Inclusive Framework on BEPS: Action 14
Making Dispute Resolution More Effective
MAP Peer Review Report

BEST PRACTICES
New Zealand
2021
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Making Dispute Resolution More Effective
MAP Peer Review Report

New Zealand
Best practices (2021)
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### Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<td>APA</td>
<td>Advance Pricing Arrangement</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>Forum on Tax Administration</td>
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<td>MAP</td>
<td>Mutual Agreement Procedure</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
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Introduction

The final report on BEPS Action 14: “Making Dispute Resolution Mechanisms More Effective” identified a number of best practices related to the three general objectives of the Action 14 Minimum Standard.

Paragraph 9 of the Terms of Reference to monitor and review the implementation of the BEPS Action 14 Minimum Standard to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective stipulates that:

*The best practices are not part of the minimum standard and whether or not a jurisdiction has implemented the best practices will not be peer reviewed or monitored, nor will it affect the assessment of the assessed jurisdiction. Jurisdictions are free, however, to identify best practices they have adopted.*

New Zealand has provided information and requested feedback by peers on how it has adopted best practices. In that regard, the FTA MAP Forum agreed on an optional best practices feedback form that peers have used to provide feedback on New Zealand’s adoption of the best practices.

The peer review process on the implementation of the Action 14 Minimum Standard consists of two stages: a peer review process (stage 1) and a peer monitoring process (stage 2). Stage 2 is launched within one year upon the adoption of the peer review report by the BEPS Inclusive Framework through an update report by New Zealand. This document contains a general overview of the adoption of best practices and comments by peers on the adoption of these best practices during stage 1 (period ranging from 1 January 2015 up to 31 December 2017) and stage 2 (ranging from 1 January 2018 up to 31 August 2019).

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1 Terms of reference to monitor and review the implementing of the BEPS Action 14 Minimum Standard to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective (CFA/NOE2(2016)45(REV.1)).
Part A

Preventing Disputes

[BP.1] Implement bilateral APA programmes

Jurisdictions should implement bilateral APA programmes.

1. APAs concluded bilaterally between competent authorities provide an increased level of certainty in both jurisdictions, lessen the likelihood of double taxation and may proactively prevent transfer pricing disputes.

2. New Zealand reported that it is authorised to enter into unilateral, bilateral and multilateral APAs. The legal basis for bilateral and multilateral APAs is the MAP provision contained in New Zealand’s tax treaties. New Zealand emphasized that its approach to each APA is tailored to the facts and circumstances involved and that it has not established a standardised formal process for the same. In addition, there are no specific timelines for the filing of an APA request in New Zealand. Typically, New Zealand applies a bilateral APA for a period of three to five years.

3. New Zealand further reported there is no formal process for obtaining an APA. Taxpayers who wish to obtain an APA are advised to contact New Zealand’s transfer pricing specialists. In this respect, New Zealand’s tax administration has a dedicated webpage that contains information on APAs, which in a general sense outlines the steps that are typically applied in practice. This concerns:

   - A submission of a short written proposal by the taxpayer discussing the background of its business, the associated enterprise that is party to the transaction(s) in question and the suggested transfer pricing methodology to be applied
   - A pre-application meeting with one of New Zealand’s transfer pricing specialists to informally discuss the submitted proposal
   - A formal application for an APA.

4. New Zealand mentioned that during bilateral APA negotiations it endeavours to keep in contact with the taxpayer to ensure that the outcome agreed by the tax authorities will also be accepted by the taxpayer.

5. New Zealand reported that no fees are charged to taxpayers when filing a request for a bilateral APA, albeit that if New Zealand’s tax administration needs to travel overseas, it will seek to recover so-called out of pocket costs on an actual and reasonable basis.

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6. In the webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on APAs, New Zealand noted that it aims to complete all unilateral APAs within six months of the date of acceptance of a formal application, which generally has been met. Furthermore, it is also mentioned that New Zealand also strives to complete bilateral APAs with Australia, being its main APA partner, within this six month time frame as well. While it generally meets this timeframe for this treaty partner, it stressed that negotiations with other tax authorities generally take considerably longer to resolve. Further, statistics on New Zealand’s APA inventory are available on this webpage as well.

7. Two peers provided input on this best practice, one of them noting that New Zealand has an established APA programme that is managed by New Zealand’s transfer pricing specialist team. This peer highlighted that this team is the contact point for any company seeking to gather information about APAs including knowledge of the pre-application process and any subsequent formal APA request. The second peer noted that it has a cooperative and productive APA relationship with New Zealand.

