

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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53rd Commission on the Status of Women

Statement by

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for

New Zealand

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Check against delivery

Tena koutou katoa
He mihi ki nga tangata o nga hau e wha
Kai te mihi ki a koutou

Greetings to all delegates in the Māori language.

Chair

It is my pleasure to present New Zealand's statement today.

On many occasions New Zealand has reaffirmed its support for the standards set out in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. We do so again today with renewed commitment; acknowledging particularly the significance of this year, the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

These agreements remain the blueprint for making real improvements in the lives of women across the world.

New Zealand is committed to women having real choices and being able to use their strengths to maximise their own, and the nation's, social and economic success. New Zealand faces its own challenges in the pursuit of this goal, for example in eliminating violence against women; but we continue to work energetically to ensure progress.

We support gender equality because we are strongly committed to our international obligations to advance women's rights, and because no nation can afford to waste any of the abilities of its people.

The current global recession should not be used as an excuse to slow progress towards women's full participation in all areas of society and the economy; rather the economic challenges make it even more important that nations ensure they make the best use of women's skills. We are also mindful of the disproportionate risks that this economic crisis poses for the situation of women and girls, and the full realisation of gender equality, particularly in our partner developing countries.

We see important links between the priority and review themes: women can only participate in decision-making if their time is not overwhelmingly taken up with responsibilities within the family and community.

New Zealand therefore welcomes discussion on the theme of equal sharing of responsibilities between men and women. Achieving this ideal, in the home, and in

the workforce, across all areas of society, is crucial to helping women achieve their full potential. New Zealand women are entering the paid workforce in increasing numbers and efforts are being made to increase their participation in governance. Clearly, the burden upon women will become even heavier, if greater sharing of family and home responsibilities does not occur.

New Zealand takes the issue of women in leadership very seriously. In the state sector, nearly 42 percent of people in governance roles are women, and we are committed to pushing towards 50 percent. The private sector has much further to go to reach equal participation of women in leadership and the Government is currently looking at ways to work more closely with business to increase the number of women on private sector boards.

As the ICPD Programme of Action acknowledged 15 years ago, involving men is crucial to success. We look forward to hearing new ideas and experiences on efforts to involve men in nurturing the social fabric of societies.

We are pleased to be part of an increased Pacific presence at CSW, and to raising awareness of the region's experiences and issues in relation to the themes. The participation of strong Pacific Island delegations will bring a unique and valuable perspective to this meeting, and New Zealand endorses the Pacific Island Forum Group Statement. In the Pacific Island context, advancing the equal sharing of responsibilities for caregiving should be seen in the broader context of high levels of non-communicable diseases (which are a major cause of disability), and the high incidence of family violence, in addition to HIV and AIDS. New Zealand's foreign aid programme supports various initiatives that address the gender dimensions of health, disability, gender-based violence and governance in the Pacific.

New Zealand recognises the valuable role and contribution of civil society to the work of the Commission. I am pleased that we have again been able to include an NGO member on our government delegation, in recognition of the importance of government and civil society working together to achieve positive change for women. We support the participation of national human rights institutions in the Commission on the Status of Women, in accordance with the spirit of the Paris Principles.

The United Nations has a vital role to play in promoting effective gender mainstreaming and resourcing for gender equality. New Zealand urges States to redouble their efforts to achieve a strengthened gender architecture, with a focus on improving gender-related development outcomes at the country level.

No reira, tena koutou katoa.