



NEW ZEALAND
Permanent Mission
TE ANA AORERE

PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURE
IN THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF THE WELL-BEING AND
IDENTITY OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

20 September 2011

Tena koutou katoa.

We thank the panelists for their interesting presentations, including the positive references to New Zealand. In New Zealand, of a population of 4.4 million, about 15% is Māori. The revitalisation of the Māori language – te reo Māori – began during the 1970s. By then, few Māori families spoke te reo and there were fears that it was in danger of dying out as an everyday language. This led to the development of Māori language education initiatives and, by the mid-1980s, the focus had widened to include Māori broadcasting.

Te Reo Māori was made an official language in 1987 and the Māori Language Commission (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori) was set up to support the growth of and promote the language. Developments since then include setting up the Māori Television Service in 2003. It now screens about eight hours a day of free-to-air Māori language and cultural programming. The second Māori Television channel, Te Reo, was launched in 2008, and currently broadcasts three hours per day in te reo Māori.

There has been progress: 27% of Māori now say they can speak the language very well, well or fairly well, and around 40% can understand or read it. New Zealand recognises that more work is required to fully secure the revitalisation of the Māori language, and is committed to taking all reasonable steps to support this. The Māori Language Strategy in place since 2003 sets out a vision for the future: that by 2028 the language will be widely spoken by Māori within their families, homes and communities.

Lastly, New Zealand is presently hosting the Rugby World Cup and this brings with it opportunities for New Zealand and for Māori language and culture. An engagement strategy has been developed to ensure meaningful Māori engagement in the hosting of the Rugby World Cup and one of the key outcomes is to see the Māori language and culture celebrated on the world stage.

Kia ora, I thank you.