[BP.2] Publish mutual agreements of a general nature

*Jurisdictions should have appropriate procedures in place to publish agreements reached by competent authorities on difficulties or doubts arising as to the interpretation or application of their tax treaties in appropriate cases.*

8. Agreements reached by competent authorities to resolve difficulties or doubts arising as to the interpretation or application of their tax treaties in relation to issues of a general nature which concern, or may concern, a category of taxpayers reflect the competent authorities’ mutual understanding of the meaning of the convention and its terms. As such agreements provide information that might be useful to prevent difficulties or doubts in the interpretation or application of tax treaty provisions, publication of these agreements is valuable.

9. New Zealand reported that it publishes agreements reached concerning difficulties or doubts arising as to the interpretation or application of their tax treaties by the competent authorities, provided that the other competent authority concerned consents to such publication. In this respect, and as an example, New Zealand has to date published one interpretative mutual agreement that was reached with the United States (2005).^3^ 

10. In view of the above, publications relating to MAP agreements of a general nature can be found at the website of New Zealand’s tax administration:


11. Further to the above, the webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP, under the section titled ‘Implementation of MAP agreements’ notes that from time to time competent authorities may resolve difficulties or doubts on the interpretation or application of the tax treaty and that are of a general nature or concern a category of taxpayers. Where such agreement is entered into by New Zealand’s competent authority, the webpage notes it will be published on the website of New Zealand’s tax administration, under the tax policy section.

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PART A: PREVENTING DISPUTES

12. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.3] Provide guidance on APAs

Jurisdictions’ published MAP guidance should provide guidance on APAs.

13. Guidance on a jurisdiction’s APA programme facilitates the use of that programme and creates awareness for taxpayers on how the APA process functions. As APAs may also prevent future disputes from arising, including information on APAs in a jurisdiction’s MAP guidance is relevant.

14. As previously mentioned under element BP.1, New Zealand allows unilateral, bilateral and multilateral APAs. While New Zealand has not issued specific guidance on APAs, it has set up a dedicated webpage on APAs in the website of its tax administration information and which is available at:


15. This webpage contains information on what an APA is and on what basis taxpayers can request for it. It also discusses the steps taxpayers need to take to apply for an APA, the steps that will be taken by New Zealand’s tax administration when reviewing such an application, the timeframes involved and the possibility of recovering costs from taxpayers when overseas travel is involved by New Zealand’s tax administration.

16. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.4] Develop “global awareness” of the audit/examination functions

Jurisdictions should develop the “global awareness” of the audit/examination functions involved in international matters through the delivery of the Forum on Tax Administration’s “Global Awareness Training Module” to appropriate personnel.

17. Making audit/examination function of tax administrations that are involved in international matters aware of: (i) the potential for creating double taxation, (ii) the impact of a proposed adjustment on the tax base of one or more jurisdictions and (iii) the process and principles by which competing juridical claims are reconciled by competent authorities, may be useful to prevent disputes from arising. Using the Global Awareness Training Module developed by the Forum on Tax Administration (FTA) can be helpful in this respect.

18. New Zealand reported that training is provided to its officials involved in the auditing/examination of taxpayers. In this respect, staff within the tax administration that are working on international tax matters are required to be skilled in interpreting the law and to exercise technical judgment. While most of the training is given by acquiring practical experience, New Zealand mentioned that part of the training takes place through formal learning activities and structured courses, which are given by the Knowledge & Development Unit. Examples of structured courses that are provided to auditors/examiners concern inter alia: (i) tax residence, (ii) double taxation agreements, (iii) taxation of offshore investments, (iv) taxation of non-residents, (v) transfer pricing, (vi) BEPS and
(vii) tax avoidance. Furthermore, New Zealand reported that these structured courses are supplemented by various events throughout the years. To gain further knowledge, the auditors/examiners may also attend external training and courses.

19. Specifically concerning transfer pricing issues, New Zealand reported that its tax administration employs a number of experts on certain subjects, including specialists that focus on transfer pricing and international tax matters. These specialists provide advice and assistance to auditors/examiners, particularly when it concerns more complex issues that arise in practice. In that regard, New Zealand also noted that it has made available a comprehensive series of practice notes on transfer pricing issues, which cover 20 issues among which the MAP process is included. These practice notes are publically available at:


20. New Zealand additionally reported that its tax administration has publicised the Global Awareness Training Module in internal presentations to its staff and that it has made the module available on its International Revenue Strategy intranet site. Furthermore, New Zealand also noted that it has distributed the module to the people in its Customer and Compliance Services - Business department who are engaged in international matters.

21. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.
Part B

Availability and access to MAP

[BP.5] Implement appropriate administrative measures to facilitate recourse to MAP

Jurisdictions should implement appropriate administrative measures to facilitate recourse to the MAP to resolve treaty-related disputes, recognising the general principle that the choice of remedies should remain with the taxpayer.

22. Under Article 25(1) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), the mutual agreement procedure is a dispute settlement procedure in annex to domestic available remedies and not a substitute for such remedies. Reference is made to inter alia paragraph 7 of the Commentary to Article 25 of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), which specifies that the right to submit a MAP request is available to taxpayers without depriving them of the ordinary legal remedies available. Facilitating recourse to the MAP through appropriate administrative measures, under the general principle that the choice of remedies remains with taxpayers, enabling them to effectively resort to such dispute settlement procedure.

23. New Zealand reported that no fees are charged to taxpayers for a MAP request and that taxpayers in New Zealand are allowed to request MAP assistance and at the same time seek to resolve the same dispute via domestically available judicial and administrative remedies. Furthermore, New Zealand reported that such requests can be made regardless of whether the issue under dispute has already been decided via these judicial and administrative remedies. However, New Zealand’s competent authority is bound to follow a domestic court decision. In that regard, New Zealand reported it will only enter into dialogue with the other competent authorities concerned to explain its position so as to allow this competent authority to grant relief from double taxation.

24. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.6] Provide access to MAP for bona fide taxpayer-initiated foreign adjustments

Jurisdictions’ published MAP guidance should provide that taxpayers will be allowed access to the MAP so that the competent authorities may resolve through consultation the double taxation that can arise in the case of bona fide taxpayer-initiated foreign adjustments.
25. A taxpayer-initiated foreign adjustment is considered bona fide where it reflects the good faith effort of the taxpayer to report correctly, timely and properly the adjusted taxable income from a controlled transaction or the profits attributable to a permanent establishment with a view to reflect an arm’s length result, and where the taxpayer has otherwise timely and properly fulfilled all of its obligations related to such taxable income or profits under the laws of the treaty partners. As such taxpayer-initiated foreign adjustments may lead to cases of double taxation, it is relevant that there is access to MAP for resolving these cases. Furthermore, specifying whether there is access to the MAP for these adjustments in a jurisdiction’s MAP guidance also provides additional clarity.

26. New Zealand reported it provides access to MAP in cases of bona fide taxpayer-initiated foreign adjustments. New Zealand further reported that it will notify the other competent authority of a downward adjustment made in such situation so as to prevent an outcome that leads to (partial) non-taxation of a primary adjustment made.

27. The webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP, in the section titled ‘Scope of MAP’, gives examples of cases for which taxpayers have access to MAP, which includes cases concerning bona fide taxpayer initiated foreign adjustments.

28. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.7] Provide guidance on multilateral MAPs

| Jurisdictions’ published MAP guidance should provide guidance on multilateral MAPs. |

29. In recent years, globalisation has created unique challenges for existing tax treaty dispute resolution mechanisms. Whilst the mutual agreement procedure provided for in Article 25 of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) has traditionally focused on the resolution of bilateral disputes, phenomena such as the adoption of regional and global value chains as well as the accelerated integration of national economies and markets have emphasised the need for effective mechanisms to resolve multi-jurisdictional tax disputes. In that regard, it is for clarity purposes relevant that jurisdiction’s MAP guidance includes information on availability of and access to multilateral MAPs.

30. New Zealand reported that it is amenable to consider multilateral MAPs on a case-by-case basis and that it has one such case in its MAP inventory. The webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP, in the section titled ‘Filing a MAP request’, clarifies that in appropriate cases and where allowed by the concerned treaties, its competent authority would engage in multilateral MAP discussions. It also clarifies that where the concerned treaty does not allow multilateral cases, its competent authority would engage bilaterally in a coordinated manner using exchange of information provisions as well to resolve the matter as efficiently as possible.

31. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.8] Provide for suspension of collection procedures for pending MAP cases

| Jurisdictions should take appropriate measures to provide for a suspension of collections procedures during the period a MAP case is pending. Such a suspension of collections |

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If, following an adjustment taxpayers immediately have to pay the tax due, whereas the same amount was already paid to the tax administration of the other jurisdiction involved, double taxation will in fact occur. As taxpayers may then face significant cash-flow issues, at least for the period the MAP case is pending, it is relevant that jurisdictions provide for suspension of collection procedure for this period under at least the same conditions as available for domestic remedies.

