



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous  
Issues

## **New Zealand statement**

*Item 5: Discussion on the 2019 International Year of  
Indigenous Languages*

Delivered by Honourable Nanaia Mahuta  
Te Minita Whanaketanga Māori  
New Zealand Minister for Māori Development

**22 Paenga-whāwhā 2019**

**22 April 2019**



- E ngā mana, e ngā reo, tēnā koutou katoa. New Zealand would like to acknowledge the Onondaga, the indigenous peoples of this land, and those of other countries. As well as Member states and their representatives gathered here today.
- I wish to take a moment to extend New Zealand's condolences to the Government and people of Sri Lanka at this time. New Zealand condemns all acts of terrorism. We reject all forms of extremism and stand for freedom of religion and the right to worship safely.
- The Māori language is an important aspect of who we are as New Zealanders and how we value Māori culture, history and identity. The International Year of Indigenous Languages gives us an opportunity as a country to reflect on and invigorate our efforts to protect and revitalise te reo Māori. We are also mindful we have much to learn from others' experience.
- There is a saying amongst the Māori people that embodies a worldview and body of knowledge:
  - "Ko tōku reo, tooku ohoho, tōku māpihi maurea tōku whakakai mārahi."
  - "My language is my precious gift, my essence of affection and my most prized treasure."
- Our experience demonstrates that legal protection for indigenous language and greater clarity for the role of Government to actively protect and revitalise indigenous language is a positive step forward that will transform the development aspirations for Māori.
- Indigenous language educational pathways broadcasting and digital platforms, community development initiatives and public sector language planning can strengthen revitalisation efforts and we continue our country's commitment to this approach.
- A Māori worldview seeks out a wellbeing vision that puts our children and future descendants at the forefront to achieve intergenerational wellbeing. But we do not forget the ways of our tūpuna, our ancestors. We seek to keep alive our stories, our histories and our aspirations in the words handed down to us, from our ancestors and pass this knowledge on to our children.
- Connection, a sense of belonging and a place to Be is transmitted through language, they are the basic precepts of social cohesion and inclusion. This highlights the importance of indigenous languages to indigenous peoples.

- In New Zealand, we recognise that we need to look beyond GDP as a measure of progress and take a more holistic approach to our wellbeing and prosperity. We seek to lift the wellbeing outcomes in areas where there is significant inequity. Children, Māori, women, the disabled, and elderly feature predominantly in these areas of vulnerability and are a reason we are taking a different path.
- We realise we cannot continue to take the same old approaches and expect different outcomes – we know that new ways are needed, and we know that indigenous wellbeing requires recognition of culture, language, knowledge and identity to build social cohesion, an inclusive and more resilient future.
- New Zealand's Living Standards Framework is one way we are addressing this, not just for the benefit of Māori people, but for the benefit of the nation.
- We continue to participate in the dialogue of the Permanent Forum to emphasise the measures we are taking to implement the intent of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

No reira tēnā ano koutou.