

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Mängai o Aotearoa

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UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SIXTY-THIRD SESSION

NEW ZEALAND STATEMENT BY H.E. MS ROSEMARY BANKS

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Check against delivery

Mr President

Sixty three years after its formation, the United Nations remains the world's central international body. Only here do all countries come together to devise solutions and to forge collective action on global challenges. And these are particularly challenging times – as the Secretary General and many others have noted, we are facing a global financial crisis, a global energy crisis and a global food crisis.

More than ever before, we are an interconnected and interdependent world community. The Charter goals of peace and prosperity require the full support of all United Nations members. New Zealand was a founding member in 1945 and our commitment to this body is as strong now as it was then.

At such a difficult time in the world we need leadership, courage and a recommitment of our resources to tackle the issues before us. When the food crisis was first in the headlines, the Secretary-General's High Level Task Force provided a mechanism for us all to respond. Having contributed nearly NZ\$10 million to date, New Zealand is among those assisting with urgent food security needs and medium term policy responses.

A successful conclusion to the Doha Development Round would alleviate much of the pressure on the demand-supply imbalance.

On the development theme of this 63rd session, New Zealand fully associates with the MDG Global Call to Action Campaign. Support is urgently needed to revitalise collective efforts, including developing and strengthening partnerships between traditional and new donors, the private sector, civil society and through south-south cooperation.

We are set to play our part. New Zealand is significantly stepping up ODA from 0.27% ODA/GNI in 2007 to 0.35% ODA/GNI by 2010/11. This 62% increase will take New Zealand aid to over NZ \$600 million.

We are acutely aware that the Pacific is the second region after sub-Saharan Africa which is least likely to meet the MDG targets. We are therefore looking to direct our increased ODA assistance there, through a Pacific Strategy.

This focuses poverty reduction efforts around four key pillars: strengthening governance; achieving broader-based growth and sustainable livelihoods; improving health and education; and reducing vulnerabilities – including the impact of climate change.

Mr President

In these challenging times, we look to the United Nations to deliver effectively for development, for peace and security and on human rights. Our Organisation must continue to evolve, along with changing demands on it. Momentum needs to be maintained in the modernisation of the UN. We share the Secretary-General's vision for this, and support his proposals to fix the human resource management system, which he has characterised as dysfunctional.

Turning now to the challenges of peace and security around the world, from which our own region is not immune.

At the Pacific Islands Forum held in Niue last month, New Zealand and other members of the Pacific Forum community expressed profound disappointment at Fiji's lack of progress towards restoring democratic government.

The Forum Communiqué urged the interim regime in Fiji to fulfil its promise to hold elections in accordance with Fiji's existing constitution by March next year. Leaders also acknowledged that there were long-term issues to be resolved in Fiji and supported a Commonwealth-led "independent and inclusive" political dialogue process to address these. This will not only create a more conducive environment for elections, but also enable a newly elected government to engage with key stakeholders to promote national reconciliation.

New Zealand urges all United Nations members to support the steps taken by the Pacific Islands Forum to encourage Fiji to return to democratic and constitutional government as soon as possible.

Our region is also home to Timor-Leste - a partner and friend of New Zealand. We are pleased to see encouraging progress since last year's elections, especially the building of institutions and improving governance. This was achieved despite assassination attempts on Timor-Leste's leadership.

The United Nations Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) and the International Stabilisation Force continue to play a valuable role in helping to maintain security. New Zealand strongly supports the UNMIT mandate and its extension beyond February. Planning for security in the longer term, to ensure appropriately sized and resourced institutions with clearly delineated roles and responsibilities, is a key issue. We stand ready to help.

Also within our region, the political, economic and human rights situation in Myanmar remains troubling. We urge the Myanmar authorities to achieve national reconciliation through open and constructive dialogue and to respect universal human rights in the country, consistent with international obligations.

We support the UN's efforts to sustain a dialogue with the Myanmar Government to build foundations for the future.

On the African continent the humanitarian disaster caused by conflict in Darfur is unacceptable. The targeting of civilians, by state and non-state parties, is a flagrant breach of international human rights law. The widespread absence of justice and accountability for such human rights violations, and the impunity this promotes, represent major obstacles to improving the human rights situation in Darfur.

In the case of Zimbabwe, the recent announcement of a power sharing agreement offers hope that the long period of violent repression and human rights abuses by the previous government can be brought to a close. The international community will be watching closely to see that all parties fulfil the commitments they have made to bring peace, respect for political freedom and human rights, and a government which reflects the will of the people.

Let me turn now to the Middle East.

New Zealand continues to be strongly supportive of all attempts to find a lasting solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict. We share the international community's vision for a viable and territorially contiguous Palestinian state, existing side by side in peace and security with the state of Israel.

In Afghanistan, despite political progress the overall situation is fragile. The international community needs to devote more resources to ending the conflict and to assisting the people of Afghanistan in their efforts to stabilise and rebuild their country. New Zealand has expressed a strong commitment to restoring peace and security in Afghanistan. Our assistance to date, both military and development, totals more than NZ\$160 million.

Closer to home, New Zealand welcomes the recent improvement in cross-Strait relations. Cross-Strait stability is vital to the security of the greater Asia-Pacific region. We encourage China and Taiwan to maintain the dialogue which has been established.

Mr President

New Zealand remains a strong supporter of efforts to protect and maintain the international rule of law. To this end, one of the most significant advances in recent times has been the creation of a permanent International Criminal Court.

When the ICC was first established, it was widely considered to herald the beginning of a new era in international criminal justice. The Court has now reached a crucial stage in its development - and it has become clear that the establishment of a global justice system brings with it many challenges. It is of

the utmost importance that states rise to these challenges. To fail to do so would be a betrayal of the victims of egregious crimes.

New Zealand urges States to make every effort to ensure the independence and success of the Court. The Court needs our full support and cooperation to ensure that the individuals responsible for the most serious violations of international law are brought to justice without delay.

Mr President

In this sixtieth anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we acknowledge the many international human rights conventions which have arisen out of that unique statement of over-riding principles.

New Zealand played an active part in the design of the new Human Rights Council. We are seeking election to the Council next year, so as to be more closely involved in its work.

The newest member of the family of human rights treaties is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which New Zealand ratified this month. We look forward to the first conference of states parties, and the opportunity the Convention offers to make a real improvement in the lives and human rights of disabled people everywhere.

Finally let me reiterate the importance that New Zealand attaches to the concept of the Responsibility to Protect. The UN, through the Security Council, should be prepared to protect people against ethnic cleansing, genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity when national authorities fail to do so.

There is a clear need to enhance early warning systems to enable the Council to act in a timely manner. We look forward to the Secretary General's report on the Responsibility to Protect and we stand ready to help to take this important initiative forward.

As we look to the year ahead, New Zealand pledges to work actively with others in our collective stewardship of the United Nations. We shall play our part in the continuing, patient process of renewing our Organisation and making it more resilient and responsive.

Thank you Mr President.