New Zealand reported that if a taxpayer submits a MAP request, this does not preclude domestic action. While officially suspension of tax collection is not available for pending MAP cases, New Zealand explained that in practice, however, collection procedures are suspended during the period a valid MAP case is in progress. The webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP does not provide any information in this respect.

Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.
Part C

Resolution of MAP Cases

[BP.9] Permit taxpayers to request multi-year resolution of recurring issues through the MAP

Jurisdictions should implement appropriate procedures to permit, in certain cases and after an initial tax assessment, requests made by taxpayer which are within the time period provided for in the tax treaty for the multi-year resolution through the MAP of recurring issues with respect to filed tax years, where the relevant facts and circumstances are the same and subject to the verification of such facts and circumstances on audit.

35. In certain cases, a MAP request with respect to a specific adjustment to income may present recurring issues that may be relevant in previous or subsequent tax years. Allowing taxpayers to submit requests for the multi-year resolution through MAP with respect to such recurring issues, where the relevant facts and circumstances are the same, may help avoid duplicative MAP requests and facilitate a more efficient use of competent authority resources.

36. New Zealand reported it allows taxpayers to request the multi-year resolution of recurring issues through the MAP, which is also stated in the webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration that contains information on MAP, in the section titled ‘Implementation of MAP agreements’.

37. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.10] Publish explanation of the relationship between the MAP and domestic remedies

Jurisdictions should publish an explanation of the relationship between the MAP and domestic law administrative and judicial remedies.

38. As mentioned under BP.5, pursuant to Article 25(1) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) taxpayers are allowed to submit a MAP request irrespective of available domestic remedies. This, however, does not further specify how to proceed if both available remedies are initiated and the case is dealt with in the bilateral phase of the MAP. Publicly available guidance on the relationship between the MAP and domestic remedies provides clarity to taxpayers as well as treaty partners.

39. As discussed under element BP.5, the webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP, under the section ‘Domestic disputes
process’, has included an explanation addressing the relationship between MAP and domestic law administrative and judicial remedies in New Zealand. This webpage is available at:


40. This section of the webpage specifies that taxpayers can initiate the MAP and the domestic disputes process simultaneously. However, it is also stated that New Zealand’s competent authority is under its domestic law legally bound by decisions from its domestic courts, but that it is willing to enter into dialogue with other competent authorities to explain its position so as to allow this competent authority to grant relief from double taxation.

41. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.11] Provide guidance on consideration of interest and penalties in MAP

| Jurisdictions’ published MAP guidance should provide guidance on the consideration of interest and penalties in the mutual agreement procedure. |

42. As interest and penalties may concern substantial amounts, providing clarity in a jurisdiction’s MAP guidance on whether interest and penalties are in the scope of the MAP is relevant to ensure that a taxpayer is well-informed on this issue.

43. New Zealand reported that charged penalties and interest are generally not deferred until the dispute is resolved. New Zealand further reported that such penalties and interest can only be deferred if taxpayers challenge the tax assessment through either the domestic disputes process or New Zealand’s courts. The webpage of New Zealand’s tax administration containing information on MAP, under the section titled ‘Implementation of MAP agreements’ also specifies this position.

44. Peers did not provide input relating to this particular best practice.

[BP.12] Include Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention in tax treaties

| Jurisdictions should include paragraph 2 of Article 9 of the OECD Model Tax Convention in their tax treaties. |

45. Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) allows competent authorities to make a corresponding adjustment to unilaterally eliminate double taxation arising from primary adjustments. Including this provision in tax treaties provides taxpayers the possibility to obtain the elimination of such double taxation via a unilateral corresponding adjustment.

46. New Zealand reported that it is in favour of including Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) in its tax treaties where possible and that it will seek to include this provision in all of its future tax treaties.
Overview of tax treaties

47. Out of New Zealand’s 47 tax treaties, 27 contain a provision equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) requiring their state to make a correlative adjustment in case a transfer pricing adjustment is imposed by the treaty partner.\(^4\) Furthermore, 18 treaties do not contain a provision that is based on or equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017). Out of these 18 treaties, seven are treaties with a limited scope that do not contain a provision that is based on or equivalent to Article 9 of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), but in six of these treaties, MAP is allowed to be initiated for transfer pricing cases. Both remaining treaties, contain a provision that is based on Article 9(2), but either stipulate that corresponding adjustments can only be made as a result of a mutual agreement procedure in accordance with the MAP article or that the granting of corresponding adjustments is only option, as the word “shall” is replaced by “may”. For these reasons, both provisions are considered not being equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017).

