

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



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50th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

STATEMENT BY

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NEW ZEALAND REPRESENTATIVE

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AS DELIVERED

Madame Chair, New Zealand welcomes the opportunity provided by this forum to come together with those with a common interest in and commitment to the advancement of women.

New Zealand has a strong commitment to human rights and places a high priority on honouring the commitments we have made internationally to advance and protect the rights of women.

We are proud to have been part of the process that has allowed us as an international community to define our collective goals and time-bound targets for action. The Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW, the ICPD Programme of Action together with the Millennium Development Goals remain the blueprint for our collective work.

Forums such as this provide important opportunities to learn from each other those things that have proved instrumental in achieving progress to date. Just as we have much to learn and gain from each other, so too do we have much to learn and gain from the representatives of civil society who join us on occasions such as this. New Zealand welcomes their presence and contribution.

New Zealand also welcomes the opportunity for discussion about the ways this Commission can make the most constructive contribution possible to the advancement of women.

Our views on the importance of streamlining and improving debate at this Commission are well known.

We continue to believe the Commission's processes should:

- encourage and support constructive interactive dialogue
- allow free flow of information between states, and
- avoid repetitive and duplicative debate.

New Zealand, therefore, welcomes the report of the Secretary-General and the Chair's draft resolution on improving the working methods of this Commission. We support the Chair's text and look forward to engaging constructively in negotiations on it.

New Zealand is a longstanding supporter of the system of human rights special procedures. The special procedures are an essential tool for monitoring implementation of priority human rights issues. Those with a mandate on gender issues should brief this Commission each year.

We commend the initiative of the Commission this year in providing opportunities for interactive discussion between members and further commend States for their willingness to share their experiences and what they have learned on how to further improve the well-being of women.

The themes of this session are important issues for women. New Zealand's domestic experience emphasises that empowering women to make their full contribution to their community is essential to the development and success of that community. The New Zealand government has a goal of achieving 50% representation of women on state sector boards by 2010, and has to date achieved 41% representation. Our international development assistance experience has taught us that women's empowerment is the most effective way to increase the well-being of families, communities and societies.

A key function of this Commission is to provide encouragement and support in the work still to be done. For notwithstanding the progress we rightly celebrate, considerable challenges remain before us.

New Zealand has significant domestic challenges. In particular, our government has identified as a priority issue the incidence and impact of family violence on women and children. New Zealand is also committed to meeting the challenge of recognising and supporting the diversity of women and of the families in which they live. Last year, we passed legislation to provide equal protection under the law to women in diverse family relationships.

Regionally, New Zealand will continue to work with our Pacific Island partners to address domestic and family violence, increase women's leadership and participation in decision-making, and to respond to an HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact on the well-being of women and their ability to support themselves and their families.

Globally we all face the challenge of empowering women to be decision makers in their own lives and we join with other states in affirming the fundamental importance of ensuring women are able to make decisions regarding their own bodies and sexual and reproductive health.

Internationally, an important challenge for us all is that of ensuring policy cohesion across the range of international fora that address the issues central to the wellbeing of women. We must ensure that our work in all foras is consistent and mutually-reinforcing.

New Zealand looks forward to working with other member States to advance our common goals and progress the work of this Commission.