

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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**UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
SIXTY-FIRST SESSION**

GENERAL DEBATE

**STATEMENT BY RT HON WINSTON PETERS
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

22 SEPTEMBER 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Madame President

New Zealand remains unwavering in its support for the United Nations. Our commitment has not changed since we helped found this organization 61 years ago. Events of this past year have only reinforced our belief that the world would be substantially worse without the United Nations.

It would be remiss at this time not to pay tribute to Kofi Annan. It is to his vision, determination and courage that we must attribute many of the reforms achieved thus far. Five years ago when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Nobel Committee paid tribute to his efforts on reform.

Since then he has continued to work tirelessly for a United Nations that can live up to the hopes that 'we the peoples' have invested in it.

This is all the more remarkable in that for much of his stewardship the United Nations has been confronted with some of the most difficult international crises of its existence.

New Zealand is committed to multilateralism. This is not some act of faith – but to multilateralism that really delivers. We need to be prepared to work diligently for the good of the global community.

The United Nations is passing through a period of challenge to its relevance and effectiveness. It has confronted serious political and security shocks – fresh hostilities in the Middle East, the tragic and worsening situation in Darfur – and in our own region, instability in Timor-Leste.

Last year, world leaders agreed to an ambitious reform agenda based on the three pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. Progress has been made but this is no time to rest. We must press on for much remains to be done.

Development

The challenge of development has never been higher on the international agenda. Never before has the commitment to eradicating poverty been so critical.

But increasing aid levels will not be enough. We must become more effective.

We need to make sure that every dollar we spend makes a positive difference.

That means addressing the key threats to our success - poor governance, corruption, gender inequality. We need to secure fairer international trading relationships. And we must work on these together.

The theme of this year's General Debate is implementing a global partnership for development.

For New Zealand, collective action is imperative.

- We need participation, ownership and responsibility from recipient countries.
- We seek harmonization with larger contributors to align and combine our contributions.
- We seek partnership with multilateral development agencies in our campaign to eradicate poverty.
- And we endorse the efforts of United Nations agencies to coordinate better, country by country.

New Zealand and the Pacific

New Zealand's relationship with the Pacific is based in history, culture, economic and social linkages. Our bonds with Pacific states are an important dimension of our other relationships. We want nothing less than educated, healthy, well-governed, economically prosperous and safe societies.

In the Auckland declaration of 2004, Pacific leaders committed themselves to a "region that is respected for the quality of its governance, the sustainable management of its resources, the full observance of democratic values and for its defence and promotion of human rights."

These are ambitious goals.

Translating them into reality means hard work by all Pacific countries. This is a challenge we accept.

In facing this challenge, we confront economic, environmental, governance, development and security issues. Markets are distant. Climate change is a reality. Political instability does not help. Threats from communicable diseases like HIV/AIDS or pandemic influenza must be managed.

The Pacific accounts for almost one quarter of the surface of the world – an area bigger than Europe and the Middle East combined. Its strategic significance presents opportunity and challenge.

New Zealand is determined to seek out the benefits of that significance and guard against the threats – among which I include cheque-book diplomacy.

Across the Pacific, we have learned that regional problems require regional solutions. Last year, Pacific Island Forum leaders adopted the Pacific Plan for regional cooperation. Through this Plan we will strengthen regional cooperation

where it can most make a difference. And we will use it to promote the four goals of the Pacific Islands Forum:

- Sustainable development,
- Economic growth,
- Security and
- Good governance.

At the same time, we do not forget that our regional endeavours depend on strong international frameworks. The Framework Convention on Climate Change is an essential example.

Another example is the United Nations Agreement for Conservation and Management of Straddling and Highly Migratory Fish stocks.

We are proud of our achievements in regional fisheries management. The Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission, with its headquarters in Pohnpei, manages the region's migratory fish species. We are in the midst of developing new regional arrangements for non-migratory fish stocks.

These mechanisms are central to the region's ability to ensure the sustainable management of its most important natural resources. They are at the leading edge in establishing best practice management norms.

