

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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United Nations General Assembly General Debate

**HON MURRAY MCCULLY
MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

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Check against delivery

Mr President
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates

It is an honour to lead New Zealand's delegation this year.

The opening of the General Assembly is the best example there is of the capacity of the United Nations to bring us all together.

Our discussions here will be wide-ranging, but inevitably settle on two main issues – global security and sustainable economic development.

We want to make our world safer, more secure, and more prosperous.

These goals will require strong collective action with a focus on practical outcomes.

New Zealand is seeking every opportunity to contribute. We are a young, small, and fair-minded country. We depend upon a United Nations that is effective and credible.

Mr President

New Zealand takes pride in its diversity. As well as our indigenous Maori population, we are a mix of people from Europe, Asia, and the Pacific.

Our links with Europe are built on history and tradition. Within Asia, we are developing ever-stronger economic and security relationships.

Our future is closely tied to both of these regions.

We have an equally strong focus on our closest neighbours in the South Pacific.

New Zealand is a Pacific country. Auckland is the largest Pasifika city in the world, and a number of Pacific countries have more citizens living in New Zealand than at home.

The security and development of the region is New Zealand's constant preoccupation.

It is a matter of grave concern that the South Pacific is second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of lack of progress towards the achievement of some of the Millennium Development Goals.

We want to see the MDGs achieved, and we want to see the wider Pacific prosper, through good governance and sustainable economic development.

This is why New Zealand is increasingly deploying our resources in our region. This is where they are most needed, and where they can be most effective.

The development challenges in the Pacific are extremely complex, with vulnerable economies and challenging environmental circumstances.

New Zealand has increased and will continue to increase, our overall level of development assistance despite challenging times for our domestic economy.

A higher percentage of that larger budget will be focused on our region.

But money alone is not enough - aid-effectiveness and donor coordination are vital.

Progress will also rely on good governance in the region.

Next year we will mark the 40th anniversary of the Pacific Islands Forum, the central body for regional engagement in the Pacific, which held its first meeting in New Zealand in 1971.

We will welcome Leaders from around the region back to New Zealand next September to celebrate our achievements over forty years, and to take stock of the challenges we must face in the future.

Mr President

The past year has reinforced the need for better disaster management.

Just three weeks ago residents in Christchurch woke to the most destructive earthquake in New Zealand for 80 years.

Miraculously there was no loss of life. But the damage runs into billions of dollars and people's lives and livelihoods were affected.

Significant aftershocks are still affecting the population.

But less than a month after the earthquake hit, roads and buildings have been repaired, tourism infrastructure is at almost full capacity, and people's lives are being rebuilt.

Others have not been so lucky. The earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, and the recent flooding in Pakistan, are reminders of the devastating scale of such disasters.

The Pacific has been hit hard too.

This month we mark the first anniversary of the Pacific tsunami, which took the lives of 184 people in Samoa, American Samoa, and Tonga.

These events, and others, demonstrate the importance of disaster preparedness, management and recovery.

New Zealand's experience with major earthquakes has taught us how to mitigate risks, enforce strong building codes, and implement effective recovery plans.

But there will be lessons we should learn from this recent experience.

We will work with the UN system, NGOs, and other international agencies to ensure those lessons are shared and help others to prepare.

Mr President

While development and disaster management are crucial in the quest for a safer world, underpinning both is security.

Peacekeeping is a key responsibility of this organisation.

Indeed, it is its peacekeeping operations that shape perceptions of the UN for many people around the world.

New Zealand is committed to supporting global security and UN peacekeeping.

This is why we have been engaged in peacekeeping, and peace support operations, since the 1940s.

New Zealand soldiers, police, engineers, corrections and customs officers, doctors, and other personnel are today involved in 12 operations that span the globe – Africa, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

One of the clearest examples of New Zealand's commitment to the principles of collective responsibility through the United Nations is Timor-Leste.

Since 1999 New Zealand has been a part of every UN mission that has served in Timor-Leste.

We have played a major role in the UN-sanctioned international military operations that restored order in 1999 and again in 2006.

Over 6000 New Zealanders have served in Timor in the past decade – a significant undertaking for a country of only 4.4 million people.

Of course, helping ensure peace and stability in our region alone is not enough.

New Zealanders are among those that have been affected by terrorism – killed in the attacks that took place just a few blocks away from here in September 2001, and more recently in Bali, in London, as well as in Jakarta.

The need to respond decisively to those who perpetrate such atrocities is a key reason why New Zealand has led the Provincial Reconstruction Team in Bamyan, Afghanistan, since 2003.

