

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

ONE UNITED NATIONS PLAZA 25TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10017-3515 USA
TELEPHONE (212) 826 1960 FACSIMILE (212) 758 0827 HOMEPAGE: missions.un.int/newzealand EMAIL: nz@un.int

1

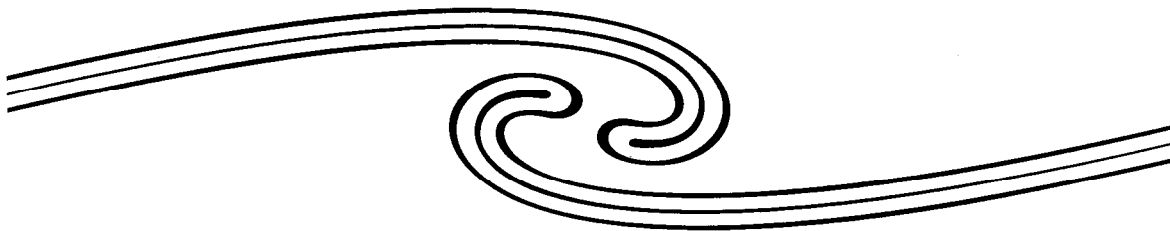
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

TWENTY-FIRST SPECIAL SESSION

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE GEORGINA TE HEUHEU,
MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS, MINISTER FOR COURTS,
ASSOCIATE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND ASSOCIATE MINISTER FOR TREATY
OF WAITANGI NEGOTIATIONS
OF NEW ZEALAND**

WEDNESDAY 30 JUNE 1999

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY



Mr President

Whakarongo ki te hau raki e pupuhi nei, i takea mai i Hawaiki nui.. ..

Listen to the north wind blowing from the great Hawaiki

This saying reminds Maori people that they descend from the ancient voyagers who sailed the Pacific Ocean, spreading across many miles establishing communities throughout from Hawaiiiki in the North to Aotearoa, New Zealand in the South. Maori people were adventurous. Our penchant for history and genealogy means we hold to a strong sense of identity and destiny as a people. We recount the ancient voyages in story and song, recalling to mind the winds which brought us to New Zealand. We have developed a keen sense of place and belonging, embodied in the notion *Tangata Whenua -the people of the land*.

From belonging comes identity - my own defined by the following tribal saying

*Ko Tongariro te maunga
Ko Taupo te Moana
Ko Tuwharetoa te iwi
Ko te Heuheu te tangata*

*Tongariro is the mountain
Taupo is the lake
Tuwhare toa are the people
Te Heuheu is the man.*

It is this saying which connects me to the mountains at the centre of New Zealand's North Island to the waters which flow from those mountains, and to the peoples that live there.

The importance of identity in **recognising** the needs of indigenous populations especially is one of the particular matters that my Government places a high priority on.

Mr President, I am truly honoured to address the United Nations General Assembly today as the first Maori woman to do so as a member of my Government's Executive.

Today, I **reaffirm** New Zealand's commitment to the important goals of the International Conference on Population and Development as agreed in Cairo, and to the further advances made in Beijing in 1995.

New Zealand is a small country in size and population compared to many of the countries represented here today. We have just over 3.5 million people.

Women comprise just over half the population of New Zealand. At the 1996 Census, 83 percent of women identified as European, 15 percent as Maori, 6 percent as Pacific and 5 percent as Asian.

Maori women are currently 15 percent of all women in New Zealand, and 7 percent of the total population. By the year 2046, Maori women will comprise 21 percent of the total population of women, and 11 percent of the total population. Their role in the future of our nation, therefore, is important to all our citizens. Their leadership will also be important.

The number of older people in New Zealand is increasing and women form a larger proportion of the population over 65 years of age.

These demographic trends present a challenge for New Zealand as we plan our future.

I am proud that in New Zealand we value women's contribution to society and we have a long history of innovative policies designed to enhance the status of women.

We believe that the participation of women in all spheres of economic, political and cultural life must be achieved if women are to **fully** access economic and social benefits and opportunities.

At home and on the international stage, New Zealand has sought to play an active role in the promotion of the human rights of women and to ensure their full participation in society as equal partners with men.

In the context in which we have gathered this week, New Zealand has always played an important role in supporting and encouraging sexual and reproductive health rights and the rights of women which is central to the *Programme for Action*. We will continue to provide strong support for this.

This support has included the development of the Cairo *Programme of Action*, the 1995 Beijing *Platform for Action*, and most recently taking a constructive approach towards the development of an Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Our aim is to support leadership in initiatives that will improve women's health.

Moreover, we are encouraged to look more closely at our domestic policies to ensure that they are consistent with the *Programme of Action*, and to consider where further enhancement could be made, such as continuing to focus on education and information for young people, and targeting initiatives to ensure that Maori people, and minority ethnic groups, can enjoy improved health.

Over the last five years our key initiatives include:

- improved access to contraception through the removal of financial barriers to the purchase of contraception and free access to contraceptive advice and **counselling** for groups at high risk of poor sexual health
- implementation of national cervical and breast screening programmes
- the inclusion of comprehensive sexuality education within the school curriculum and resources **for schools** to assist them to implement sexuality education
- pilot programmes to improve the delivery of sexual health services for Pacific Island people living in New Zealand.

While significant advances have been made our aim is to ensure that good sexual and reproductive health is achievable for everyone - irrespective of their sex, ethnicity or age or the place that they live.

Strong families are at the heart of a strong nation. In addition to the particular initiatives I have just outlined, our Government is committed to building a strong nation.

Strengthening Families is a strategy which joins the Health, Education and Welfare sectors of Government to improve life outcomes for children and families by reducing disparity. It aims to improve family health and educational attainment and reduce the incidence of persistent offending or abuse and neglect. This programme presents one of many opportunities for a partnership between the Government and communities.

For Maori, as will be the case for all indigenous populations, our efforts are also designed to accommodate individuals as part of the group or collective, providing an added challenge for Governments when dealing with their indigenous populations. The desire of these groups is to develop in accordance with their collective values and tribal structures.

When families are healthy and able to support themselves our nations will prosper. Sexual and reproductive health is central to the development of healthy and productive nations. Poor sexual and reproductive health comes with a cost to our nations, communities and our people.

New Zealand participates actively in international development activities. Population issues are at the very heart of balanced and sustainable development. The essential message of the Cairo *Programme of Action* is that population issues are development issues, and the *Programme* should be considered as part of a global framework for sustained and sustainable development.

New Zealand is committed to the implementation of the Cairo *Programme of Action* in its Official Development Assistance (ODA) programmes and has participated actively in a number of international population activities.

We have substantially increased our contributions to the United Nations Population Fund and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. We are now also supporting the important work of the Population Council.

New Zealand is a Pacific nation and I want to acknowledge my colleagues from the South Pacific who, like me, have travelled over the Pacific Ocean to be here for this meeting.

In our development assistance programme, and especially within our immediate neighborhood, the Pacific region, we take our lead very much from our country partners. This process of consultation underpins New Zealand's approach to partnership and development. In this context, New Zealand has supported projects in the sexual and reproductive health area and the related 'Gender and Development' area. In consultation with our partners we have also recently begun a South Pacific Regional Health initiative which includes many programmes in the sexual and reproductive health area.

Gender and Development is an area New Zealand places great emphasis on and which illustrates our integrative approach to the Cairo *Programme of Action*. New Zealand has for some time focused on a conscious recognition of women's rights, choices and well-being. These are the cornerstone of the ICPD agenda and are critical to women's equitable access to development.

One of the clearest violations of women's fundamental human rights and freedoms - and a major obstacle in the achievement of equality and development - is violence against women. This is a universal issue, crossing the boundaries of culture, geography, race, ethnicity, class and religion, and yet many countries have no policy or legislation on violence against women.

In New Zealand we have introduced such legislation and in addition we support programmes to combat domestic violence in other countries.

As we come to the end of the 20th century we collectively face a significant challenge. Gathered here as the representatives of our nations we must take this opportunity to renew our commitment to the Cairo *Programme of Action* and to further build on the gains we have made since then.

It has been a privilege to stand before you today and present New Zealand's message to this forum.

Kia tau te rangimarie
Kia tatou katoa

*May **peace** be with us all.*

Thank you, Mr President.