



Tēnā koutou katoa – Greetings to everyone.

Aotearoa New Zealand thanks the Expert Mechanism for its reports on the rights of the indigenous child and the right to self-determination and welcomes the opportunity to speak with you today about these important issues.

Regarding indigenous children, in Aotearoa New Zealand the indigenous Māori are a largely a youthful population. Around 23 per cent of children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand identify as Māori. The median age of Māori is 24 years compared to 37 years for the total Aotearoa New Zealand population.

Māori value systems and knowledge deem child-rearing a collective responsibility. Māori children are the future and are therefore recognised as treasures, or taonga.

Tino rangatiratanga is a Māori term for self-determination, which can loosely mean Māori control over Māori lives. Exemplifying tino rangatiratanga is essential to achieving Māori individual and collective wellbeing.

Improving wellbeing outcomes for Māori children and young people is a critical issue involving multiple government agencies. Our commitment to young Māori people is being pursued through New Zealand's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

The Strategy acknowledges that our founding constitutional document, the Treaty of Waitangi, provides the framework for the Crown's commitments to Māori children and young people. It recognises the special status of Māori as the indigenous peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand; and that the relationship between Māori and the Government is foundational.

The Strategy also acknowledges that enabling Māori children and young people to achieve self-determination and improve wellbeing means supporting the whole family, recognising that collective or family-centred approaches work.

Turning to self-determination, Aotearoa New Zealand has completed the first part of our two-step engagement process for developing a plan to realise the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in our country.

Between September last year and February this year, a range of Indigenous groups have shared their experiences and ideas on how to give effect to the Declaration. This engagement was led in partnership by representatives of the National Iwi Chairs Forum,

an organisation of Māori tribal leaders, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, and the Government.

We are now drafting a Declaration plan which will go out for public consultation. This will be the second step of the engagement process and we hope to release a final plan by the end of the year.

The timeframes are ambitious but it is time to demonstrate our commitment to maintaining constructive relationships with our Indigenous peoples, to achieve equitable outcomes for all. When Māori thrive on their own terms, then so too does Aotearoa New Zealand.

We look forward to the opportunity to provide you with an update on progress with the implementation of this Strategy and Declaration Plan in future EMRIP sessions.

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