



# New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

## UNGA 72: New Zealand National Statement

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## **UNGA 72: New Zealand National Statement**

Mr President,

There is no greater demonstration of the United Nations's ability to bring the world together than the opening on the General Assembly.

The breadth of issues which are discussed in this Hall is immense. Often there are as many points of view as there are Member States. But ultimately we as an Organization share the common goal of making the world more peaceful, and improving the lives of all of our peoples.

New Zealand is around a thousand kilometres away from our nearest neighbour in the Pacific, but our international connections are an intrinsic part of our identity and the foundation of our prosperity. We are an outward looking nation that relies on global stability for our trade and the safety of our people.

As a founding member of the United Nations, New Zealand has always supported the UN's leading role in a multilateral system which fosters positive international relations.

Given significant ongoing challenges to international peace and security, the UN's role in preventing and resolving conflict is as relevant now as ever.

Amongst these challenges, **North Korea** presents some of the most pressing threats to international security of our time.

The North Korean regime has consistently disregarded Security Council resolutions, the wishes of the international community and the well-being of its own people.

In this past month alone, it has conducted its sixth nuclear test, launched a ballistic missile over Japan, and carried out other ballistic missile tests. These provocative actions have directly undermined the nuclear non-proliferation regime, which has serious wider implications.

As we saw during our recent Security Council term, the Council works most effectively when it acts as one. New Zealand supports the strong, unified responses by the Security Council and we stand ready to work with Member States on measures that will fully reflect the consequences of North Korea's actions.

We hope to see tensions defused, and a path to dialogue developed. The goal of denuclearisation requires eventual engagement with Pyongyang. But any dialogue must be meaningful and constructive, and address the issues that most concern the international community.

Until then, we join the rest of the international community in calling on North Korea to undertake immediate actions to de-escalate tensions, improve its humanitarian situation, and abide by its international obligations.

The risks associated with nuclear weapons and nuclear proliferation have been a key factor in New Zealand's long-standing commitment to international nuclear disarmament. Last week we were pleased to sign the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Treaty represents an important step towards a nuclear-free world.

New Zealand is committed to playing its part to address **global threats to peace and security**. We have a history of contributing to efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, including through the United Nations.

On the Security Council, New Zealand made determined efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in **Syria**. Alongside Spain, Jordan and Egypt, we managed to renew and improve cross border access arrangements.

We consistently raised concerns at the Council's failure to bring about a political solution. Unspeakable crimes continue to be committed against the civilian population and humanitarian access remains fraught.

Only a sustainable peace based on an inclusive long-term political settlement can bring this needless conflict to an end.

In **Iraq**, New Zealand Defence Force personnel are working to strengthen the capacity of Iraqi forces in their battle against **Daesh**.

We welcome the liberation of Mosul, Tal Afar and Nineveh province. This was an admirable achievement and we acknowledge the sacrifice and commitment of the Iraqi Security Forces and Government.

Unfortunately, this does not represent the end of the battle. It will be important for Iraqi forces to consolidate the gains they have made, and for the international community to support Iraq in stabilising and rebuilding areas that have been recaptured. We must prevent any resurgence in violent extremism.

We note that Daesh's influence is not limited to Iraq and Syria and that defeat of Daesh there will not spell the end of this group. New Zealand is focused on working with others in our near region, the Asia-Pacific, to ensure that groups like Daesh do not inflict suffering in the way they have elsewhere.

In addition to security-based efforts, preventing and countering violent extremism in the first place is vital and we are pleased to support international efforts in this regard.

New Zealand has been contributing to Afghanistan's stability since 2001. We remain a committed partner of **Afghanistan** including through NATO's Resolute Support Mission.

Ongoing support for Afghanistan from the international community is critical given the scale and complexity of the challenges ahead.

But history has demonstrated in Afghanistan that no amount of international support can, by itself, bring lasting peace and security.

Afghanistan's future lies in the hands of its government and people. We continue to call on the National Unity Government to prioritise the interests of the Afghan people above all else.

Mr President

The United Nations is unique in its ability to convene the world in order to tackle problems that require collective action.

