



New Zealand Permanent Mission
to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

General Debate of the 69th Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

**Statement by the Honourable Murray McCully
Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand**

New York, 29 September 2014

Please check against delivery



It is an honour to address you today on behalf of the Prime Minister and Government of New Zealand. Our General Election took place last week - our Prime Minister Rt Hon John Key is engaged in forming a government and that is why he is unable to be here in New York.

I want to begin by acknowledging the success of the recent Small Islands Developing States conference held in Samoa. The success of the Conference was the result of the extraordinary work Samoa put into preparing to host, and the ownership of the agenda that was demonstrated by small island developing states. While it is undoubtedly true that small island developing states placed great value on the opportunity to talk - it is also true that there was an undertone of frustration, born of the fact that too often in the past talk has not been followed by action. I strongly identify with this view.

The multilateral world is awash with talk of plans and strategies and funds, while out there in the real world of small island developing states, not enough is happening on the ground. My country, New Zealand, is intent on avoiding this shortcoming, especially in our own region, the Pacific.

Renewable energy featured strongly at the SIDS Conference, as it has at the Secretary General's Summit last week. Pacific nations spend 10% of their GDP and up to 30% of their total import bills on importing diesel for electricity generation. Sustainable economic development simply cannot happen in our region without renewable energy.

Significant progress is being achieved, especially since the Pacific Renewable Energy Summit we co-hosted with the European Union in Auckland in March 2013, at which \$635 million in funding was committed for over 50 projects.

- The Tokelau islands have moved from 100% dependence on fossil fuels to 93% renewable.
- During the SIDS Conference, we opened a 2.2 megawatt solar array in Samoa.
- A year earlier we opened a 1.2 megawatt plant in Tonga.
- Next month we will open a 1 megawatt array in Rarotonga.
- And in the next twelve months all of the outer islands of Tuvalu and all but one of the outer islands of the Cooks will be close to 100% renewable.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are making real progress towards converting our Pacific neighbourhood to renewable energy - bringing significant environmental benefits and greatly enhancing prospects for sustainable economic development.

My country has committed over \$100 million to this process. We are not waiting for a new multilateral agreement or green fund. We are just going ahead, with robust partnerships, and making it happen.

Another key topic at the SIDS Conference was sustainable fisheries. For our region this is critically important. The biggest economic asset in the Pacific is its fishery. Last year, over US\$3.3 billion worth of tuna was harvested from Pacific waters, yet only 14 per cent of that value, about \$460 million, made its way back to Pacific nations. New Zealand has committed over \$70 million over the next five years to advance a comprehensive approach that includes enhanced surveillance, training of monitors, training in commercial fishing practices, research and science initiatives and improving management practices. Our objective is to see the owners of the Pacific tuna resource receive a significantly greater share of the value of that resource, and to ensure that it is sustainably managed for the future.

A key message from the SIDS Conference is the need to share experiences and skills between the SIDS regions. It is starting to happen. Fisheries management is a prime candidate for greater cooperation. And we have commenced a process of inter-regional cooperation in renewable energy by supporting the development of geothermal energy in the Caribbean and Africa.

While Small Island Developing States are showing real leadership in addressing climate change and shifting to renewable energy, they require action on a global scale. So we commend the Secretary-General for convening the Climate Summit here in New York last week. We are participating actively in those negotiations and hope they will pave the way for a successful conclusion in Paris next year. We have made an initial commitment to the Green Climate Fund to show our support for the global effort. But unashamedly we will continue to prioritise making real progress with real projects in our region, which will continue to consume the bulk of our resources.

The other major event which has recently taken place in the Pacific is the election in Fiji. We congratulate the Prime Minister, his party and the people of Fiji on their successful return to democratic rule. Fiji's successful elections are hugely important for the region. I am delighted that following the preliminary report of the multi-national observers' group both the Pacific Islands Forum and the Commonwealth have commenced the process to lift Fiji's suspension. We look forward to rebuilding and strengthening the connections between us. Neither New Zealand nor Fiji can contemplate a future that does not entail close and continuing links with the other.

We also welcomed the safe return of the Fiji Peacekeepers who were held hostage in the Golan Heights. That incident again underlined the great challenges and the dangers faced by UN peacekeepers and the responsibilities we all have to ensure the safety and security of peacekeeping and other UN personnel.

It is as well that we are able to note some bright spots for our region, not least because the situation in other parts of the world looks bleak.

What happened over the past few months in Gaza was an affront to humanity. No good was done for the cause of Palestine by Hamas firing rockets indiscriminately into Israel. No good was done for peace in the Middle East by Israel pounding Gaza with such intensity and at such cost of civilian lives.

