

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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SIXTH SESSION OF THE PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

ITEM 3 : DIALOGUE ON THE THEME OF TERRITORIES, LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES

STATEMENT BY

NEW ZEALAND

**DEPUTY PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
MS KIRSTY GRAHAM**

TUESDAY 15 MAY

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

E nga mana
 E nga iwi
 E nga reo
 Ti hei mauri ora.
 Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa.

Madam Chair, New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to participate once again in this important forum for discussion of the international indigenous agenda.

New Zealand continues to place the highest priority on promoting awareness of indigenous issues, and engaging in meaningful dialogue with the Permanent Forum about how human rights can be translated into reality for the world's indigenous population. With one of the largest indigenous minorities in the world at nearly 15%, these issues are of fundamental importance to my country. In New Zealand, the place of Maori in society, their grievances, and the disparities affecting them, continue to be central and enduring features of domestic debate and of government action.

Madam Chair, the special theme of this meeting is Territories, Lands and Natural Resources. These are issues with which New Zealand has long experience. These are also fundamentally important issues that traverse the waterfront of indigenous interests, at the heart of which is sustainable economic development. Some indigenous peoples live with a sense of grievance and loss about the way society treated them in the past. For groups deprived of lands and resources, this sense of grievance can be profound. When combined with social deprivation and exclusion, the maintenance of social cohesion becomes a concern.

Madam Chair, for all of these reasons, more than thirty years ago, New Zealand began a journey to address indigenous rights, including grievances related to territories, lands and resources. The Treaty of Waitangi has been the foundation document for the renewal of the relationship between Maori and the Crown, and this has acquired great significance in nearly all areas of government activity including the allocation and management of lands and resources. In 1975, a permanent commission of inquiry - the Waitangi Tribunal - was established to investigate the Crown's alleged breaches of the Treaty in respect of lands and resources. In 1985, the mandate of the Tribunal was extended to address alleged historical breaches dating back to 1840 when the treaty was signed.

Since the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal, claims to some of New Zealand's most important resources have been settled. As part of this process, valuable land and resources have been returned to Maori groups. In 1992, for example, the government and Maori reached a landmark settlement with respect to Maori fisheries assets. As a result, Maori hold a significant stake in the New Zealand commercial fishery - today close to 40% of the national

quota is Maori owned. Among other things, domestic legislation also requires the Crown to recognise Maori customary non-commercial fishing rights and management practices. Maori also have a specific interest in agribusiness and forestry. Reflecting this, government agencies have been working to lift Maori land development. Today, Maori are estimated to own up to 10% of New Zealand's forest holdings, and hold an equally important stake in the valuable agriculture industry.

Madam Chair, in New Zealand we have a proverb. *'Toitu he whenua, whatu ngarongaro he tangata - the land is permanent, man disappears'*. We believe that Maori have a critical role to play in the promotion and protection of the environment in New Zealand and that States must work in cooperation with indigenous peoples in this endeavour. In New Zealand, the principal legislation regulating environmental management, the Resource Management Act, includes the need to take account of the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and enables participation by Maori in decision-making. The Act includes the obligation to recognise and provide for the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, and other treasures.

We are very proud today to advise you that, since your last meeting, Tumu Te Heuheu, Paramount Chief of Ngati Tuwharetoa, has been elected the first indigenous chair of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, which chooses, funds and monitors the caring of world heritage areas. This honour is particularly fitting because Mr Te Heu Heu's ancestor Horonuku Patatai gifted the mountains of the central North Island to the Crown in September 1887. This was the first gift of its kind from an indigenous people in the world, and the area became the first national park in New Zealand, which is today known throughout New Zealand and the world as Tongariro National Park. In 1993, this property was the first to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

Madam Chair, in New Zealand, the issue of indigenous territories, lands and resources is moving increasingly beyond the question of resolving grievances. There is a new confidence and dynamism in the many Maori communities that have concluded Treaty settlements. The indigenous economy in New Zealand is booming; Maori asset bases in fisheries, forestry and land based business continue to expand. Land and resource issues will continue to be of critical importance for economic development for Maori and for New Zealand. The progress made so far gives us much optimism for the future.

We commend the Permanent Forum for highlighting the importance of land and resource issues to indigenous peoples by making it the theme of this year's meeting. We look forward to sharing experiences with indigenous peoples and States here in the next two weeks.