Recent developments

Bilateral modifications

48. New Zealand signed a new tax treaty with one treaty partner to replace the existing treaty in force. This treaty contains a provision that is equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), which was also the case in the treaty that was replaced. This newly signed treaty has already entered into force. Furthermore, New Zealand also signed amending protocols to two existing treaties, adding the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) to one of these treaties where it was previously not present. The effects of this newly signed treaty and the amending protocols have been reflected in the analysis above where it has relevance.

Multilateral Instrument

49. New Zealand signed the Multilateral Instrument and has deposited its instrument of ratification on 27 June 2018. The Multilateral Instrument has entered into force for New Zealand on 1 October 2018.

50. Article 17(2) of that instrument stipulates that Article 17(1) – containing the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017) – will apply in place of or in the absence of a provision in tax treaties that is equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017). However, this shall only apply if both contracting parties to the applicable tax treaty have listed this treaty as a covered tax agreement under the Multilateral Instrument. Article 17(2) of the Multilateral Instrument does not take effect for a tax treaty if one or both of the treaty partners have, pursuant to Article 17(3), reserved the right to not apply Article 17(1) for those tax treaties that already contain the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), or not to apply Article 17(1) in the absence of such equivalent under the condition that: (i) it shall make appropriate corresponding adjustments or (ii) its competent authority shall

\(^4\) In the stage 1 best practices report, it was described that in total 27 of New Zealand’s tax treaties contain the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017). Following the peer review process of other assessed jurisdictions, however, one additional treaty were identified that does not contain such equivalent. Due to the signing of an amending protocol to an existing treaty that also contains Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), the number of treaties not containing such equivalent remains the same.
endeavour to resolve the case under mutual agreement procedure of the applicable tax treaty. Where neither treaty partner has made such a reservation, Article 17(4) of the Multilateral Instrument stipulates that both have to notify the depositary whether the applicable treaty already contains a provision equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017). Where such a notification is made by both of them, the Multilateral Instrument will modify this treaty to replace that provision. If neither or only one treaty partner made this notification, Article 17(1) of the Multilateral Instrument will supersede this treaty only to the extent that the provision contained in that treaty relating to the granting of corresponding adjustments is incompatible with Article 17(1) (containing the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017)).

51. New Zealand has not reserved the right, pursuant to Article 17(3), not to apply Article 17(1) of the Multilateral Instrument for those tax treaties that already contain a provision equivalent to Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017). With regard to the 13 treaties identified in paragraph 47 above that are considered not to contain an equivalent provision (disregarding those seven treaties that do not contain Article 9 at all), New Zealand listed all of them as a covered tax agreement under the Multilateral Instrument, but only for two of them made a notification on the basis of Article 17(4) that they do contain a provision described in Article 17(2). Both treaty partners are a signatory to the Multilateral Instrument and listed their treaty with New Zealand as a covered tax agreement under that instrument, but one of them has, on the basis of Article 17(3), reserved the right not to apply Article 17(1) as it considered that its treaty with New Zealand already contains the equivalent of Article 9(2). The remaining treaty partner also made a notification on the basis of Article 17(4). This treaty partner has already deposited its instrument of ratification of the Multilateral Instrument, following which the Multilateral Instrument has entered into force for the treaties between New Zealand and this treaty partner, and therefore has replaced the relevant treaty provision to include the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017).

52. Furthermore, for the remaining 11 tax treaties for which New Zealand did not make a notification on the basis of Article 17(4), one has not listed its treaty with New Zealand under that instrument. Five of the remaining ten treaty partners have already deposited their instruments of ratification of the Multilateral Instrument, following which the Multilateral Instrument has entered into force for the treaties between New Zealand and these treaty partners, and therefore has superseded the relevant treaty provision to include the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), but only to the extent that the provision contained in these treaties relating to the granting of corresponding adjustments are incompatible with Article 17(1). The provision in the remaining five treaties will, upon the entry into force of the Multilateral Instrument for these treaties, be superseded by the Multilateral Instrument to include the equivalent of Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), but only to the extent that the provision contained in these treaties relating to the granting of corresponding adjustments are incompatible with Article 17(1).

53. One peer provided input and mentioned that its treaty with New Zealand includes Article 9(2) of the OECD Model Tax Convention (OECD, 2017), which is indeed the case.
Part D

Implementation of MAP agreements

There are no best practices for Part D.
### Glossary

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