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New Zealand Mission to the United Nations



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Seventh Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Discussion on the Pacific

**Statement by Kirsty Graham
Deputy Permanent Representative**

23 April 2008

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E nga mana
E nga iwi
E nga reo
Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa

Thank you Madame Chair.

New Zealand welcomes this opportunity to participate in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and to contribute to this timely discussion on Pacific issues.

As a founding member of the Pacific Islands Forum, New Zealand has very close relations with the Pacific Islands based on a shared historical, cultural and trade links and extensive people-to-people networks with significant Pacific communities living in New Zealand. We also have constitutional obligations for the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

Working in partnership with Pacific Island countries, New Zealand supports the development of a stable and prosperous Pacific region that advances the well-being and rights of all of its peoples. Our key development goal is reduced poverty. Assisting the Pacific Islands to meet all of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will contribute to this goal.

The Pacific Island region has many development challenges, notably in Melanesia. After the sub-Saharan Africa, it is the least likely region to meet the MDGs. For example, only half of primary school children have access to formal schooling in the Solomon Islands and 20% of the population in Vanuatu have no access to health care services. Security crises and political and ethnic conflicts have in many situations compounded these challenges.

New Zealand has played an active role in assisting Pacific Islands respond to the challenges they face, including through support for political processes, peace support operations, and development assistance. We are increasing our bilateral engagement and devoting significant effort to improving regional mechanisms. Almost half of New Zealand's aid budget is allocated to the Pacific Islands region.

New Zealand's aid programme focuses on strengthening Pacific governance; encouraging broader-based economic growth and improved livelihoods; improved health and education outcomes; and reducing vulnerabilities including the impact of climate change. Promoting human rights and gender equality in the region are recognised as essential cross-cutting issues that must be addressed to achieve these outcomes.

The Pacific Islands are extremely vulnerable to climate change and its effects. As a result, we actively support the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the development of the Pacific Framework and Action Plan on Climate Change and community-level projects on adaptation to climate

change. At the global level, New Zealand is helping advance Pacific interests by actively supporting strong international action and the need for a new, comprehensive negotiation under the UNFCCC, involving participation by both developed and developing countries.

As part of our engagement with Pacific Islands, New Zealand has a longstanding tradition of support for local and indigenous solutions to political and development issues. New Zealand has drawn on its own domestic experience and supported indigenous initiatives for many years. This has included customary land use and management such as the establishment of the Customary Land Tribunal in Vanuatu in 2000. Another example is the early childhood education system in Solomon Islands which has, through New Zealand assistance, been modelled on pioneering work by Maori women in New Zealand.

New Zealand encourages continuing and increased attention from the UN system on the Pacific Island region, and we are grateful for the opportunity for discussion on this unique region here in the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Wairangi
Wairangi
Wairangi
Wairangi