

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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UN PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

ITEM 4:

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

STATEMENT BY

NEW ZEALAND

**MS DONNA MATAHAERE-ATARIKI
DIRECTOR OF POLICY, TE PUNI KOKIRI**

THURSDAY 17 MAY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

I would like to address the inter-related issues of culture and education in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for indigenous peoples. Over the past thirty years, New Zealand has undergone a profound transformation to address the rights and needs of its indigenous people. At the centre of New Zealand's approach has been the promotion and protection of indigenous culture. We have recognized both a responsibility and an interest in doing so.

In particular, New Zealand continues to place high priority on the promotion and protection of te Reo Maori, Maori language. We believe that the growth and use of the language is fundamental to the well-being of Maori as a community and as individuals. At the same time, we also believe that te reo Māori is a taonga, a cultural treasure, that makes New Zealanders and New Zealand unique.

Maori has been an official language of New Zealand since 1987 and efforts to promote te Reo have seen the language regenerate and flourish. These efforts have included funding early childhood, primary and secondary schools for children whose first language is Maori. We will shortly celebrate the 25th anniversary of the te kohanga reo movement, Maori language early childhood education, which was inspired and driven by Maori women leaders, in partnership with the government. More recently, New Zealand has included funding free-to-air Maori language television and radio stations with nation-wide coverage.

We are pleased to advise the Permanent Forum that New Zealand has recently passed another major milestone in the protection and promotion of Māori language. The government last month launched draft guidelines for te Reo Māori in the New Zealand school curriculum. These will guide the teaching and learning of te Reo Māori in English-medium primary and secondary schools.

All New Zealand schools will now have the opportunity and the practical guidance to teach te Reo Maori. The government is encouraging all New Zealand children, whatever their ethnicity, to learn some te Reo, and is working to ensure that all Maori children have access to learning their own language. Much work remains to be done and we look forward to keeping the Permanent Forum updated.

New Zealand fully supports the Permanent Forum's work promoting education for indigenous children in their own language and supports calls for the relevant parts of the UN system to properly address this issue in the context of the Millennium Development Goal on primary education. Moreover it is essential that the UN system is sensitised to the importance of indigenous culture and engages at the country level in such as way as to promote the continued use of indigenous languages.