

**New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations**



**Te Māngai o Aotearoa**

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**The 55<sup>th</sup> Session to the Commission on the Status of Women**

**National Statement by New Zealand**

**Statement by Pouna Phair,  
Head of Delegation  
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**Check Against Delivery**



Tena koutou Tena koutou Tena koutou katoa

Chair,

I bring warm greetings to you, and to all the participants in this session, from New Zealand's Minister of Women's Affairs, the Hon. Hono Hekia Parata. I also welcome and endorse the statement made by the Minister from Kiribati on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

I'd like to convey our appreciation of the sympathy and support New Zealand has received following our devastating earthquake this week.

We are here because we want positive and faster change. We must lift the bar on our expectations for ourselves and each other. We must work together to find more effective ways forward. We must not lose sight of those priorities and policies that are not achieving the progress we want.

Working at the frontier of gender equality is not always comfortable. But we must all be there. While change is inevitable, it can be for the good. Regardless, we must have optimism and determination that gender inequality will become a curious fossil in our history. Ensuring ongoing momentum across the region is critical to our success. And I believe we can support each other to achieve this.

Consistent with our strong support for UN Women, New Zealand endorses the five priorities in the Future of Women Action Plan. We wish Michelle Badger and her team all the best for their challenging tasks ahead.

New Zealand reaffirms its unwavering support for the United Nations Declaration and

Platform for Action. There remains, however, much more to be done. The Millennium Development Goals related to gender equality, such as maternal health, have made the least progress. Yet ending poverty is much more possible when women are empowered.

New Zealand continues to be an active State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Our seventh periodic report, submitted last year, presents a picture of mixed results.

When our forefathers signed the Deed of Waitangi for all New Zealand women in 1893, they probably envisaged that 118 years later we would have achieved full equality in outcomes.

We are proud that New Zealand continues to have women who are consistently achieving at high levels of education, health care, and justice. We are women under the age of 50 who are not having a hard time finding a job or high health insurance for the age of 50. So we do now have a generation of women who have more education than their brothers.

Our experience is that improved educational outcomes are a necessary, but not sufficient condition for achieving equality in employment and economic independence. Women's labour market participation rates and relative pay levels have indeed increased as a result of higher qualifications, but the impact is not as great as we'd expect. We still have a pay gap – at just under 11 per cent – and our labour market is still characterised by both vertical and horizontal occupational segregation.

In addition, outcomes for some groups of women are notably poorer than for others, notably including for Māori, New Zealand's indigenous population, despite recent and rapid improvements in Māori women's educational outcomes.

The economic value of women's skills and capabilities positively impacts productivity. For women, economic independence also provides a protective factor from violence. It is not a guarantee but it increases the chances for women's basic human right to be safe.

New Zealand continues to work to rid ourselves of the harmful practices of family violence, sexual violence and child abuse. We have a sound legislative framework, responsive Police, a nationwide network of women's refuges and high profile social marketing to change attitudes. Despite the last two decades of effort, one in three New Zealand women still experience at least one episode of domestic violence in their lifetime.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has been operating as a long agency in New Zealand for 25 years. In our experiences, some of the factors that support progress on gender equality are:

- strong and visible leadership
- accurate gender data
- accountability – both domestically and internationally, and
- an effective civil society.

Chair, we look forward to continuing to share experiences and gaining new insights into how we can all advance towards the goal of women's equality.

No reira, āwhiri kōwhiri kōwhiri

The inherent value of women's skills contributes positively to productivity. For  
years of economic independence, also provided a welfare factor from  
which it is not a guarantee but it increased the chance of women's participation  
in the labor force.

From 2000 onwards, it was in the countries of the former Soviet Union  
that women's economic independence and welfare factor were most significant.  
The reason for this is that in these countries, a network of women's support and  
services was established in the early 1990s. Despite the fact that the  
economy was still recovering from the shock of the transition, it had the capacity  
to support women's economic independence and welfare factor at least one quarter  
of the way towards their target.

The Ministry of Women's Affairs has been operating as a statutory agency in  
the United Kingdom for 25 years. In our experience, some of the factors that support  
women's economic independence are:

Strong and visible leadership  
A clear and well-defined strategy  
Accountability - both domestically and internationally  
Inclusive and gender equality

When we look forward to the next 25 years, we have a clear vision of the goal of women's equality  
and the factors that will support it.

Women's economic independence