



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

## Item 66: Rights of Indigenous Peoples

*Statement by H.E. Jim McLay*

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative*

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*Check against delivery*



**NEW ZEALAND  
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The New Zealand Government remains committed to ensuring the fulfilment of the rights of indigenous peoples and takes this opportunity to reaffirm its support for the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The principles and aspirations of the Declaration underpin the continued dialogue between Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand – the tangata whenua – and the New Zealand Government. Central to the relationships between the Government and Māori is the Treaty of Waitangi.

The rights reflected in the Declaration are given varying effect through a range of measures in domestic law and policy, including the laws and policies that reflect the Treaty of Waitangi. This process is on going and evolving, having commenced before the Declaration was adopted by New Zealand in 2010. The New Zealand Government is maintaining momentum in settling Treaty of Waitangi claims and is moving towards a more positive post settlement environment.

The Treaty settlement process creates an opportunity for the government to engage more effectively through the relationships established between the government and Māori.

The Treaty settlement process is also supporting Māori to develop social, cultural and economic capacity and in some situations is creating opportunities to work in partnership with the Crown on more effective social policy solutions for Māori.

New Zealand is also undertaking a nationwide consideration of constitutional issues, which provides an opportunity for all New Zealanders to think about, and have a say on, New Zealand's constitutional arrangements. The future role of the Treaty of Waitangi is an important part of that discussion; and we are hopeful that this process will promote a better awareness of the Crown-Māori relationship that continues to underpin New Zealand's foundational experience.

The New Zealand government is committed to educating our children, our Tamariki, and the use of Māori language in education is a defining feature of New Zealand's education system. New Zealand is the only country in the world that has national curricula in two languages that are not direct translations of each other. A key goal of the government is that all Māori and other New Zealanders will have increased opportunities to access high-quality Māori language education.

Despite many positive developments, we remain realistic about the challenges. We recognise that Māori are over-represented in the criminal justice system, that Māori women and children experience a greater prevalence of domestic violence and that Māori face a higher number of health problems. The New Zealand government is committed to addressing these issues by improving social and economic conditions for Māori.

New Zealand thanks the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for his continued efforts to promote the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. New Zealand has welcomed both the present Special Rapporteur and his predecessor to New Zealand, and has been grateful for their feedback. We are concerned that some Member States have declined to give their consent to country visits or to respond to the Special Rapporteur's communications regarding human rights violations. We urge all states to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur's mandate.

As part of the important progression and promotion of indigenous rights in the multilateral context, New Zealand joins with others in emphasising the need to ensure an inclusive World Conference on Indigenous Peoples in 2014. New Zealand has worked hard to ensure participation of indigenous peoples at all stages of the process, and will continue to do so. Most recently we joined other missions in urging the Secretary General to circulate the Alta document as a formal UN document as we consider that document, as a reflection of the views and recommendations of indigenous peoples, to be of relevance and value to the World Conference process. We look forward to the World Conference next year, where we will have an opportunity to share perspectives and best practices on the realisation of the rights of indigenous people; against which background New Zealand reaffirms its commitment to improving the human rights conditions of the world's indigenous peoples.