

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
49^m SESSION**

**STATEMENT BY THE NEW ZEALAND MINISTER OF WOMEN'S AFFAIRS
THE HON RUTH DYSON**

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Madame Chair, New Zealand places the very highest priority on the 10th anniversary of Beijing. This is a time to celebrate our progress. It also provides us with a collective opportunity to reaffirm the importance of the rights of women, to raise awareness among our peoples, to change attitudes, and, to continue to take steps to achieve the full dignity of human rights for all women and girls.

Ten years ago the international community adopted the Beijing Platform for Action as a statement of our political will to make real progress towards achieving full equality for men and women. Putting our words into action requires intensified political will.

New Zealand comes to this meeting to celebrate the 10th anniversary of Beijing. We unequivocally reaffirm our commitment to implement the promises that we made when we adopted it. We add our voice to the growing calls for full implementation of the Platform of Action. Messages to this meeting from the Commonwealth Ministers, EU Ministers and all the Regional Preparatory meetings contain strong reaffirmations of Beijing.

New Zealand takes our responsibilities under the Beijing Platform for Action seriously and has in the last ten years addressed them directly. We have had some success and we have made progress both in terms of policies and the machinery of government necessary to support those policies. This includes:

- Better access to primary health care
- Secure and affordable housing
- Improved opportunities for employment
- Violence prevention programmes
- Affordable and accessible quality childcare

- Strengthened Superannuation provisions
- Paid Parental Leave
- Addressing pay and employment equity issues
- Increased support to strengthen families, recognising that we cannot support the family at the expense of the rights of the women within that family.

We do, however, like many countries, have more work to do.

New Zealand welcomes the significant presence of representatives from civil society and the NGOs of our respective communities and acknowledges the value of their contribution. Domestically our government recognises the significant role of such groups in successfully developing and implementing policy. New Zealand is accordingly pleased to know that their contribution will be available in this forum.

New Zealand also strongly supports the sexual and reproductive health rights identified at Cairo and Beijing. Too often women suffer or die in circumstances that are preventable. They die because they have limited information about their choices; because they have no access to safe, effective, and affordable methods of family planning; and, because they have no freedom to decide when to have sex and when to have children. Beijing contains clear commitments on women's sexual and reproductive health rights, and the right to control their own sexuality, and these commitments must be implemented.

With CEDAW, Beijing and Millennium Development Goals we have the tools to combat HIV/AIDS, eliminate violence against women and girls and eliminate poverty, thus achieving peace, equality and empowerment for women.

New Zealand recognises that it is critical that the rights of women, as set out in the Beijing Platform for Action, are at the forefront of deliberations at the UN

Major Event and review of the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals later this year.

We are not here to re-litigate or reinterpret Beijing. We are here to reaffirm it, to pledge our renewed commitment to its implementation and to support each other to do that.

New Zealand will not accept an outcome Declaration that contains anything less than a clear, unambiguous and unqualified reaffirmation of Beijing. We are not interested in negotiating any qualifications to the reaffirmation contained in the draft prepared by the Bureau.

New Zealand calls on all states to reaffirm the Beijing Platform for Action without equivocation. The international community has laboured too long over language in human rights treaties, declarations and resolutions. It is time to take action, and Beijing provides with us with the right platform for doing so.

Thank you Madam Chair.