

New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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56th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

High Level General Debate

Statement

by

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NEW ZEALAND

Check against Delivery

Tēnā koutou Tēnā koutou Tēnā koutou katoa

Chair,

I bring warm greetings from New Zealand's Minister of Women's Affairs, the Honourable Jo Goodhew. I also welcome and endorse the statement made by the Honourable Minister of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

New Zealand reaffirms its unwavering support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. New Zealand continues to be an active State party to CEDAW and will be presenting its seventh periodic report to the CEDAW Committee in July this year. These documents are as relevant as ever, and while we all have seen significant progress, much more remains to be done.

New Zealand commends the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on a successful first year. As a member of the UN Women Executive Board in 2012, we are looking forward to a year of cooperation towards advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We are here because we want positive and fast change for women. We must lift our expectations of ourselves and each other and work together to find more effective ways forward.

We have seen a significant change in the role of many rural women over the years. In farming communities women are now often farm owners, farmers and managers in their own right. Rural women's contributions continue to be crucial for New Zealand's considerable success in this sector as markets expand and prices are high.

More rural women are becoming self employed and are also diversifying rural enterprises, and growing businesses from domestic to export markets. Women professionals in rural areas, including teachers, veterinarians and health professionals, provide vital services to their communities.

Rural women also do more unpaid work than either their urban or male rural counterparts. Rural women are often the backbone of rural communities and make invaluable contributions to keeping communities together.

Rural women run effective organisations where they provide leadership and advocacy on women's issues, and on issues affecting rural communities, including access to services and environmental sustainability. We support their work in raising awareness of the challenges facing rural communities, and rural women in particular, in our society.

While, many rural women do well with educational qualifications and skills that match their urban counterparts and rural men., there are some women, including Maori women, working in low paid jobs.

The Treaty of Waitangi settlement process is progressing and making a significant contribution to the asset base for Māori, over a quarter of which is concentrated in the primary sector. There is also a new approach by government to providing services, which is inclusive and community- or family-driven, called Whānau Ora. This is offering hope that all rural Māori women will be more able to reach their full potential.

As with other women around the globe, access to services is an issue for New Zealand rural women. We are excited by the roll out of ultrafast broadband in rural schools and communities by 2016. This is poised to revolutionise rural women's access to health, education and welfare services and to enable them

to manage large and small businesses and to work and train remotely. Women are seizing this opportunity on many fronts.

But the old issues remain. In New Zealand, as elsewhere, rural women suffer as much from violence against women as their urban sisters but may face additional issues due to their geographical isolation, such as getting help, and accessing counselling and safe houses. In addition, confidentiality for women subjected to violence may also be compromised in small rural communities.

So the challenge continues....

Chair, we are excited about sharing experiences and gaining new insights into how we can all advance towards the goal of women's equality for all rural women.

No reira, tēnā koutou katoa.