We have redeployed our special forces to work alongside the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to ensure that that country does not return to being a safe haven for Al Qaeda.

We must address the conditions in which terrorism thrives.

We are increasing our development spending in Bamyan and recently placed the PRT under civilian leadership for the first time.

New Zealand is also strongly supportive of peacekeeping reform.

The expansion in peacekeeping since 1990 has been dramatic.

Never before has this organisation deployed so many missions to such complex environments.

This expansion has opened up the discussion of the way the UN conducts its peacekeeping operations.

Clear and achievable mandates are needed, progress needs to be better monitored, and efficiency needs to be improved.

We are also contributing to UN efforts to strengthen peacebuilding in practice, including the need for better participation of women in peacebuilding.

Of course the United Nations' response to crises has not always been successful.

It is for this reason that New Zealand has strongly supported the Responsibility to Protect.

We were pleased to contribute to the joint Genocide/R2P office, and look forward to more comprehensive implementation of R2P throughout the UN system.

Mr President

Effective pursuit of these goals – countering terrorism, maintaining peace and security – demands coordinated, collective action.

The United Nations is the best vehicle for that action.

New Zealand has been – and remains – proud to be a part of that community of collective action.

In line with this commitment, New Zealand is seeking a seat on the Security Council for the 2015-16 term.

In doing so, New Zealand will work with others here who want the world to be a safer and more prosperous place.

Mr President

This year significant gains have been made in global disarmament.

New Zealand welcomes the action plan adopted at this year's Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the groundbreaking Nuclear Security Summit, and the entry into force of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

These are tangible and practical successes.

But we still face some significant challenges. New Zealand is concerned by the continuing inertia in the Conference on Disarmament.

The Secretary-General's High-Level Meeting on Disarmament this morning was a valuable step in acknowledging this problem and finding a way forward.

Mr President

As a country that prides itself on sustainable development, New Zealand is also greatly concerned by global environmental issues.

As well as working towards an outcome in Cancun, we are involved in practical projects to address climate change.

One such project is the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases.

Fourteen percent of world-wide greenhouse gas emissions come from agriculture.

At the same time, there are projections that world food production needs to increase by 50% in the next 20 years, and double in the next 40 years, to feed a growing world.

Clearly, we need a scientific breakthrough to the challenge of producing more food whilst reducing emissions.

New Zealand formed the Alliance, which now includes more than 30 agricultural nations, to find ways to address this problem.

Scientists and researchers are now linking up across the world to try to balance the need for increased agricultural production with the need to address climate change.

This is just one example of how countries can come together to address climate change in a very real way.

Mr President

When I was here a year ago, we were watching to see whether the world would be able to climb out of a global recession.

Much progress has been made and key economic indicators are generally pointing in the right direction.

The rapid and coordinated international response, including by the G20, has been effective.

The World Trade Organisation's rules-based trading system has held up well.

But like many countries, New Zealand is frustrated that the conclusion of the Doha Development Round still eludes us.

Over these last few days, especially in the context of discussion of progress towards Millennium Development Goals, I have heard many fine words spoken in support of the world's disadvantaged.

I take the opportunity to remind those speakers and those countries that the single most effective step that could be taken to advance the position of the world's disadvantaged would be to create a framework within which they can trade themselves to a better future.

Mr President

I want to strongly endorse President Obama's statement yesterday that there is no viable alternative to the resolution of conflict in the Middle East other than two states, Israel and Palestine, living side-by-side in peace and security.

We believe that direct negotiations, with both parties at the same table, are the only way to resolve the conflict.

We congratulate President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu for having the courage to negotiate in very difficult circumstances.

We ask that Israel heed the international community's unanimous call to extend the moratorium on settlements and enable an atmosphere for direct negotiations to continue.

We also agree with President Obama that resolution of the Middle East conflict is not just the responsibility of Israel and Palestine.

Countries in the region especially, but also elsewhere, must work towards Middle East peace.

New Zealand, as a friend of both Israel and Palestine, will play its part.

I recently visited Sinai where a New Zealand officer has command of the Multinational Force and Observers. I was reminded that there has been peace between Israel and Egypt for over 30 years, a prospect once unthinkable.

With the commitment of the two parties, and the support of the international community, Israel and Palestine can enjoy the same freedom from conflict.

We all have a huge stake in achieving that objective.

Resolution of the Palestinian question would tear out the fuse that threatens to ignite conflict in the Middle East and beyond.

So today we add our voice to that of President Obama and others who believe this dispute can, and must, be solved.

And we call on all members of the United Nations to lend their support to this process in the critical weeks ahead.