



**New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Te Aka Aorere**

**United Nations General Assembly:
Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:
New Zealand Government Intervention
on Item 5(f) International Decade of
Indigenous Languages**

**New Zealand Statement delivered by
Permanent Representative, H.E. Ms. Carolyn Schwalger**

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Tēnā koutou katoa – Greetings to everyone.

Aotearoa New Zealand welcomes the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. It was this very Forum which recommended the proclamation of the International Decade, and we join with the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples in reiterating our support.

This decade we must drastically increase our efforts to preserve, revitalise and promote indigenous languages around the world to ensure they do not disappear forever.

In Aotearoa New Zealand we continue our commitment to revitalise te reo Māori, our indigenous language. The Māori language is sacred, and helps define who we are as New Zealanders.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Māori Language Petition: a catalyst that prompted the establishment of Māori language immersion schools, Māori language week, and a range of broadcasting, community, and Māori-led revitalisation initiatives which have been foundational to the current cultural and linguistic landscape of our country.

Over the next decade we will look to strengthen our partnership approach to Māori language revitalisation. Te Mātāwai, an entity established to represent Māori, is working towards a vision of “*He Reo Mauriora*” or “A living language” by 2040.

Māori language revitalisation initiatives implemented in partnership with Māori to date include establishing more bilingual cities and towns across the country, the phasing in of official bilingual road signs, and implementing a Māori language predictive modelling tool to support policy and decision-making for revitalisation efforts.

The Māori language is essential to supporting social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is also inherent to the rights and wellbeing of Māori, which is affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The government is currently developing a Plan to help realise the rights in the Declaration, which includes the right of indigenous peoples to revitalise their languages.

We will continue to support other countries around the world in their vision to revitalise their Indigenous languages, as their languages are sacred to them too.

This Decade is a momentous occasion to raise awareness of the important role indigenous languages play in sustaining the cultures and identities of indigenous peoples into the future.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou – Many thanks to you all.