Peace and Security

There have been profound political and security shocks over the past year - in the Middle East, in Darfur, instability in Timor-Leste – these are testing the UN system.

It is a sad reality that the situation in the Middle East has been on the agenda of the United Nations for 60 years – since its formation.

The lack of sustained political will to see through more than a handful of decisions on the Middle East has undermined confidence. It has contributed to an unstable environment where extremism, injustice and despair flourish.

These issues must be tackled with new resolve, using the international, multilateral system as a tool for peace and progress. The international response to the Security Council's call for an expanded United Nations International Force in Lebanon shows that the international community can react to conflict and provide basic stabilization.

But such responses are doomed to failure unless the underlying political and security issues are addressed. It is imperative to relaunch the Middle East Peace process covering all issues, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The United Nations efforts to introduce a UN force into Darfur is being cynically thwarted by the Government of Sudan. This is unconscionable.

The Government of Sudan must, in the name of basic humanity, accept the need for a United Nations force as the best chance for the security of the people of Darfur.

Timor-Leste

New and fragile states face enormous challenges. Recent unrest in Timor-Leste demonstrates this fact.

New Zealand responded quickly to Timor's needs with a military and police contribution to help restore stability. The regional response has been swift and robust.

The United Nations played an important role in facilitating Timor's independence, and it is clear the United Nations will continue to be involved in Timor for many years to come.

The deployment of a substantial UN police force is vital if peace and stability is to be maintained even in the medium term. But the nature of the expanded UN mission in Timor-Leste reflects the deep and broad engagement required to build a lasting peace.

Timor encapsulates the principle that peace and security cannot be separated from economic development, social reconciliation and the protection of basic human rights. The Security Council's mandate for Timor-Leste endorses that truth.

Human Rights

New Zealand fully supported the renewed focus on human rights at last year's World Summit. We strongly campaigned for the new Human Rights Council and worked hard to bring it into being. We have high ambitions for it and will follow its activities closely.

It must remain strong, focused and effective. It must be able to deal swiftly with emerging situations of human rights concern, in a balanced way, with scrupulous attention to verifiable facts.

It must be aspirational, inspirational and practical. Its working methods must be transparent and inclusive. Above all there must be genuine political will to make it work.

Disabilities Convention

A few weeks ago Member States, encouraged all the way by energetic non government organizations, agreed on the first new comprehensive human rights instrument of the 21st century, the Convention relating to those with disabilities.

We are proud of the role which New Zealand played in this negotiation.

The Convention stands to make a real difference in the lives of the approximately six hundred and fifty million of the world's most disadvantaged citizens.

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

New Zealand is conscious of the disadvantages faced by indigenous peoples in many parts of the world. We engaged closely in the lengthy negotiations towards the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We had hoped that this Declaration would be a new standard of achievement for governments, that could be implemented and that could really improve the lives of indigenous peoples. We are disappointed that this was not to be.

The Declaration that emerged with less than conclusive support from the Human Rights Council is deeply flawed and represents a lost opportunity for the world's indigenous peoples.

Reform - a rolling process

At the beginning of his term, the Secretary-General set an important goal for the United Nations. This was to perfect "the triangle of development, freedom and peace". His words still ring true. We have travelled only part of the journey toward that goal.

Considering our achievements over the last year, we can be satisfied with progress made in setting up the Human Rights Council and the Peace-building Commission. The challenge now is to make these two new bodies truly effective.

The welcome adoption of a counter-terrorism strategy reminds us of the efforts we must continue to make at regional and national levels.

New Zealand wants to see continuing reform high on the list of priorities for this 61st session to ensure that the United Nations can be as responsive as possible to the needs of Member States, and efficient in getting the best from the resources available to it.

Sixty years ago, New Zealand had high hopes for the United Nations. In 2006, we still do. New Zealand is a country that engages with the United Nations with no hidden agenda. Those who do so pervert and weaken this organisation.

We will continue to put our efforts behind the principles and policies that will make the United Nations strong.