



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Item 3 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)

New Zealand written statement for UN Journal

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ITEM 3: Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16

Aotearoa New Zealand remains strongly committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda and recognises they cannot be achieved by government alone. The cooperation and participation of all sectors of society is required, especially Māori as Aotearoa New Zealand's indigenous people. As a partner to the Treaty of Waitangi, one of our country's founding documents, the Government is dedicated to working with Māori on issues of importance. This includes on policy issues relating to the economic, environmental and social spheres, over which the SDGs provide a frame of reference for domestic policy development.

Peace, justice and strong institutions

This is particularly so with SDG 16, which promotes peace, justice and strong institutions. While Aotearoa New Zealand is committed to work under SDG 16, we acknowledge there are many areas where continued efforts are required. We know that some New Zealanders face more barriers accessing justice and participating in democracy than others. Māori and Pacific peoples have experienced longstanding disparities. Māori are overrepresented at every stage of our criminal justice system, both as offenders and victims. Māori are also severely overrepresented in our prison population and have been for several decades.

We need to work to ensure that the crucial voice of indigenous people is at the forefront of peace and justice matters impacting on indigenous rights and issues, and that there is active partnership between the government and Māori, consistent with the Treaty of Waitangi. We know that central to continued progress on SDG 16's targets and indicators is meaningful, productive relationships between the government and Māori to achieve better outcomes. Although we acknowledge much work is still needed, two recent initiatives provide a good example of the direction we are travelling.

Work being done to improve outcomes for Māori

In the criminal justice space, the Hāpaitia te Oranga Tangata: Safe and Effective Justice programme was established in 2018 to initiate nationwide public engagement about what people in Aotearoa New Zealand want from their criminal justice system. A specific meeting was established in 2019 to create a deliberate space where Māori could openly talk about the ongoing failure of the justice system and discuss how to lead its reformation from a Māori worldview.

Following the meeting, a leadership group, Ināia Tonu Nei, was formed to partner with the government on criminal justice transformation. The Justice Sector Leadership Board and Ināia Tonu Nei are working together to formally establish this partnership so that work can begin on their shared goals and aspirations: a future that benefits both Māori and all New Zealanders by transforming the justice system.

Work is also underway to bring a Māori worldview into our court systems. In November 2020, the Chief District Court Judge, Heemi Taumaunu, announced a vision for a new model for the District Court - Te Ao Mārama. Te Ao Mārama means 'the world of light', or moving from the dark to the enlightened world, and stems from a Māori worldview. The Te Ao Mārama vision is that the District Court will strive to become an increasingly enlightened court where all people may seek justice, regardless of their means or abilities, their ethnicity, language or culture, and who they are or where they are from.

The Te Ao Mārama vision is intended to reflect the modern day needs of Aotearoa New Zealand, a vibrant, diverse multi-lingual and multi-cultural society with two founding cultures bound together in a spirit of partnership by the Treaty of Waitangi. The new model will take the knowledge, skills and approaches learned from the existing specialist courts in Aotearoa New Zealand, so that the best practice elements are incorporated throughout the mainstream District Court. These elements include infusing tikanga (Māori customary practices or behaviours) and te reo Māori (Māori language), using plain language in the court, improving the information available to Judges about people's backgrounds and needs, and improving wrap around support.

The model will be implemented in partnership with Māori tribes and local communities, with support from the Ministry of Justice and cross-sector agencies.

Item 3(c): Discussion on the theme “Peace, justice and strong institutions: the role of indigenous peoples in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16” – study on the theme “Climate change and indigenous peoples”

The Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG16) is relevant to climate change strategy processes and development within Aotearoa New Zealand. Moving into the future, we recognise that the impacts of climate change will be unevenly distributed and will disproportionately impact Māori, the indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand. The government and Māori tribal leaders are preparing to ensure that measures are put in place to mitigate against climate-related risks.

Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand

We acknowledge the unique relationship that Māori as tangata whenua, or people of the land, have with the environment. Central to this perspective, is the notion of cultural guardianship, where environmental sustainability is the central tenet to ensuring the availability of resources for future generations and the species it sustains.

Aotearoa New Zealand and climate change

As a nation, Aotearoa New Zealand is highly dependent on connections with the rest of the world. Our climate is changing and affecting our nation.

As a party to both the 2015 Paris Agreement and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Aotearoa New Zealand has committed to work with the rest of the world to limit future warming.

In 2020, Aotearoa New Zealand declared a climate emergency as a form of commitment to climate action and as a signifier of our obligations to future generations. In this same year, the first Aotearoa New Zealand Climate Change Risk Assessment (Risk Assessment) was completed.

The Risk Assessment provides our country with a comprehensive outline of various risks that will have far-reaching consequences for people, the natural and built

environment, the economy and governance. These 'value domains' underpin our wellbeing.

Effects of climate change on Māori communities

The Risk Assessment outlined that of 43 identified main risks our country faces, 14 of these risks are of specific significance to Māori. In broad terms the Risk Assessment identified that the social, cultural spiritual, economic and environmental wellbeing of Māori will be impacted by climate change. Issues of concern include the loss and degradation of lands and waters, and decline of species and biodiversity. The increased spread of invasive species due to warming temperatures may also impact indigenous ecosystems.

Māori comprise 16.7 per cent of the total New Zealand population and as a group have significant economic investments in the primary sector, forestry sector and marine-based businesses. These economic sectors may not be as economically effective due to climate change, with risks that this may exacerbate existing inequalities.

Many Māori communities, including their cultural meeting houses, are clustered along coast lines and located near flood-prone rivers. These ancestral land spaces (including ancient learning spaces, burial grounds, food gathering spaces and traditional ceremonial places) create a cultural footprint that has been inter-generationally maintained and nurtured. These places of cultural significance lying in vulnerable area will be impacted by climate change and Māori in these communities need to be leading solution-based measures to ensure the protection and endurance of these areas.

Paving pathways forward

The first Emission Reduction Plan and National Adaptation Plan are due for completion in December 2021 and August 2022 respectively.

Creating solutions with tribal leaders will be critical for future pathways forward. Within our country, the government alongside Māori climate leaders have agreed on joint national strategic climate goals. To ensure that these goals are achieved, an agreed working programme and forms of monitoring are currently being established.

Tribal leaders have clearly articulated to the government, that a middle ground approach to climate solution making is preferable. That is, where top-down government approaches and community-up approaches find the in-between space to jointly advance climate action.

