



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

United Nations General Assembly: 75th General Debate – National Statement

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E ngā mana, e ngā reo,
(Prestigious people, speakers of note,)

Rau Rangatira mā o te Ao
(Chiefs and world leaders)

Ngā māngai o ngā whenua ake,
(Representatives of your countries)

Huri rauna I te Ao
(From around the world)

Tēnā koutou katoa mai Aotearoa
(Greetings to you all from New Zealand)

My opening remarks were in Te Reo Māori, an official language of New Zealand, and the language of the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand.

While geographically remote, New Zealand is deeply connected to our region and globally.

This connectedness drives us to seek common purpose with the countries in this Assembly Hall: a common purpose of a more prosperous, sustainable, and peaceful world for all.

For New Zealanders, diversity is strength.

We strive for a more equal society, and we value strong institutions that promote fairness and deliver for all people.

We are a country founded on the Treaty of Waitangi - Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

This treaty requires a genuine and sustained partnership, and the search for shared solutions.

We still have work to do at home, but these values guide our approach to global cooperation.

Our connectedness also means New Zealand relies on global cooperation - and on multilateralism.

And at the heart of this is the United Nations.

We invest in this system not only because it is the right thing to do, but because it helps build a safer, more prosperous, and sustainable future.

Our security and prosperity, is your peace and prosperity.

Our inter-dependence with other nations is never more evident as our countries tackle **COVID-19**.

New Zealanders believe in inclusiveness, equality, and a sense of community.

These beliefs shape our approach to tackling the pandemic.

Our response has been science-based and precautionary.

We responded rapidly to each outbreak, and New Zealanders have played their part in preventing widespread community transmission.

Management of the New Zealand border continues to be our key line of defence.

While we all learn to live with the impact of COVID-19 domestically, we must also focus on its impact globally.

To defeat this virus globally we will need to be at our collective best.

We need to pool our best ideas, think innovatively, and share our best people and resources.

We need to invest in, and trust, each other.

We support the World Health Organisation and the role it played in coordinating an early response.

The international system has responded well to address the early health, humanitarian, and development impacts of COVID-19, but the need for international cooperation goes beyond this.

We must work together to develop and distribute a **vaccine on an equitable basis**.

To achieve this, New Zealand has joined the COVAX Facility.

This will ensure that COVID-19 vaccines can be equitably distributed to every participating country worldwide.

By supporting the COVAX Facility we also demonstrate our commitment to ensuring vulnerable communities everywhere, including in the Pacific, receive the vaccines they need.

No one is safe until we are all safe.

We encourage other countries to support vaccine multilateralism, and to ensure the unimpeded fair and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide.

COVID-19 and its **secondary impacts** are having a disproportionate effect on the world's most vulnerable groups.

Millions of children are out of education with no ability to learn from home, and millions more have missed life-saving vaccinations.

Ethnic minorities are dying from COVID-19 at a disproportionately high rate.

Many of those working in the informal economy, particularly women, lack access to social safety nets.

And there has been a concerning increase in gender-based violence.

While a vaccine would return some normality to our lives, it may take years to recover from the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic.

But we have an opportunity to mitigate these impacts.

We must work together for a global economic recovery that protects the most vulnerable, creates jobs, and maintains supply chains and open markets.

We must ensure the recovery respects and promotes the human rights of all.

We must recommit to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda.

And we should rally behind the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire so we can all focus on prevention and recovery.

Where we live, in **the Pacific**, the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic have been, and will continue to be, particularly damaging.

The outlook is challenging.

Many Small Island Developing States depend on tourism sectors that have been drastically affected by closed borders.

These countries already faced significant constraints to ensuring economic resilience.

The pandemic has amplified these challenges.

The international community needs to ensure that appropriate concessional finance is available to SIDS to support their response to this economic shock.

New Zealand is committed to working with the international community and supporting Pacific Island Countries to withstand the most damaging effects of the pandemic.

In all crises, there are opportunities.

Our opportunity today is to build back better.

To re-think how our economies can work for the many, not just the few.

To better focus on the most vulnerable.

And to re-build our societies to prioritise tackling the defining challenge of our generation, **climate change**.

Many of the things I have said about COVID-19 apply equally to climate change; but there will be no vaccine against climate change.

The threat of climate change is more real in the Pacific than any other region in the world.

Some of the most climate-affected nations in the world sit within this region.

Sea-level rise poses an extreme threat to many Pacific Islands.

They are paying the price for our collective inaction and their fate is in our hands.

They rely on the United Nations and its Member States to make political decisions, and commitments, to protect their future.

The full implementation of the Paris Agreement is critical.

Moreover, it is time for a 'global reset' towards a more green economy.

We must stop fossil fuel subsidies and divert these billions of dollars into transitioning to clean energy generation.

It is time to re-think how our societies can simultaneously focus on the well-being of our people, and of our environment.

The critical importance that biodiversity plays in ensuring the welfare of our people, the economy, and the environment will be highlighted tomorrow in the **High-Level Summit on Biodiversity**.

Biodiversity all over the world is in serious decline.

The time for action is now and New Zealand is stepping up.

We have launched Te Mana o te Taiao, the Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy to guide the way we protect and restore nature.

We urge all others to join us in increasing our ambition on biodiversity protection.

It is one of the best investments in our future.

New Zealand will continue to advocate for progressing gender equality and women's empowerment.

We were the first country in the world in which women won the right to vote.

Our top three constitutional positions are all held by women, and we have our third woman Prime Minister.

We are proud of our gains, but mindful of the continuing gap.

On Thursday we will celebrate the **25th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.**

The Beijing Platform for Action remains as relevant today as it was 25 years ago.

We recommit to completing the unfinished work.

To achieve the commitments set in Beijing we must protect the rights of all women and girls.

Collectively, we need to do more to eliminate gender inequalities.

Realising gender equality is everyone's responsibility.

It is simply non-negotiable, and we will not rest until it is achieved.

At recent events to mark the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, we recalled the catastrophic consequences of nuclear weapons.

The testing of nuclear weapons has also had a disastrous impact in the Pacific region.

We know that no state or organisation can prepare for the unimaginable suffering in the wake of a nuclear holocaust.

If we cannot prepare, we must prevent.

That is why New Zealand has signed up to the **Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.**

We urge all others to join this landmark Treaty, and we welcome its imminent entry-into-force.

The Treaty's global prohibition on nuclear weapons is a necessary step on the way towards their total elimination.

As we will also emphasise in New Zealand's statement delivered later this week on the **International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons**, it is time for global negotiations involving all nuclear weapons possessors to take place in order to achieve "nuclear zero".

It was out of the devastation of World War II that nations pledged to save successive generations from the scourge of war.

Now, in 2020, more than ever, the international community must step up - collectively and in the common interest.

Since 1945, New Zealand has championed the United Nations and the wider international system.

Today we recommit to playing our part in ensuring the multilateral system collectively responds to shared, urgent global challenges.

New Zealand urges all other Member States to do the same.

Nāu te rourou, nāku te rourou ka ora ai te iwi.

With your food basket, and my food basket, the people will thrive.