

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: www.nzembassy.com/newyork

United Nations General Assembly Sixty-Second Session

General Debate

**Statement by
H.E. Ms Rosemary Banks
Permanent Representative of New Zealand**

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Check against delivery

Mr President,

As we meet for the 62nd session of the General Assembly, we look again to the United Nations as the global forum to address the challenges which affect us all.

Climate change

Climate change is serious and urgent. We welcome that it has been the theme of our general debate this year. The science is clear. Climate change is real and will impact on all parts of the world.

To meet the global challenge of climate change, there must be widespread and effective international action. It will be important to get all economies onto low carbon pathways over time. Market mechanisms will have a significant role to play. Individual countries will face different challenges. Different national circumstances must be taken into account.

The UN climate change conference in Bali in December will be a fresh opportunity to re-energise our efforts in addressing climate change. New Zealand wants to see a 'Bali Roadmap' emerge in December to set us on the course for an effective future response. To deliver on this, the roadmap will need to include all relevant pieces of the climate change puzzle.

New Zealand welcomes the momentum being generated by other high level meetings in the lead up to Bali, including the recent APEC Leaders' Declaration.

Last week's High Level Event deserves special mention. We congratulate the Secretary-General for his efforts in cultivating the political good-will that will be vital if we are to reach agreement in Bali.

Taking action as an international community also means taking action domestically.

In recent weeks, New Zealand has announced a number of domestic measures to address climate change. An emissions trading scheme will be established from January 1st 2008 and will form the cornerstone of our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The scheme will be a world first, covering, over time, all sectors and all gases.

We have also identified a number of longer-term domestic goals, which will move New Zealand down the path to carbon neutrality.

These will provide co-benefits from healthier homes, cleaner air and improved public transport. While climate change is a challenge, it is also an opportunity to move towards a more sustainable world.

Development

Mr President,

Support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is central to New Zealand's contribution to the global effort to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty. We recognise that having passed the half way point to 2015, the international community needs to step up efforts if we are to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, the UN development system can be strengthened. We welcome the newly established initiatives in ECOSOC – the Annual Ministerial Review and Development Cooperation Forum as practical ways to share information about what is working and where we can improve our efforts at the country level.

New Zealand is committed to improving system-wide coherence at the UN in the fields of development, humanitarian issues and the environment, for a more effective, cohesive, response by the United Nations.

We attach particular importance to working for a strengthened, coherent, gender architecture and toward effective gender mainstreaming across all UN entities.

New Zealand welcomes the completion of the United Nations Pacific-Based Development Agencies' Strategic Framework for the Pacific. We are keen to work closely with UN agencies to achieve positive outcomes for our Pacific partners in the areas of human rights, sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, child immunisation and women's leadership.

Pacific

Mr President,

A strong, prosperous and stable Pacific is a key foreign policy priority for New Zealand. We place a high priority on fostering solidarity and cooperation in the Pacific, to tackle the challenges the region faces in democracy, security and economic development.

Around half of New Zealand's development assistance goes towards the Pacific.

New Zealand has provided assistance in the region in Timor-Leste, the Solomon Islands, Tonga and Bougainville in Papua New Guinea, with each situation calling for a unique response.

The Timorese people, their leaders, and the international community have made a huge effort over the past year to return Timor-Leste to a more secure and stable path. New Zealand has participated in these efforts through our contributions to the International Security Force (ISF) and to the UN Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT). Timor will require a sustained commitment from UNMIT.

The situation in Fiji continues to be of concern to New Zealand. As a neighbour of Fiji with a longstanding and very close relationship, New Zealand worked hard to avert last December's coup, including by convening a meeting to mediate between the then Prime Minister and the military commander. We very much regret that this failed to dissuade the coup makers from their illegal and unconstitutional path.

New Zealand strongly and actively supports the steps that have been taken by the Pacific Islands Forum to encourage an early return to constitutional government in Fiji. We would welcome a firm commitment from the interim administration to work towards elections within the timeframe endorsed by the Forum. Given that commitment, New Zealand would begin to restore a more normal bilateral relationship through which we could cooperate in addressing Fiji's undoubtedly complex problems.

I want to take this opportunity to address one issue in particular raised in the Solomon Islands statement on Monday.

It was suggested, inter alia, that the presence of the Regional Assistance Mission in the Solomon Islands, RAMSI, was an "occupation", and that RAMSI's operation transgressed Article 52 of the UN Charter. New Zealand has always been committed to upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations in every respect. In our view RAMSI is entirely consistent with these purposes and principles. It is a specific example of Chapter VIII of the Charter in operation and to suggest it is contrary to the Charter is in our view wrong.

RAMSI was established in response to a formal request from the Solomon Islands. Its presence in the Solomon Islands is sanctioned by treaty, and by the domestic law of the Solomon Islands. This was recently reaffirmed by the Solomon Islands Parliament. Moreover, RAMSI stems from the endorsement by Pacific Islands Forum Foreign Ministers of a programme of action under the Forum Leaders' Biketawa Declaration. This provides a framework for regional responses in times of crisis or when members request assistance – exactly the situation in this case.

