

**Eleventh Annual Meeting of The Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, 31 July – 3 August 2006**  
Holiday Inn, Suva

**Reports from Asia Pacific Governments**

**New Zealand Statement delivered by HE Michael Green, High Commissioner to Fiji**

The New Zealand Government, with strong public support, is committed to collective action at all levels to promote and protect human rights.

At the 2005 United Nations Summit, world leaders acknowledged that peace, security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and wellbeing. They recognised that these pillars are mutually reinforcing.

New Zealand welcomed this emphasis on human rights and has been at the forefront of efforts to establish a credible and effective Human Rights Council. Our delegation is actively engaged in negotiations in New York to review the mandates and mechanisms inherited from the Commission on Human Rights, and to establish a system of Universal Peer Review. The ability of the new Human Rights Council to monitor human rights situations and to effect real improvements will depend in no small measure on the success of these negotiations.

New Zealand strongly supported the doubling of the budget for the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Our contribution to the Office increased three-fold to \$1.5 million in FY2005/06 and will increase again in FY2006/07 to \$2 million. We welcome the establishment of the Regional Office here in Suva and the appointment of a Regional Representative, with whom we have already established a constructive working relationship.

At the regional level, New Zealand has long supported the work of the Asia-Pacific Forum. The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights recognised the fundamental role of regional arrangements in promoting and protecting human rights. In a region where there is no intergovernmental arrangement, this Forum's work has been especially valuable.

This year, following a comprehensive review of the Forum through NZAID's Multilateral and Regional Agency Assessment Framework, New Zealand has entered into a Strategic Partnership Arrangement with the Forum. The review confirmed the similarity between our respective objectives and reinforced our belief that Forum members contribute effectively through their activities to strengthening peace, development and security in the region.

New Zealand attaches importance to achieving the widest possible support in our region for the core international human rights instruments. We provide assistance to raise awareness of these instruments at the grassroots level, and to build the capacity of governments to ratify and implement them. This Forum also has an important role to play. New Zealand encourages member institutions to continue placing emphasis on this aspect of their work.

New Zealand welcomes the focus at this meeting on economic, social and cultural rights. As early as 1948, New Zealand argued that governments had as much responsibility to promote these rights as they did civil and political rights. New Zealand currently provides considerable assistance to support partner governments in delivering economic, social and cultural rights to their peoples. This emphasis in our assistance programmes is indicated by the level of support provided to education and health, to economic growth and to livelihoods programmes.

The new UN Human Rights Council has mandated an intergovernmental working group to begin negotiations on an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with a view to improving implementation at the domestic level. New Zealand will be following these negotiations with keen interest.

We welcome this meeting's focus on the role and instruments of the International Labour Organisation. Because of its tripartite structure, the ILO is a unique agency within the United Nations family. The equal role of governments, employers and workers helps to produce international standards that reflect the reality of the modern workplace. Human rights are fundamental to the work of the ILO and the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, and its Follow-up. New Zealand remains a strong and constructive supporter of the ILO and its 'decent work' mandate.

New Zealand looks forward to continuing its strong relationship with the Asia-Pacific Forum Secretariat and with other member institutions. We extend our thanks to the Secretariat and to our hosts, the Fiji Human Rights Commission, for their efforts in organising this meeting and for their hospitality. It is already evident that this will be a productive meeting for all participants.