

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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Seventh Session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Agenda Item 4: Implementation of the UN Millennium Development Goals through the Maori Potential Approach

 Statement by

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 **New Zealand**

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Madame Chair,

I am honoured to be part of these important discussions on the development of indigenous peoples and to brief you on the New Zealand government's updated approach to Maori policy and development.

In 2004 the New Zealand Government updated its approach to Maori policy. This updated approach is known as the *Māori Potential Approach* and provides the basis for policy development in the Māori Affairs portfolio. The Māori Potential Approach is currently being integrated into the wider public sector. For example, it has recently underpinned the Government's Māori Education Strategy, *Ka Hikitia*.

Fundamentally, the *Maori Potential Approach* is a strengths-based approach to policy development for Maori. It is based on the premise of recognising and investing in the strengths and opportunities of Māori people for the benefit of Māori and wider New Zealand. There is a growing recognition that Māori success is New Zealand's success. Māori are over 15% of the overall population and that population is young, increasing and integrated throughout New Zealand society.

The Māori Potential Guiding Principles guide government in the development and implementation of policy for Māori people. The guiding principles are:

- **Māori Potential**: this principle affirms that Maori are a multi-dimensional, aspirational people, supported by a distinctive culture and value system. This principle seeks opportunities for Māori to change their life circumstances, to improve life choices, and thus achieve a better quality of life;
- **Culturally Distinct**: this principle reflects the role of Māori and their indigenous culture, recognises the Māori community and their indigenous culture as a net contributor to the identity, wellbeing and enrichment of wider society. This principle seeks out respect for Māori as first people of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the cultural advantage with which Māori enrich their communities; and
- **Māori Capability**: this principle affirms the capability, initiative and aspiration of Maori to make choices for themselves. This principle reflects the need to invest in Maori themselves as catalysts of change. This principle also seeks to build the capability of Māori people and their sense of their choices and power to act.

Madame Chair,

This set of principles is intended to promote a conscious shift in government towards identifying the positive opportunities for Māori going forward, and to provide a stronger platform for effective relationships between Māori and Government.

The government will continue to address disparities between Māori and non-Māori, but this updated approach places disparities in a more appropriate context, which recognises that the primary objective should be for Maori to fully realise their economic, social and cultural potential.

The New Zealand government supports Maori succeeding as Maori and as critical contributors to New Zealand society.

No reira, tena koutou tena koutou tena koutou katoa.

Further information: <http://www.tpk.govt.nz/>