

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Intervention Submitted by Te Runanga o Te Rarawa Statement – Fukushima & Nuclear Energy

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ITEM 4: Half-day discussion on the Pacific region.

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Tena ra koutou ki te iwi o te rohe e hora atu nei e; tena ra koutou ki nga iwi taketake o te Ao e, me nga karangaranga maha, manuhiri tuarangi e - tena ra koutou, tena ra koutou, tena ra koutou katoa.

(Greetings to you, the indigenous Peoples of these lands extended out before us; greetings to you, the indigenous Peoples of the World (here present), esteemed dignitaries and other participants (to this Permanent Forum) – greetings, greetings, thrice greetings).

Kia ora Madam Chair,

RECOMMENDATIONS

This statement is supported by the Koani Foundation, Kamakakūokalani Center for Hawaiian Studies, Na Koa Ikaika KaLahui Hawaii.

Regarding Fukushima and nuclear energy in the Pacific, the Pacific Caucus recommends:

1. *That the Permanent Forum actively supports* the Petition¹ (submitted two years ago to the UN Secretary General) calling on the UN to urgently intervene and engage with the Japanese Government in order to:
 - a. *Remove* the Tokyo Utility company, Tepco, or any other corporate entity, from leading the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster response; and
 - b. *Authorize* an international Team of independent experts² to lead, in close collaboration with the Japanese Government, a more transparent and coherent response to bring the Fukushima situation under control;

¹ Reader Supported News, “Demand Grows for a Global Take-Over at Fukushima” (2 October 2013), at <http://readersupportednews.org/opinion2/271-38/19670-demand-grows-for-a-global-take-over-at-fukushima>. A link to the petition (on behalf of tens of thousands of concerned citizens, experts and NGOs from around the world) may be found here: <http://www.nukefree.org/crisis-fukushima-4-petition-un-us-global-response>. See also <http://www.change.org/petitions/un-secretary-general-ban-ki-moon-urgent-request-on-un-intervention-to-stabilize-the-fukushima-reactor-unit-4>.

2. *That the Permanent Forum calls upon* all States to urgently transition away from nuclear-powered energy to forms of safe, clean, renewable energy production, beginning with dialogue with citizens about the necessity of decommissioning nuclear power plants; and
3. *That the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Secretariat put greater energy and effort into* promoting, and ensuring inclusivity (particularly by indigenous peoples) in, its World Wide public consultation on climate change and energy scheduled for 6 June 2015.³

MADAM CHAIR,

4. The Fukushima incident is on par with the Chernobyl nuclear disaster,⁴ with the 1,500 spent fuel rods holding the radioactive fallout equivalent to over 14,000 Hiroshima bombs.⁵ It has already released massive quantities of radioactive pollution into the atmosphere which has entered the food chain, making local farm products unfit for human consumption due to dangerously high levels of radioactivity. Aside from the obvious immediate and long-term immeasurable harm to the natural environment and humans (which includes the inevitable increase of genetic mutations to wildlife and in cancerous disorders in people⁶), this has the added potential to collapse economies.
5. The level of nuclear contamination in the local sea water continues to be at millions of times the legal limit. This is of deep concern to our Pacific nations with reports that radiation has extended beyond Alaska⁷ to other locations bordering and within our Pacific. We know that unprecedented negative impacts are inevitable for our ocean life,

² Including physicists and engineers.

³ For more information, see <http://newsroom.unfccc.int/unfccc-newsroom/launch-of-largest-ever-global-citizen-consultation-on-climate-and-energy/>.

⁴ A key source for this intervention material includes 'Democracy Now' interview with Theoretical Physicist (City College, New York), Dr Michio Kaku, on the Japan Nuclear Crisis (13 April 2011), downloadable at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrXKqLeZYD0>.

⁵ Moyers & Company 2013 interview with medical doctors Jill Stein and Margaret Flowers on "Positive Resistance" (at 5:20 mins), at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cK92iCDNI80>.

⁶ See Democracy Now!, "Fukushima Fallout: Ailing U.S. Sailors Sue TEPCO After Exposure to Radiation 30x Higher Than Normal" (19 March 2014): "Three years after the triple meltdown at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, scores of U.S. sailors and marines are suing the plant's operator, the Tokyo Electric Power Company, for allegedly misleading the Navy about the level of radioactive contamination. Many of the servicemembers who provided humanitarian relief during the disaster have experienced devastating health ailments since returning from Japan, ranging from leukemia to blindness to infertility to birth defects." Former nuclear industry executive Arnie Gunderson forecasts that "over the next 30 years we're going to see about a million cancers as a result of this": See Democracy Now! article (6 July 2012) below at note 10.

