New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations
Te Māngai o Aotearoa

Agenda item 28(a) Advancement of Women

New Zealand statement

Statement by H.E. Jim McLay
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative

14 October 2013
Mr Chairman, New Zealand congratulates you on your election, and that of the other members of the Bureau; and thanks the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, for their reports.

We also welcome the recent appointment of Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as Executive Director of UN Women, and wish her all the very best for her term.

Mr Chairman, nothing we do here at the United Nations, or in our home countries, can be considered successful if it only involves half of the world. You don’t leave half of your sports team in the dressing room, or face a winter storm with a glove on only one hand. So in order to realise our full potential as members of the international community, it is only logical to include and empower women and girls; and so it is that New Zealand reiterates its commitment to realising gender equality and empowering women and girls.

For us, that is a long-term and unwavering commitment, manifested in our adherence to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Vienna Declaration and Programme for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development, UN Security Council resolution 1325, and the outcomes of the Commission on the Status of Women – all of them vital tools on the path to gender equality.

Removing discrimination and actively supporting the full participation of women in economic, social and political life is essential to reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance, and increasing the well-being of women, girls and their families. It produces healthy populations and stable societies. It makes common sense and economic sense. And it is right.

New Zealand joins the Secretary-General in calling for increased, targeted, and progressively standardised data collection on women’s political participation. Inclusivity is the cornerstone of all healthy democracies – we must continue to work towards full inclusion and meaningful participation of women in all political processes.

Mr Chairman, ending all forms of violence against women and girls is a priority for New Zealand, both domestically and internationally. We must remain responsive to this issue, not least through consistent re-evaluation of policies and laws aimed at eliminating violence against women. We are also concerned at the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women, particularly indigenous women and women with disabilities.
While there has been great progress towards achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls under the Millennium Development Goals, New Zealand encourages all parties to remain focused on achieving these goals. We also believe that the post-2015 development agenda should ensure gender equality; if it does not, then how can we expect that any new development goals, however couched, will be truly achieved?

In June this year, the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, Mary Robinson, asked the question “how can there be peace and security if half the population has no role in building it?” Indeed, the post-2015 development agenda must leave no one behind.

Mr Chairman, we strongly support the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325, and the women, peace and security agenda more broadly. New Zealand is currently developing its National Action Plan under this resolution, through a comprehensive whole-of-government approach, and, through the work of our aid programme, and defence and police forces, we are working with our regional partners to implement the Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

We also welcome the Ministerial Declaration on Ending Sexual Violence, and are pleased to be one of the 123 states to have endorsed this declaration. It reflects a shared determination to see an end to the use of rape and sexual violence as weapons of war, and to tackle impunity and deliver justice for victims and survivors. We therefore applaud the efforts of the United Kingdom and others in drawing greater attention to this very important issue.

Mr Chairman, women are disproportionately affected by humanitarian emergencies – both conflict situations and natural disasters. Yet they remain excluded from many peace processes, and from those related to preparedness, response and recovery. We welcome recent measures in the UN system to take more account of women’s needs in emergency situations, and call for an acceleration of efforts to include and empower more women in decision-making processes for humanitarian action and disaster risk reduction.

New Zealand looks forward to further constructive discussions on the advancement of women and gender equality at the forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and to the review of the ICPD Programme of Action in 2014; all of which can help secure the advancement of women – the very purpose, Mr Chairman, of this agenda item.