

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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United Nations General Assembly General Debate

H.E JIM McLAY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE

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Check against delivery

E nga mana, e nga reo, e nga iwi; tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa; to all peoples and to all voices, greetings, greetings, greetings to all.

Mr President -

I speak at the end of a period of intense United Nations dialogue and engagement.

This General Debate provides unparalleled opportunities to reaffirm the UN's unique, multilateral role.

And, Mr President, there's been much to debate.

Events set in motion by a single Tunisian street vendor have transformed much of the Middle East and North Africa.

People have displayed extraordinary courage in claiming their rights and freedoms.

The transition from dictatorship to democracy won't be easy; it won't be quick; but it must be achieved.

For others, the struggle continues.

We still look for change in Yemen; we still look for change in Syria.

There are other challenges; some highlighted in this debate.

We heard from the President of South Africa, and others, how the global community must move swiftly to avert humanitarian disaster in the Horn of Africa.

We've heard, from the President of Nigeria, how terror networks threaten international peace and security; and from the President of Tanzania about growing piracy on Africa's eastern coast - from Somalia to Mozambique.

We've heard calls from the Indonesian Foreign Minister for "bold measures" to avert a renewed global financial crisis.

And we've heard from the President of Brazil about the challenge of empowering women to participate in political decision making.

So, Mr President, there's still much more to be done.

Lives have also been wrenched by natural disasters in many countries, including my own.

On 22 February 2011, we experienced what my Prime Minister called New Zealand's "darkest day".

An earthquake struck Christchurch, our second-largest city.

181 people were killed, a loss we share with fifteen other countries whose citizens also died.

We were humbled by the support we received; and, once again, I thank those who gave that help.

Despite that disaster, and the literally thousands of following after-shocks, New Zealanders remain resilient and optimistic.

Christchurch is being rebuilt.

Our economy is bouncing back; and the country is returning to normal, not least by currently hosting the Rugby World Cup – a celebration of a game we love, in the land we love.

Despite some cause for economic optimism, events of the past week suggest the world still faces what we've long feared - a second, even more disastrous decline into a double-dip recession.

We don't relish the prospect, Mr President, of being dragged into another recession that's not of our making.

And we caution others larger than ourselves against repeating the mistakes of the 1930s, when autarkic protectionism only deepened the Depression and led to war.

Instead, Mr President, a successful conclusion of the Doha Round is one of the keys to prosperity, particularly for the Global South.

The February Christchurch earthquake was followed by the devastation wrought on our close friend Japan.

I repeat our heartfelt sympathy to Japan, so steadfast in its support for New Zealand in our time of need.

Those disasters, and others elsewhere, reinforced the importance of effective **disaster preparedness**, response and recovery.

New Zealand will work with the UN, NGOs, and international agencies so the lessons learned from Christchurch are shared, and others can be better prepared.

For regions as vulnerable as ours, disaster preparedness is no desktop exercise - it's a matter of survival.

Likewise, for our Pacific neighbours, another high risk, **climate change**, is no abstract threat, confined to thousands of pages of reports and esoteric debate; it's a fundamental question of existence.

For the Pacific, climate change is a grave and present threat to livelihoods, security and well-being.

Our Secretary-General experienced these challenges first-hand when he visited several Pacific states; including one post-conflict society, and another whose people see, on a daily basis, the dangers of rising oceans.

He experienced real "vulnerability" when his hotel room, in addition to the towels and the telephone, was equipped with a lifejacket.

And he saw the impact of rising oceans on the viability and survival of many communities when his plane had to be "wheels up" from the country's airport (its major link with the world) before the tide came in.

Much more of that, Mr President, and whole populations will be on the move (as they'll be in other regions as well) – with implications for regional and international stability and security.

Faced with that, it's self-evident that all relevant international fora – including the Security Council – must play their part in addressing this challenge.

That means taking urgent and effective action on emissions reduction.

It means strengthening adaptation in developing countries, particularly the most vulnerable.

And it means acknowledging and planning for security implications, before they become threats to regional and international security.

This year's Durban meeting must set us on the road to full implementation of the Cancun Agreements.

New Zealand is committed, both through the UNFCCC negotiations, and its active assistance in the Pacific and elsewhere, to integrate adaptation and mitigation measures into development activities.

New Zealand also initiated the Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases.

Supported by over thirty countries, the Alliance seeks to ensure that reducing agricultural emissions doesn't compromise global food security.

Increased agricultural productivity – the ability of many countries to feed themselves - is one of the great achievements of recent decades.

Constraining agricultural production would put much of the world's population at risk; and no country will do that.

We must maintain investment in agricultural research, so productivity and efficiency gains can continue, but with fewer greenhouse gas emissions.

That's what the Global Alliance is all about.

Mr President -

New Zealand takes pride in its diversity.

We are indigenous Māori; we are European; and we are the many peoples from Asia-Pacific and elsewhere who call New Zealand home.

We're also proud to be part of the **Pacific Islands Forum**, the foremost regional body.

For 40 years, it's been central to the region's efforts to address its own problems; whether they be the special development challenges of small, isolated, vulnerable island states, or halting and healing the impacts of violent conflict.

And it's done that in the time-honoured "Pacific Way" – through respectful dialogue, cooperation, and joint action.

Three weeks ago, at the Forum's 40th Anniversary meeting in Auckland, Pacific leaders honored that legacy by agreeing measures aimed at converting Pacific potential into Pacific prosperity.

The themes of their discussions will resonate in other regions - strong, sustainable economic growth, protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring they are healthy, educated and can live long lives.

A key focus was the alarming incidence of **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)**, a scourge that's rapidly encircling the globe.

Almost half of New Zealand deaths relate to cancer and heart disease; but the situation is even more critical in many Pacific Island Countries where diabetes, in particular, approaches epidemic proportions.