We welcome the indefinite ceasefire that was agreed after so many false starts and are thankful that so far it endures. We call on all sides not only to keep the guns and rockets silent but to refrain from actions that may destabilise what can only be described as an uneasy peace.

In this connection, we express our profound regret of Israel's appropriation of 400 hectares of privately owned Palestinian land near Bethlehem for settlements. This act itself is profoundly unhelpful.

The problems of the Middle East are deep and difficult. They go back to the earliest days of this Organisation and beyond. But what happened over the past months in and in relation to Gaza was a modern failure, a failure of leadership, of purpose and of vision. We urge the leaders of Israel and of Palestine – both West Bank and Gaza – to live up to their responsibilities to their peoples and to their positions.

In Syria and Iraq we see the truly frightening consequences when leadership, both internally and in the Security Council, has failed. Syria has been a weeping sore for over 3 years. Thousands of Syrians have died; millions have become refugees and all Syrian people have suffered terribly from the multiple conflicts engulfing the country.

And now the tragedy of Syria has spilled over into Iraq which was already wrestling with its own deep seated problems. Many actors, in both the recent past and over a longer timeframe, have had a hand in contributing to the situation we now confront. Now it is time for action.

We need to find a way to contain the madness that is ISIL, to address the humanitarian tragedy and to help the people of Syria and Iraq craft a better future. By any objective standard, this is a situation that cries out for Security Council attention, and that is true of both sides of the border. We need the Council Members and the Governments concerned to move past the ideological stalemate that has kept the Council largely impotent for the past 3 years. The challenge we all face in Syria and Iraq is unlike any the United Nations has faced before. The political circumstances in which it is being played out are about as bad as they get. Yet somehow we must find a way of coming together to defeat this shared problem.

Paralysis has also prevailed in the Security Council over Ukraine. The Council has been essentially a bystander as one of the Permanent Members has undermined the integrity of another member State. We recognise the difficulties of managing ethnic tensions that straddle borders and the risks of local fires being stoked into wider national and international crises. But with the strong shared histories of cooperation and achievement between Russia and Ukraine there is no excuse for leaders allowing matters to unravel as

they have, to the point where international peace and security may be at risk. And already hundreds of innocent civilians on Flight MH17 have lost their lives through an associated mistake and miscalculation.

We welcome the ceasefire that was agreed earlier this month and which has held - for the most part. We call on all involved to step back, think about what is at stake, and start rebuilding the trust essential to finding a lasting solution.

Events in the Middle East and Ukraine have dominated headlines in recent months and diverted attention from the serious situations that continue to play out in Africa - particularly in Libya, Mali, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

These crises, in which the UN is directly involved, continue to challenge the capacity of the Organisation and of the African Union to respond to the sheer scale of human suffering and continuing need for external assistance to restore and keep the peace, keep civilian populations safe and deliver humanitarian assistance.

These issues, no less than those in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, will continue to require constant attention from the Security Council and the coordinated efforts of the wider UN family. They show that, for all its failings and structural inequalities, the Council still has a vital role to play in maintaining international peace and security. But there is one lesson that we must learn from all these recent crises. The UN must fundamentally improve its performance in preventing conflict. Once fighting is in full spate, the options for peace disappear. Prevention is critical not just in new conflicts but also in the cases on the agenda where conflict is frozen or where peacebuilding has not really taken hold.

We are deeply troubled by the unprecedented scale of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. We recognise the huge challenges this poses to the economies and to political and security cohesion in the region. We have contributed and will continue to contribute to the humanitarian work underway, and on the formation of a new Government we will look at further practical steps to support the international effort.

In 18 days' time the UN membership will decide who will be on the Security Council for the next two-year term. New Zealand has been a candidate for that position since 2004. It is 20 years since we were last on the Council. It has been a long and demanding campaign and it will continue right up to the elections on 16 October. With tough competitors such as our good friends, Spain and Turkey, that has to be the case. The campaign has been a great opportunity for us to engage with nations around the world. We greatly value the new relationships we have forged, and the enhanced character of existing relationships. Whatever the outcome, we are determined to maintain these.

New Zealand has demonstrated in the past that as a member of the Council it acts strongly, effectively, and independently. It champions the right of small states and for the voices of all to be heard.

In short, as my Prime Minister said from this rostrum last year, "There is no point being on the Council simply to make up the numbers. Sometimes, you have to speak up and shine a light on what is going on – or not going on – even when it is embarrassing or inconvenient to others to do so." Above all, I can assure you that if we are elected, New Zealand will be a credible, positive influence on the Security Council.

At our core, New Zealand is an optimistic country and New Zealanders are an optimistic people. We believe that things can be better than they are and are prepared, as a people, to work hard to achieve that. Despite the many challenges on the international agenda, my hope is that the membership of the UN will give us an opportunity to prove this by serving on the UN Security Council from next year.