The speed with which Parties ratified the **Paris Agreement** has demonstrated the strength of commitment to take meaningful action on **climate change**.

New Zealand is among the many countries committed to the Paris Agreement.

Progressing the Paris work programme is essential to deliver a framework that will ensure the Agreement is robust, effective and credible, and that collective ambition will increase over time.

The **Pacific** is at the forefront of vulnerability to the effects of climate change, so we are pleased to support Fiji's Presidency of this year's climate change Conference of the Parties. It is a rare opportunity for the region to showcase its leadership in this area.

We are an island nation within a vast Pacific Ocean. Our Exclusive Economic Zone is 15 times larger than our land area.

Sustainable management of our sea and our islands are of critical importance environmentally, economically and culturally.

**Small Island Developing States** face unique challenges and vulnerabilities; they are also great ocean states and stewards of considerable ocean resources.

New Zealand wants to assist these states in the sustainable management of **oceans** to ensure that our oceans are healthy and productive. We are making substantial investments to improve sustainable **fisheries** management in the Pacific and to reduce illegal unreported and unregulated fishing.

We are also propelling a major increase in **renewable energy** generation in our region, and further afield.

New Zealand has committed NZ\$230 million over the past six years to renewable energy projects in the Pacific, Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and we have worked hard to catalyse even greater resources from other partners.

The tangible impacts of this work include **Tuvalu**, for example, which is on course to generate all of its electricity from renewable sources by 2025. **Tokelau** - which was previously wholly dependent upon fossil fuels for electricity - is now effectively 100 percent renewable energy via solar generation.

Better, cleaner energy sources help Pacific Island countries cut their greenhouse gas emissions and meet their renewable energy targets and low carbon development pathways. It also makes them less reliant on expensive imported diesel.

New Zealand has taken a lead role in advocating internationally for the reform of **fossil fuel subsidies** which lead to wasteful consumption, disadvantage renewable energy, and depress investment in energy efficiency.

We are exploring alternative sources of **development financing** including working with the private sector, tapping into diaspora as a source of skills and investment, maximising the value of remittances, and increasing temporary labour market access.

New Zealand is supporting the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals** in a wide range of areas, both domestically and internationally, including through our

development assistance. We will continue to play our part in meeting the high level of ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The **Pacific** is an important part of how we define ourselves internationally. There are strong Pasifika communities in New Zealand, and we have special relationships with our Realm country partners – the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau.

New Zealand works to promote a stable, prosperous Pacific region and 60 percent of our development assistance (NZ\$1 billion over three years) is directed to the Pacific.

A strong and effective regional architecture, with the **Pacific Islands Forum** as the central regional body, is key to Pacific success.

New Zealand was pleased with the outcomes of the recent Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting, which had a strong focus on fisheries and climate change issues.

Pacific Leaders also agreed on the importance of fully implementing relevant Security Council Resolutions on North Korea, including by de-registering any North Korean trading or fishing vessels currently flagged on Pacific States' shipping registries.

New Zealand places significant value on the international rules based order. Widely recognised rules, buttressed by an effective United Nations, are the best guarantors of our security and our economic well-being, particularly for small states. Such guarantees are also the best means of ensuring decent treatment and decent conditions for the world's citizens – and thereby reducing conditions that can lead to unrest, conflict and misery.

But we all recognise that the United Nations can do better, and to do so must be more relevant, effective and fit for purpose.

The **Secretary-General's reform agenda** provides an opportunity for us to make this a reality. Important work lies ahead for us to reform the development and peace and security pillars.

The United Nations needs to invest a much greater proportion of its resources and effort in preventing conflict, rather than focusing primarily on the consequences of conflict.

New Zealand continues to support **Security Council reform** to make the Council more representative, as well as to improve its working methods, which was a high priority during our Council term.

Another critical element of making the United Nations more effective is **management reform**, including to strengthen and modernise its recruitment and management processes to ensure maximum benefit is derived from its people.

New Zealand looks forward to working together with the Secretary-General and all Member States. It is our sincere hope that reform can achieve our collective goal of better reflecting the ideals of the UN Charter and, ultimately, ensuring that the UN delivers better outcomes for our generation and those to come.

Thank you.