

Item 8: Discussion on the theme “Indigenous peoples’ collective rights to lands, territories and natural resources”

[Speakers List]

Tēnā koe Mr / Madam Chair

[New Zealand aligns itself with the statement delivered by Mexico on behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples]

New Zealand recognises the relationship of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and natural resources noting that this relationship is fundamental to identity, culture and wellbeing.

Our history has shown us the importance of this relationship as Māori have continued to assert and uphold their identity, rights and interests to lands, territories and resources. With the passage of time and supported by the foundations of the Treaty of Waitangi, the Government of New Zealand and Māori tribes have negotiated redress to settle past grievances of rights and interests including to land and resources.

Increasingly, Māori approaches to land and resource management have been built into law. For example, there is legislative recognition of Te Awa Tupua /the Whanganui River as a legal person with its own rights in law, and establishment of a governance and management framework that enables the collective participation of several Whanganui iwi (tribes) with overlapping interests and whakapapa with the river.

Settlement negotiations have been a key vehicle for realising tribal aspirations like with the Whanganui River, and the Government aims to achieve settlements with all remaining iwi groups who wish to settle by 2020. Building on knowledge brought through these settlement processes, both the Government and Māori are also increasingly looking to the opportunities that a partnership approach provides in managing resources to deliver economic, social and cultural benefits for Māori and all New Zealanders.

The centuries-long relationship of Māori with our environment has built a rich base of mātauranga (knowledge) on natural resource management and the integration of economic, social and environmental values. The Government, businesses and communities are increasingly looking to Māori for knowledge and expertise in natural resource management. This is illustrated, for example in New Zealand's National Biodiversity Action Plan 2016-2020 which includes national targets:

- to increase Māori participation across activities implementing New Zealand targets for biodiversity, and
- that encompass activities to protect and develop the appropriate use of mātauranga Māori.

Looking after the whenua (land) and taiao (environment) have been a central part of Māori culture for centuries. This practice of kaitiakitanga (guardianship) has been recognised through Treaty settlements and in recent resource management reforms. However, New Zealand also acknowledges the need to address historic barriers to Māori making

*Whanganui te tangata
to the whoa
As people
disappears
from sight,
the land
remains*

choices and decisions to develop their own future through their whenua (land). This is important/significant because land underpins wellbeing of Māori – from Māori identity through to the ability of Māori to support themselves economically and socially.

The New Zealand Government is committed to a strong, ongoing and healthy relationship with Māori, and has made it a priority to ensure that this ongoing relationship is based on partnership.

No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa