

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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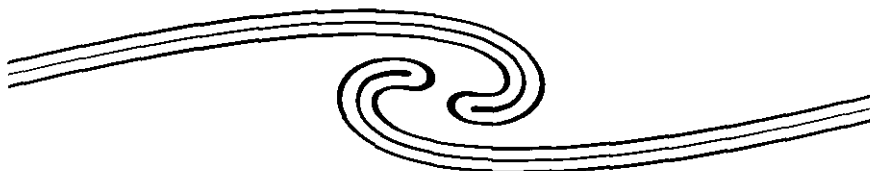
2ND PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES

ITEM 5: METHODS OF WORK

**STATEMENT BY THE REPRESENTATIVE OF NEW ZEALAND
MR JONATHAN AUSTIN**

TUESDAY 13 MAY 2003

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā waka, e ngā hau e whā
Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa

*(to all the many peoples gathered here from the four winds,
greetings, greetings, greetings to you all)*

Mr Chairman

New Zealand has strongly supported the establishment of this Forum. It is a significant step toward meeting the needs and aspirations of indigenous peoples. We believe indigenous peoples must have greater responsibility for their own affairs. And they have the right to develop and determine policies that affect them. This Forum's emphasis on partnership and engagement is one that New Zealand wholeheartedly supports. This is a Forum for indigenous peoples by indigenous peoples.

New Zealand believes the role of States in the Forum is to maximise indigenous involvement, contribute to constructive dialogue and to support the work which the Forum undertakes. We were pleased, therefore, that member States agreed that funding should be provided from the regular budget to establish the Forum's modest secretariat. New Zealand is also providing direct support to this secretariat. And we are very pleased with the result: we commend the secretariat for its substantial outcomes produced in such a short time.

We are pleased, too, with the continuing cooperation the Forum has received from the UN system. The reports before us from UN agencies go some way to addressing the issues raised at this Forum's inaugural meeting last year. Maintaining this constructive and productive relationship will be crucial to achieving real progress.

We note that this event would not have been possible without the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. New Zealand is grateful for their cooperation. We endorse fully the role of the inter-agency support group: an essential body in helping ensure the Forum produces tangible outcomes.

The imperative must be for UN activity in the indigenous area to be focussed, to be effective and, above all, to deliver practical benefits for indigenous peoples. It is important to ensure there is clarity, understanding and appreciation of the contribution the Forum can make. The Forum should strive to improve the responsiveness of existing mechanisms rather than create new ones. At a time when the UN's resources are so stretched it will be important to avoid duplication. In this context we are awaiting with interest the outcome of the Review of Indigenous Mechanisms mandated by ECOSOC.

Separate from the work of the Forum, but of considerable relevance to it, are the ongoing discussions in the Working Group on the draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. New Zealand is firmly committed to the elaboration of a Declaration that is predicated on rights, that is responsive, that attracts consensus and support and that is applicable to all indigenous peoples. But time is running out and all parties need to review

their positions so that we can agree on a declaration by the end of the International Decade for Indigenous Peoples.

We have noted with interest the suggestion that the venue for the Forum be rotated between regions of the world. This might aid indigenous engagement and enhance the Forum's profile. On the other hand the Forum will need to consider how this might affect interaction with relevant UN agencies along with the significant cost implications. In the meantime New Zealand welcomes visits by members of the Forum. We hope that in due course an indigenous New Zealander might be among the Forum's members.

Finally, we acknowledge the importance of this meeting's theme 'Indigenous Children and Youth'. New Zealand is scheduled to make a presentation on the revival of the Māori language. This issue is particularly relevant to Māori children and youth, as they have played a key role in this area. Their efforts have contributed to the proliferation of fluent Māori language speakers we are witnessing in New Zealand today. After continual decline for several decades, we have seen the numbers of Māori speakers stabilise since 1996. Today, 25% of Māori can now speak Māori to some extent. There has been strong growth in enrolments in Māori language education programmes, with the number of Māori language teachers increasing as well. We look forward to sharing more about our experience in this area later in this meeting.

Mr Chairman, thank you.

No reira e ngā iwi, e ngā mātā waka puta noa i te ao
tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

*(therefore, once again, to the people from throughout the world,
greetings, greetings, greetings to you all)*