Amidst all these challenges I would like to report on activity being undertaken by Tokelau, the tiny territory 500 km north of Samoa that New Zealand administers. The people of Tokelau, all 1500 of them on three atolls, have decided that they wish to undertake an act of self determination to decide

whether they wish to change their present status. A vote in February 2006 narrowly missed the threshold set by Tokelau for a change of status. They will from 20-24 October vote again on this issue.

As members of the Decolonisation Committee know, New Zealand supports Tokelau's right to choose but has stood well back from any wish to determine the direction of any change. This decision is entirely for the people of Tokelau. New Zealand will support their decision.

Global justice and the rule of law; ICC support

Mr President,

Advancement of the rule of law at the national and international levels is essential for the realisation of sustained economic growth, development and human rights.

New Zealand encourages members to provide their full support to the International Criminal Court by acceding to the Rome Statute of the ICC. We also call on all UN Member States, especially States Parties to the Rome Statute, to fully cooperate with the Court in carrying out its current work. Universality and our full support are crucial if we are to end impunity for the perpetrators of the most serious crimes of international concern, such as those carried out in Darfur where ICC arrest warrants are outstanding.

International peace and security

Mr President,

Efforts to protect and maintain the international rule of law can only be effective, when built on a foundation of international peace and security.

Interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue can help to counter religious extremism by encouraging understanding and respect amongst different faith communities and cultures.

In May, New Zealand hosted two significant gatherings to try and advance the global response to interfaith and inter-cultural issues in a practical way. New Zealand sees its commitment to interfaith and inter-cultural dialogue in terms of building a more secure and peaceful region and world, as well as a means of promoting and protecting human rights.

We regard UN's Alliance of Civilisations as the key multilateral process amongst the growing number of international and regional initiatives in this area.

With respect to nuclear proliferation, New Zealand welcomes the strong signals that have been sent to North Korean and Iran by the Security Council.

New Zealand is convinced that the humanitarian harm posed by cluster munitions must be addressed urgently. We believe that the negotiation of a treaty to deal with the problems caused by cluster mines is well overdue. We will host a meeting on this initiative in February next year.

New Zealand is also pleased to promote a new initiative at the UN General Assembly this year calling for action to lower the operational status of nuclear weapons. Maintaining nuclear weapon systems at a high-level of readiness increases the risk of these weapons being used, with catastrophic consequences.

There is a window of opportunity to make meaningful steps towards a just, enduring and comprehensive peace settlement in the Middle East.

Iraq and Afghanistan continue to present significant challenges for the United Nations.

The humanitarian disaster and conflict in Darfur threaten security in the entire East Africa region. New Zealand applauds the efforts by members to establish the new UN and African Union Mission in Darfur.

New Zealand is deeply concerned at the current political, economic and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe. We welcome the efforts which are being made to find acceptable solutions to the problems Zimbabwe faces. We sincerely hope that these efforts continue and that solutions can be found which will benefit all Zimbabweans and will enable free and fair elections to be held.

New Zealand remains profoundly concerned at the situation in Myanmar. Protestors have been killed, shot at, beaten and arrested. This violent treatment is reprehensible. Engaging in peaceful protest is a fundamental human right.

New Zealand joins others in calling for the immediate release of those detained in recent weeks, along with the many political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi, who have been held without trial for much longer periods.

The Myanmar regime should be held responsible for the personal safety and treatment of all people it has detained. We call on the authorities to stop the violence and encourage a process of genuine dialogue with pro-democracy leaders and ethnic minorities.

New Zealand fully supports UN efforts to resolve the immediate and longer term situation in Myanmar. We have welcomed the visit to Myanmar by Special

Envoy Ibrahim Gambari. We fully support continued discussion of the situation in Myanmar in the Security Council, with a view to considering what further steps might be taken by the international community.

Human Rights

Mr President,

New Zealand will stand for election to the Human Rights Council for 2009-2012. We want to do our part to help this fledgling United Nations organisation achieve its full potential as the pre-eminent global human rights body.

New Zealand was very pleased to sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March this year, with 80 other states. We are currently working through our domestic process to enable us to ratify the Convention, and urge others to do the same.

A human rights issue of particular importance to New Zealand is the death penalty.

New Zealand was the first country to become party to the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Adoption of a resolution on a global moratorium on this inhumane form of punishment would represent a historic step towards global efforts to abolish the death penalty.

UN Reform

Mr President,

New Zealand has been a committed participant in the United Nations from its formation.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for Member States 'to deliver to the best of our ability at the UN', recognising the need for faster, more effective action, as well as a more results-driven organisation which strives to have the highest standards of transparency and professional ethics. New Zealand wholeheartedly agrees. We look forward to working closely with the Secretary-General and with you, Mr President, and other Member States in efforts to build 'a stronger UN for a better world'.

I thank you, Mr President.