⁷ CBC News, "Radiation from Japan nuclear plant arrives on Alaska coast: Scientists concerned about lack of monitoring plan" (2 November 2013), at <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/radiation-from-japan-nuclear-plant-arrives-on-alaska-coast-1.2335668>.

and ultimately the health and wellbeing of our region's Indigenous Peoples and fellow citizens.

6. The Tokyo Utility company has failed spectacularly in dealing with Fukushima, and has misled affected Japanese citizens and the international community by describing the situation as "stable". Similarly, the Japanese Government is down-playing the severity of the situation⁸ which is out of control, with the slightest earthquake or other disturbance threatening to set off a full-scale meltdown far worse than Chernobyl. Eminent zoologist and environmentalist David Suzuki has been quoted as saying that another earthquake to hit Fukushima could mean "*bye bye Japan, and everyone on the west coast of North America should evacuate.*"⁹
7. Madam Chair, a Japanese parliamentary inquiry has concluded that the Fukushima meltdown was "*a profoundly man-made disaster*" and should have been prevented.¹⁰ The inquiry report revealed that the nuclear facility design was known to be flawed, with one key Nuclear Regulatory Commission official being reported to have said, "*These are the worst containments in the world.*"¹¹ Disturbingly, however, "*there are 23 plants in the United States that are essentially identical to all three of the...plants that blew up*".¹²
8. Reflecting on the Fukushima report, former nuclear industry executive Arnie Gunderson is of the belief that all these nuclear plants should be "*shut down*".¹³ The World Economic Forum Global Risk Report 2015¹⁴ would seem to support such a move by listing "*Biodiversity loss & ecosystem collapse*" as the 10th highest risk in terms of impact.¹⁵

⁸ The media regularly reports that Japanese citizens themselves as well as scientists and other independent experts do not trust the Utility company or the Japanese Government's statements concerning radiation damage, which is continuing to leak out of the reactors.

⁹ Moyers & Company 2013 interview with medical doctors Jill Stein and Margaret Flowers on "Positive Resistance" (at 4:00 mins), at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cK92iCDNI80>.

¹⁰ 'Democracy Now!', "As Japan Says Fukushima Disaster "Man-Made" & "Preventable," Fears Grow for Nuclear Plants Worldwide" (6 July 2012) at

http://www.democracynow.org/2012/7/6/as_japan_says_fukushima_disaster_man.

¹¹ See 'Democracy Now!' article (2 November 2013) at note 7.

¹² See 'Democracy Now!' article (2 November 2013) at note 7.

¹³ See 'Democracy Now!' article (6 July 2012) at note 10.

¹⁴ This report highlights a number of global risks ranked according to highest likelihood and highest impact. See <http://reports.weforum.org/global-risks-2015/>.

¹⁵ It also lists the related global risks of "*failure of critical infrastructure*" and "*man-made environmental catastrophes*".

9. All this is why Governments (A.K.A. the taxpaying citizens) ordinarily have to underwrite the insurance of Nuclear Power plants, because private insurer corporations themselves have the good sense to recognize that the fiscal cost alone of ‘cleaning up’ a nuclear ‘accident’ runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars – and that’s exclusive of other ‘externalized’ environmental, social, cultural and economic costs. Indigenous Peoples, therefore, ask the obvious question:

- a. if such nuclear powered activity is so inherently risky and unaffordable; and
- b. if safe, clean energy production is by today’s technological standards *exponentially* superior in every way; and
- c. if citizens (to whom Governments are still, theoretically at least, meant to be accountable to) are calling for this transition to safe clean energy production:-

...then why do Governments still resist making the shift?

10. Madam Chair, our environmental and human rights mean NOTHING if we cannot exercise and protect them from threats such as this. Never in the history of humanity have we faced so many potentially devastating and ‘game-changing’ crises all at once affecting our environment, society, culture and economics. This is clearly no longer a Japanese issue but a Pacific Regional if not a global issue.

Thank you Madam Chair.