

NEW ZEALAND MISSION to the UNITED NATIONS



Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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THIRD COMMITTEE

ITEM 67 (b) and (c)

**STATEMENT BY THE NEW ZEALAND
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS
H.E. MS ROSEMARY BANKS**

MONDAY 30 OCTOBER 2006

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Chairman, the past year has been one of reflection and change for the international human rights community. Good progress has been made in some areas; in others we are still looking for a way forward and seeking better ways of doing things.

New Zealand campaigned strongly for the new Human Rights Council and worked to support its creation. We remain ambitious for its future and committed to its evolution into a strong, focused and effective body able to deal swiftly with emerging situations of human rights concern and to maintain pressure in situations of ongoing concern. It must be able to do this in a balanced way, with scrupulous attention to the facts; it must be aspirational as well as practical; its working methods must be transparent and inclusive. Above all, there must be the political will to make it work. This is a big ask for a new institution, but together we can ensure our newly created Council has the long term vision and commitment to find solutions in the most difficult circumstances.

Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situations in all Member States will be a milestone in the evolution of the human rights system. New Zealand supported the establishment of the Universal Periodic Review, which will ensure that the human rights situation in all Member States is subject to review. It is essential that this review is objective, and based on partnership and open and constructive dialogue with the concerned State.

Mr Chairman, in establishing the Human Rights Council, we agreed that there was a continuing need for our collective engagement on serious human rights violations. We would now like to take this opportunity to raise some of these situations and to voice our concerns.

New Zealand remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. There is evidence of continuing systematic serious violation of basic human rights in the DPRK in contravention of the State's obligations under four human rights treaties, including the right to security of the person, freedom of movement, and freedom of expression. While the DPRK allocates massive amounts of funding to military consolidation and to missile and nuclear testing, its people continue to suffer from deprivation of their basic economic, cultural and social rights. We note that the DPRK has begun to engage with those treaty bodies to which it is a party. We call upon them to engage with the Special Rapporteur and to allow full and unconstrained access by humanitarian agencies, including the World Food Programme.

New Zealand has consistently expressed its serious concern about the human rights abuses and the absence of national reconciliation or genuine reform in Myanmar. Myanmar's junta regime continues to show an unwillingness to cooperate with the international community and is drifting towards isolation. The National Convention remains neither all-inclusive nor transparent and the government is yet to adhere to recommendations made by successive resolutions of the UN General Assembly and the former Commission on Human Rights. New Zealand remains concerned that the wider Myanmar population faces difficult socio-economic conditions. Critical human rights issues include: the right to health, in particular, the rapid rise of HIV/AIDS infection and limited health services, the right to food and education, and forced labour practices.

The recent violence in Sri Lanka is also a serious concern to New Zealand and we have called on the parties involved to declare immediately a ceasefire and commit themselves fully and unconditionally to peace talks to be held in Geneva in a few days time. The execution-style killing of fifteen aid workers in Mutthur was especially distressing. Humanitarian access to highly

vulnerable people in north eastern Sri Lanka will be seriously hampered if attacks continue. Sri Lanka has said it will invite an international Group of Eminent Persons to observe the Commission of Inquiry established to investigate alleged abductions, disappearances and extra-judicial killings. New Zealand urges Sri Lanka to conduct a thorough, transparent and impartial investigation of alleged human rights abuses and to provide assurances that everything possible will be done to ensure a safe environment for humanitarian workers in the country.

The human rights and humanitarian situation in Sudan is of profound concern to New Zealand. Human rights violations have not abated, despite the May 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement and despite international scrutiny and monitoring. Men, women and children in Darfur continue to be victims of systematic human rights violations of the most abhorrent kind, including sexual violence against women and children, and the abduction of children. New Zealand welcomes efforts made to date by the African Union Mission in Sudan to mediate and support a ceasefire and peace agreement between the parties to the conflict in Darfur. New Zealand also fully supports UNSC Resolution 1706, and believes a United Nations presence in Darfur is the best chance for peace and security in the region. New Zealand calls on Member States to send a clear and united message to the Government of Sudan that the situation in Darfur must end.

Mr Chairman, New Zealand remains dismayed about the human rights situation in Zimbabwe. Starvation resulting from economic mismanagement and the politically motivated distribution of food is only part of the picture of abuse and repression perpetrated by the Zimbabwean Government. New Zealand calls on the international community to take a united stand in pressing the Zimbabwean Government to secure its future and protect the human rights of its people.

New Zealand notes with regret the deterioration in human rights in Iran, including censorship and further reports concerning the execution of minors. Mr Chairman, New Zealand once again urges Iran to engage constructively with the international community on human rights issues, and to move to address substantively those requiring attention, including the treatment of members of religious and ethnic minorities, including Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, Christians, Kurds, Jews, Sufis, Sunni Muslims and Bahá'ís.

Mr Chairman, at last year's World Summit Leaders emphasised that human rights are the third pillar of the United Nations system and, with peace, security and development, constitute the foundations for collective security and well-being. It is therefore deeply disappointing that, in this forum, just a year later, we have listed so many situations of concern. And, of course, there are others. No country has a perfect human rights record. But there are some which are ignoring their obligations to their citizens and to the international community. This is unacceptable.

That these injustices continue to exist should spur us to a stronger resolve- to use all available channels of influence on these countries, to persuade them to acknowledge the gap between their obligations and the actual situation, and then to support them in improving their human rights implementation.