

New Zealand's Role in the Establishment and Strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions

E te Rangatira o tenei hui – tena koe. Ki o tatou e hui mai nei tena tatou katoa.

[To the Chairperson of this meeting - greetings. To all who have gathered here - greetings.]

Mr Chairperson, New Zealand has long been resolute in the protection and promotion of human rights domestically and internationally. We consider that national human rights institutions are one of the most effective means by which to assist in the advancement of human rights. We are committed to supporting their development and strengthening at the multilateral, regional, bilateral and national levels.

Mr Chairperson, through the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID), we have provided targeted funding to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to assist with its activities aimed at the development of national human rights institutions in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition, this year, as in the past, New Zealand cosponsored the Australian led Commission on Human Rights resolution on national human rights institutions. The 2002 resolution commended the High Commissioner for according priority to the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions. It also called upon the Office to continue to strengthen its coordinating role in this field, and to allocate the necessary resources from both core and extra-budgetary sources.

At the regional level, New Zealand considers that the Asia-Pacific is fortunate to have the APF to support the development of, and promote cooperation among, the region's national human rights institutions. It is successfully nurturing the habit of cooperation and dialogue in the region, with a practical focus. We look forward to the expansion of the APF as more national human rights institutions in the region become fully compliant with the Paris Principles. New Zealand has supported the development of the APF since its inception. This year we have been pleased to be able to provide the APF with a one-off payment of \$100 000, to assist with its transition to a more central location in the Asia-Pacific.

Mr Chairperson another example of our commitment to regional human rights cooperation, has been our part-funding of a sub-regional workshop in collaboration with the OHCHR and UNDP, on human rights education and the administration of justice. Considerable planning went into this workshop and we are grateful to Fiji for hosting it. The workshop targeted law and justice sector practitioners from throughout the Pacific region. It had a practical focus incorporating workgroup sessions to discuss issues specific to courts, prisons

and police. Several valuable course-books were prepared by the OHCHR for this workshop. These provide useful and practical information.

Mr Chairperson, I am happy to announce that New Zealand intends to part fund a Melanesian sub-regional meeting on the ratification of human rights instruments. The purpose of the workshop is to increase government, national human rights institution and NGO awareness of human rights instruments, and the implications of ratification. We note that one outcome of the treaty ratification workshop held in Apia late 2001, has been an exploratory proposal to set up a national human rights institution in Samoa.

Mr Chairperson, New Zealand is continuing to assist with the development and strengthening of national human rights institutions. We are also doing this through the NZAID. NZAID supports and encourages developmental activities with a specific human rights focus, for example national human rights institutions and regional human rights organisations.

Through NZAID's bilateral and good governance programmes New Zealand has provided support to the Human Rights Commissions of Fiji, India, Indonesia, Nepal, the Philippines and Malaysia.

In the case of Fiji we were able to assist the Fiji Human Rights Commission with the development of a strategic and corporate plan of action, to design programmes and projects, and to help with the general development of the Commission.

Mr Chairperson, we welcome Mongolia's membership of the APF. We intend to provide support to the Mongolian Human Rights Commission to further its development including the revision of the Commission's strategic plan, the development of an operative plan and the drafting of a complaints manual.

Mr Chairperson, I would also like to briefly mention that the New Zealand Government has an excellent working relationship with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission. Currently we are working with the Commission in their development of a National Plan of Action.

Finally – may I express New Zealand's warm appreciation to our Indian hosts and the APF secretariat, for their generous hospitality and for the organisation of this meeting.

No reira, tena koutou, tena koutou, kia ora koutou katoa.

[In closing, greetings to you all.]