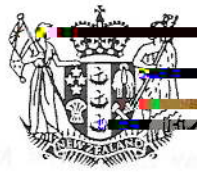


New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations



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56th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

High Level General Debate

Statement

by

Deb Moran

Policy Director.

Ministry of Women's Affairs

NEW ZEALAND

Check against Delivery

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Chair,

I bring warm greetings from New Zealand's Minister of Women's Affairs, the Honourable Marie Sherry, with the statement made by the Honourable Minister of Samoa on behalf of the Pacific Island Forum.

New Zealand reaffirms its longstanding support for the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. New Zealand continues to be an active State party to CEDAW and will be presenting its seventh periodic report to the CEDAW Committee in July 2012. While we have made significant progress, much more remains to be done.

New Zealand commends the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Women's Empowerment Fund. As a member of the UN Women Executive Board, in 2012, we are looking forward to a year of cooperation towards advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We are here because we want to see real and fast change for women. We must lift our expectations of ourselves and each other and work together to find more effective ways forward.

We have seen a significant change in the role of many rural women over the years. In many communities women are now often farm owners, farmers and managers in their own right. Rural women's contributions continue to be crucial for New Zealand's considerable success in this sector as markets expand and prices are high.

More rural women are becoming self-employed and are also diversifying rural enterprises, and growing businesses, from tourism to export markets. Many professionals in rural areas, including teachers, veterinarians, and health professionals, provide vital services to their communities.

Rural women also do more unpaid work than their urban or male rural counterparts. Rural women are often the backbone of rural communities and make invaluable contributions to keeping communities together.

Rural women run effective organisations where they provide leadership and advocacy on women's issues, and on issues affecting rural communities including access to services and environmental sustainability. Women's work is raising awareness of the challenges facing rural communities, and rural women in particular, in our society.

While many rural women do well with educational qualifications and skills that match their urban counterparts, and rural men, there are some women, including Māori women, working in low paid jobs.

The Treaty of Waitangi settlement process is progressing and making a significant contribution to the asset base of rural communities. There is also a new approach by government to providing services, which is inclusive and community- or family-driven. We are confident that all rural Māori women will be more able to reach their ruri potential.

As with other women around the globe, access to services is an issue for New Zealand rural women. We are excited by the roll out of ultrafast broadband in rural schools and communities by 2016. This is expected to revolutionise rural women's access to health, education and welfare services and to enable them

to manage her and other businesses and to work and train remotely. Women are taking this opportunity on many fronts.

Rural women in New Zealand, as elsewhere, suffer as much from violence against women as their urban sisters but may face additional issues due to their geographical isolation, such as getting help, and addressing issues like language barriers. In addition, confidentiality for women subjected to violence may also be compromised in small rural communities.

So the challenge continues...

Chair, we are excited about sharing experiences and gaining new insights into how we can advance towards the goal of women's equality for all rural women.

ino teira, teia koutou katoa.