CalOES



joined the Binational Emergency Communications Work Group in September, a forum co-hosted by the San Diego County Office of Emergency Services and the Office of Border Health Operations Center. This gathering brought together local, state, federal, and Mexican officials to strengthen border collaboration and emergency response planning.

In June, CalOES hosted a delegation of senior emergency management and fire officials from Australia. The delegation visited sites across the state, including Los Angeles and Sacramento. Dorantes said that the delegation discussed lessons from the fires in Los Angeles as well as wildfires in Australia. Other major topics of discussion included: wildfire response, recovery, lithium-ion battery fire risks, repopulation, and incorporating First Nations knowledge into fire strategies.

Dorantes discussed several upcoming events and projects, such as the upcoming FIFA World Cup and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. She stated that CalOES will be participating in the 2025 Foreign Consulate Workshop, an emergency management exercise led by the Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management.

The Deputy Director closed out her remarks by providing some updates regarding key MOUs. She noted that CalOES has initiated discussions with Denmark regarding cyber-security resilience efforts and that CalOES is developing a letter of intent with France. Finally, CalOES is partnering with the Department of Water Resources to develop a virtual meeting on flood management, as part of the execution of the Aga Khan MOU.

Sarah Izant, Deputy Secretary for Climate Policy at the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), noted that international engagement on climate change continues to be a priority for CalEPA.

To illustrate, Izant discussed Secretary's Garcia participation at London Climate Action week in June. Given the small U.S. presence, the Secretary felt that CalEPA's presence was critical. Attendees of London Climate Action week celebrated the 10 year anniversary of the Under2 coalition – the world's largest coalition of subnational governments fighting climate change. The Secretary noted the importance of the coalition and of the celebration.

The Secretary also joined the California Delegation to New York Climate Week in September. During the trip, the Secretary strengthened relationships with Brazil and Kenya and applauded the recent MOUs that the Governor signed. Izant noted how multiple partners emphasized the importance of California's presence at the event to the Secretary



as partner countries are looking for signals from U.S. states to show climate action remains a priority at the subnational level. Finally, the Secretary held the first in-person convening of the Subnational Methane Action Coalition since its founding in 2023. The coalition announced its 22nd member – the Province of Western Cape.

Izant closed her remarks by highlighting other aspects of CalEPA's international work, such as how the agency is working on commitments made on existing MOUs with Canada, Australia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and China. Furthermore, Izant stated that Secretary Garcia helped to convene the California-Mexico Border Relations Council, a central oversight body for California-Mexico issues. At the meeting, the parties discussed Tijuana River coordination, amongst other items.

Courtney Smith, Principal Deputy Executive Officer at the California Air Resources Board (CARB), began her remarks by celebrating new CARB Chair Lauren Sanchez. Smith noted that Sanchez is passionate about international issues and looks forward to working with the committee.

Smith discussed two MOUs CARB has signed since April: an MOU with the Panama Ministry of the Environment in May as well as an MOU with the Danish Energy Agency in June. CARB committed to providing technical support for developing a carbon market with Panama and support on offshore wind development to Denmark.

Smith spent the bulk of her remarks describing her recent experience at the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) extraordinary session in London. Smith stated that the IMO is a body of the UN that has the authority to regulate the global shipping industry, both for safety and for environmental protection. Previously, the IMO had committed to adopt a net zero framework by 2050; however, the Trump Administration threatened to pass sanctions on countries who approved the framework – these threats cast the outcome of the vote in doubt. Given that global shipping accounts for 3% of the world's emissions, the outcome of this meeting had large climate ramifications. In fact, this framework would be the world's first global framework regulating shipping emissions. Furthermore, Smith noted that the International Chamber of Shipping – an organization that represents 80% of global shipping companies – approved of the framework as it would provide regulatory certainty for its members.

In the end, the vote was postponed, an outcome Smith dubbed disappointing. In spite of this, Smith stated that the conference was filled with hope; while California is not a voting



member of the IMO, many attendees approached California delegates about opportunities to tackle this issue. Given CARB is in the early stages of exploring an in-transit shipping regulation, Smith said these conversations were fruitful. In the end, Smith's take away was that the world is watching California's climate action and that our state is not alone in its plan to address climate change.

Elsa Beljean, Senior International Advisor at the California Energy Commission (CEC), opened her remarks by thanking California's leadership for their commitment to international engagements.

Beljean echoed Secretary Ross's interest in engaging with India, as the CEC is in conversations with the Rajasthan Electricity Regulatory Commission in India regarding a potential MOI. Furthermore, the CEC, CPUC, and CARB hosted 32 stakeholders from India earlier this year. During this conversation, participants discussed the importance of hydrogen in energy integration as well as how economic development and meeting climate goals go hand in hand.

Beljean also discussed the CEC's engagements with the Nordic region, as the CEC renewed an MOU with the Danish Energy Agency. This working group meets regularly and will be meeting again in November. Commissioner Nancy Skinner will soon join a delegation to Denmark to discuss decarbonization in the industrial sector. Furthermore, Beljean said that the CEC has continued to work with Norway and looks forward to meeting the new Consul General of Norway soon.

The CEC joined CalSTA's green shipping corridor forum at the Port of Long Beach that focused on collaboration with the Port of Shanghai. Regarding China, Commissioner McAllister joined the California-China Climate Institute trip to Hong Kong, Hainan, and Beijing where he met with Chinese partners and attended two forums.

Other recent CEC engagements include participation with CalSTA's work with Nigeria and Kenya as well as continued partnership with the Mexican state of Sonora. Beljean concluded her comments by highlighting California's recent clean energy milestone, where the state celebrated being powered by two-thirds clean energy – becoming the largest economy in the world to achieve milestone.

D. Closing Remarks from the Chair & Vice Chair



Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis ceded her closing remarks to Secretary Omishakin, who circled back to Principal Deputy Executive Officer Smith's comments regarding the International Maritime Organization's recent vote on the Net Zero Framework; here, the Secretary emphasized his disappointment. Given California's role in this industry, the Secretary stated that he hopes California can influence this framework moving forward. He lamented how the Trump administration influenced voting members, especially since two-thirds of the IMO's members agreed to adopt the framework in April. Secretary Omishakin said that California should do whatever it can to support the Net Zero Framework.

Emily Desai, Chief Deputy Director of the California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), ceded her closing remarks.

E. Public Comment

Brian White, Partner at KP Public Affairs, provided public comment on behalf of the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association. White iterated PMSA's appreciation for the committee's actions to keep California's Ports – notably the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach – competitive but noted how uncertainty continues to affect the shipping industry. White said that certain state and local policies are limiting investment into the industry and highlighted the rising frequency of cargo theft in the state and nationwide – both factors that have increased the cost of consumer goods. White noted that maintaining California's supply chain requires capital intensive investments and asked the committee to continue to make these investments into California's maritime industry.

F. Adjournment

Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis thanked members of the public for attending the committee meeting as well as her fellow committee members for their participation.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:32 pm.