



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

World Conference on Indigenous Peoples
Roundtable 3: “Indigenous Peoples’ lands,
territories, and resources.”

Statement delivered by
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23 September 2014

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As indigenous peoples we all have, and share a close relationship with our lands and resources. For Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand we acknowledge Papatuanuku as our Earth Mother, and it is from her bond with Ranginui, the sky father, that we, and all the plants and creatures on earth, descend. From this *whakapapa* or lineage, we are connected by a common bond and for us as Māori this translates into an obligation as *kaitiaki* or guardians to care for and protect our land and resources and to maintain their life sustaining properties for the benefit of present and future generations. As Māori we refer to ourselves as *tangata whenua* – people of the land.

As with many indigenous peoples, Māori have a history of colonisation that resulted in the loss of a significant amount of our traditional territories and lands and affected our ability to access our traditional resources. This is despite Te Tiriti o Waitangi, the Treaty of Waitangi, an agreement between the Queen of England and Māori chiefs in 1840 that guaranteed Māori *rangatiratanga* of their lands and resources so long as they wished to retain them.

Māori have fought for many decades, for the recognition of their rights and interests in land and resources. This struggle is a familiar story for many indigenous peoples and no doubt a reason why this is one of the central themes for this World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

The negotiation and settlement of historic Treaty of Waitangi claims is the central mechanism for Māori and the Crown to acknowledge and provide redress for the past injustices that have left Māori without their lands, and affected their ability to exercise their *kaitiakitanga* over their resources. Treaty settlements include an agreed acknowledgement of the Crown's wrongs committed against iwi; cultural redress recognizing the traditional relationship iwi have with lands and resources and seeking to re-establish those connections, sometimes through the return of land; and commercial and financial redress. They are the first step in reconciling and healing the relationship between the iwi and the Crown, and enable both parties to move their focus from grievance to development opportunities. Recent settlements have included innovative arrangements for shared decision-making over significant places, for example Te Urewera National Park, in the Tūhoe settlement with the Crown.

The traditional knowledge of indigenous peoples, especially as it relates to our traditional territories and indigenous biodiversity is also a critical issue for us all. In Aotearoa New Zealand, we refer to this knowledge as Mātauranga Māori. While there is increasing recognition of the value of this traditional knowledge – especially in relation to biodiversity – we along with other Member States, need to do more to ensure the appropriate protection of this knowledge and to ensure the holders of this knowledge benefit from its utilization. This is consistent with the principles espoused in Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity. In Aotearoa New Zealand, a number of iwi continue to exercise *kaitiakitanga* over their traditional knowledge. In particular, some iwi are ensuring that knowledge is transferred inter-generationally through *Wānanga* (learning sessions) and *hui a iwi* (tribal meetings), as well as the practical application of Mātauranga Māori and their iwi/tribal cultural values through iwi environmental monitoring and continuing traditional customary practices. Treaty settlements have

renewed relationships between the government and the iwi/tribal leaders, which has improved opportunities for more meaningful engagement with Māori on major national policy issues, such as the use of freshwater resources.

Sustainable economic development that is consistent with our cultural values is also a central pillar for indigenous peoples and as Member States we need to recognise the positive contribution successful sustainable indigenous economies make to our national and regional economies both via a direct contribution to GDP, as well as through positive, engaged and resourceful communities. For Aotearoa New Zealand, the Māori asset base is estimated to be worth nearly NZ\$37 billion dollars and Māori enterprises contribute NZ\$10.3 billion annually to Aotearoa New Zealand's GDP. More importantly is the potential for growth within the Māori economy - with the right support and investment, particularly in science and innovation, the Māori economy could contribute an additional NZ\$12 billion annually and support a further 150,000 jobs by 2061.

Sustainable economic development enables our people to take the lead in decisions that affect their lives and ultimately to exercise their *rangatiratanga*. That is why I have been championing the development and implementation of the Crown-Māori Economic Growth Partnership, known as *He kai kei aku ringa*, which literally means to produce the food one needs with your own hands. Importantly for this roundtable discussion, *He kai kei aku ringa* recommends the Crown and Māori engage in a discussion on the development of natural resources as a matter of priority.

While there is much to celebrate, both as states and particularly as indigenous people, there are still many areas where we need to improve. We must continue to communicate, to educate each other, and to continually develop our collective and individual knowledge.

I am honoured to be co-chairing this third roundtable of the first World Conference on Indigenous Peoples and while I am retiring as Minister of Māori Affairs, I look forward to the positive progress we have made over these last two days continuing well into the future.

Whakataukī – *Whatungarongaro te tangata, toitū te whenua...* [While people disappear from sight, the land remains]