

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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Indigenous Issues, 16 – 27 May 2011**

**New Zealand Statement on Indigenous Peoples and Forests
Item 3(b)**

**Ms Kim Ngarimu
Deputy Secretary, Te Puni Kōkiri**

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Check against delivery

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Tena koe Madame Chair, tena koutou hoki te tepu. Kei te mihi au, me matou ko te Kawanatanga o Aotearoa, ki a koutou nga rangatira mo tenei wananga. Kei te mihi hoki matou ki a koutou kua tae mai nei ki te wananga, ki te whakawhiti korero, nga take e pa ana ki nga iwi taketake o te Ao.

Madame Chair, Distinguished Members of the Permanent Forum, participants and fellow observers. On behalf of the New Zealand government, I extend to you all our greetings.

As it is our first opportunity to do so, New Zealand is pleased to congratulate you on your appointment as Chair. I would like to acknowledge the Chief of the Permanent Forum, Ms Chandra Roy-Henriksen. I would also like to express our thanks to former Forum Chief Ms Elsa Stamatopoulou for her tireless work and dedication to human rights, and in particular the rights of indigenous peoples. Our thanks also to the Forum Secretariat and Forum Members. We are particularly proud of the New Zealand Forum Member Ms Valmaine Toki. You all have New Zealand's full support for the important work you do.

New Zealand was particularly pleased to note that in its report on Indigenous Peoples and Forests, the Expert Group made, at paragraph 31, particular mention of the Central North Island Treaty of Waitangi Settlement. It is on this specific issue that New Zealand offers further elaboration to the Permanent Forum.

In New Zealand, Māori are involved with forest lands both as landowners, particularly as a result of the return of areas used for commercial forestry through claims under the Treaty of Waitangi, and also through involvement in decision-making affecting forest areas held for conservation purposes in national parks and other reserves. Involvement in conservation decision-making is grounded both in general legislation and in agreements with particular iwi.

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By way of a recent and prominent example, and as discussed in the Expert Group's report, in June 2008, the Crown signed a Treaty settlement with eight iwi in the Central North Island (CNI) of New Zealand. The deal was finalised on 1 July 2009 when the settlement assets were transferred to iwi. The CNI settlement is the largest Treaty settlement to date in New Zealand. It covers 176,000 hectares of forest land and provides for the payment to iwi of accumulated rentals and land valued at up to \$230 million. It is anticipated that the settlement will benefit over 110,000 Māori members of the collective.

The CNI settlement is also unprecedented. In 2008, the CNI iwi formed an Iwi Collective ("Collective") and presented a proposal to the Crown to deal with the Crown forest licensed lands in their region in a way that accounted for relevant iwi interests. Broadly, the forest land was transferred as commercial redress in which the Collective agreed among themselves how they would distribute the accumulated and ongoing rentals associated with the forest land. Ultimate ownership of the forest land is being determined according to a process being managed by iwi themselves. The CNI settlement shows that iwi can take a significantly larger role than in the past in initiating and designing settlement processes and packages.

The CNI settlement provided CNI iwi with a resource base to better meet the Collective's economic, social and cultural aspirations. They now own a significant proportion of the forest land in the Central North Island, a stream of income from the rentals, and have embarked on a commercial strategy to participate in both the forestry industry and in other natural resource related business endeavours¹. This settlement means the CNI iwi are major long-term investors in the forestry industry, and significant economic players in their own tribal homelands.

¹ Tukia Group invested in geothermal carbon farming joint ventures with Timberlands to own some of the business, and is therefore more than just a landlord.

New Zealand has also developed an Emissions Trading Scheme (NZ ETS). Under the NZ ETS there is potential for forestry land owners to earn carbon credits. There are two main types of forest in the NZ ETS: post-1989 forest and pre-1990 forest. Broadly, participation in the NZ ETS is compulsory for forest owners of pre-1990 forest, and voluntary for forest owners of post-1989 forest.

The CNI settlement included the allocation of significant carbon credits for the transferred forest lands and the commercial arm has already set up a separate carbon farming business. Other iwi may also be well-placed to take advantage of these opportunities. Several iwi and hapū groups are currently investigating the economic benefits of voluntarily entering the NZ ETS by receiving carbon credits for planting and regenerating forests on their lands. In particular, iwi are investigating opportunities for afforestation schemes, in the East Coast and Northern regions of the North Island, where there are potentially large areas of suitable land.

Again, I would like to thank the Expert Group for recognising, and reporting on, this important initiative.

Thank you Madame Chair.