We thank those who took up that cause here at the UN, particularly CARICOM.

Mr President -

With the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) very much in mind, the Forum also focused on **sustainable development**.

Rio+20 will be an opportunity to assess progress since the 1992 Conference; to take its agenda forward; and to highlight best practice.

For example, New Zealand's Aid Programme includes energy, agriculture and tourism initiatives which promote sustainable development.

Mr President –

Pacific peoples were navigating their ocean - the world's largest - at a time when others were still confined to their coastal waters.

New Zealand Māori called it Te Moana nui-a-Kiwa - the ocean guarded by the god Kiwa.

Our region is uniquely dependent on its ocean; for those who call the Pacific "home", the "Green Economy" is, in reality, a "Blue Economy".

Our ocean underpins livelihoods, food security and economic development.

That's why Pacific leaders focused on ensuring its sustainable development, management and conservation.

That's why they gave urgency to addressing acidification, pollution, and illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

That's why leaders want us to work towards integrated oceans management - with our own *Pacific Oceanscape* as a good model.

And that's why they called for Rio+20 to recognise the Pacific's economic and environmental significance, and its contribution to sustainable development.

Mr President, fellow Member States: At Rio+20, we'll be seeking your support for that "Blue Economy".

We work to protect the health of people and their environment; but we must also enhance collective security by progressing the **disarmament** agenda.

Over the coming year, we must focus on full implementation of the Action Plan agreed at the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.

As coordinator for the New Agenda Coalition, a group of non-nuclear-weapon states committed to a nuclear-weapon-free world, New Zealand will shortly present a resolution highlighting work required to achieve that implementation during the coming NPT review cycle.

We commend that resolution to you.

There have been gains over the past year in respect of conventional disarmament; but we're yet to realise on these achievements.

There's been pleasing progress towards an Arms Trade Treaty; but hard work remains.

Next year's Diplomatic Conference must deliver a treaty establishing the highest possible common international standards for conventional arms transfers.

We must also maintain a focus on small arms and light weapons, which, for many regions, are their "weapons of mass destruction".

2011 marks the 10th Anniversary of the UN Programme of Action on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons.

There's been much to celebrate, including the first Open-Ended Meeting of Government Experts, which I had the honour of chairing.

But, next year's Review Conference must work to ensure the Programme delivers on its potential for keeping our communities safe.

To deal with all of that, Mr President, we need a strong, nimble and effective United Nations; and we need a Security Council that reflects geopolitical realities - realities that have changed since 1945.

Today, some states might credibly seek a fuller, longer-term Council role.

New Zealand supports change that acknowledges those realities.

But most UN members are not major or emerging powers; they are small states.

They, too, are crucial to the UN's universality and legitimacy; they, too, must contribute at the Council table.

Let me put it simply: If we reform the Security Council to provide a fuller, longer-term role for emerging powers, we must also ensure a role for small states.

Speaking as a small state: We are the United Nations.

We therefore agree with the Foreign Minister of Trinidad and Tobago when he said that "the smallness of a country is not a deterrent to the realisation of big dreams ..."; and with the Prime Minister of Cape Verde, who told us that "small states [must] have a greater voice in [international] decision-making ...".

Mr President –

There are real risks if we can't achieve genuine Security Council reform.

Emerging powers will be denied a role consistent with their global significance.

And small states will continue to be squeezed out of positions of responsibility.

It's in everyone's interests that our Security Council be more representative.

As we saw earlier this year in respect of Libya, the Council is an extraordinarily powerful instrument for maintaining international peace and security.

But, with extraordinary power comes extraordinary responsibility; responsibility that must be exercised with regard for the views of all countries, large and small.

The Council must also build on its partnerships with regional groups, such as the **African Union**, which increasingly play a critical role in maintaining regional and global peace and security.

Recognising the importance of closer relations with Africa, we are encouraging New Zealand investment in and trade with Africa, supporting peace and security, and providing development assistance; and last week raised our diplomatic engagement by appointing a dedicated Ambassador to the African Union and the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr President -

New Zealand is proud of its history of active contribution right across the UN agenda.

We have a strong record as an independent and principled voice, advocating collective security and the Rule of Law.

We take an even-handed approach to security issues, as shown by our voting record and our tangible contributions to peace processes.

We take seriously our international responsibilities.

That's why, back in 2004, we announced we'd seek a **non-permanent Security Council seat for the 2015-2016 term**.

Nearly twenty years have passed since New Zealand's last term.

The time is right for us, again, to bring the fresh, independent perspective of a small, Asia-Pacific country to the Council.

That **candidature, which I reaffirm here today**, is based on the belief that states, large and small, have a place at the Council table.

Modern New Zealand was founded on a compact – on a treaty-based partnership with its indigenous Māori people.

That, and our diversity, means a unique history and perspective on promoting tolerance and conflict resolution; a perspective we've previously brought, to good effect, to the Security Council, and which we'll bring again.

Mr President –

For the United Nations, 2011 has been a truly historic year.

It has quickly responded to change in the Middle East and North Africa.

It stands ready to provide post-conflict support – and not just in Libya.

It's been critical to relief in the Horn of Africa.

Its essential role in state recognition has been at the global centre-stage.

Even the most cynical - the most jaded - have had to re-learn that the United Nations is the epicenter of much that happens, and much that matters.

We need this United Nations; we need it to address the woes of the world, and to consolidate its successes.

Its fundamental importance stems from its universality, its legitimacy, and its mechanisms to confront challenges.

Its effectiveness depends on its ability to adapt as those challenges emerge, and on its ability to address them together.

Member states, large and small, combine in this collective endeavour, Mr President; and New Zealand, as always, stands ready to play its part.