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United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Item 3: *Follow-up on the recommendations of the Permanent Forum -
Māori youth, self-harm and suicide*

Statement by Arawhetu Gray, Deputy-Secretary Policy
Partnerships, Te Puni Kokiri (Ministry of Māori Development)

21 April 2015



Chairperson,

As we have heard today, indigenous youth globally continue to have a disproportionately high rate of suicide and hospitalisation for intentional self-harm compared with other ethnic groups.

In New Zealand this is also true, with data showing Māori have a suicide rate 2.4 times higher than that of non-Māori youth.

We know that the factors contributing to suicide are complex and multi-factorial. They range from individual factors to broad social factors.

For many indigenous people, the additional impact of cultural alienation, institutional racism, and the influence of historical, political and social processes compounds their risk.

Māori suicide prevention continues to be a priority for the New Zealand Government.

The New Zealand Government has a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy to guide the broad range of actions needed across multiple sectors to tackle suicide and suicidal behaviour.

New Zealand has established a major new initiative to lead efforts in this area aimed at building the capacity of Māori whānau, hapū, iwi, Pasifika families and communities to prevent suicide.

The national programme (Waka Hourua) is managed by a Māori health workforce provider. One component of the programme is a national Māori Community Suicide Prevention programme to support Māori communities to develop and realise their own whole-of-community suicide prevention plans. The programme is called Pae Ora and includes using Māori terminology and cultural traditions as a means of building community resilience and preventing suicide.

A number of the Māori initiatives funded by Waka Hauora are underpinned by kaupapa Māori approaches, te reo¹ Māori and cultural practices.

¹ *Te reo Maori* – Maori language

The focus for suicide prevention continues to ensure that mainstream services and initiatives are responsive to Māori, as well as supporting initiatives targeted specifically to Māori and which reflect a Māori cultural context.