



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

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New Zealand statement

Delivered by H.E. Mr Murray McCully
Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand

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New Zealand welcomes the ambition contained in the Sustainable Development Goals.

And we support the substance of the Goals.

Indeed it would be hard not to.

As a Pacific country that places a high priority on the needs of small island developing states, New Zealand regards the achievement of the SDGs as a matter of fundamental importance not just a matter of statistical interest.

The key question that flows from their adoption is not whether the 17 Goals contain worthy objectives, but how we ensure their adoption makes a difference.

Will nations and organisations do the hard work and make the hard calls that make the SDGs attainable?

The SDGs set out development goals for the next 15 years.

It is sobering to ask just how well we performed in relation to the MDGs and what lessons we need to learn if we are to be more successful in relation to their successors.

The primary focus of my country is on its neighbourhood- the Pacific, where 60% of our development budget is spent.

Of the 14 states in the Pacific Island Forum, two achieved all of the MDGs.

Three achieved more than half.

And several nations have achieved none.

I hope most would agree that we collectively need to do better in the Pacific and elsewhere with the SDGs than we did with the MDGs.

If the SDGs are to be attained we need to learn some hard lessons about past practice, and we must make hard decisions about the way forward.

Yes, sustainable development requires resources to be made available.

But it also requires accountability and discipline, it requires governments and partners to make wise decisions about priorities.

Governments and partners will need to prioritise the developments that have the potential to be game-changers, and then move heaven and earth to make sure some of these projects are actually achieved.

A key reason for the failure to achieve a better score-card with the MDGs has been a failure to prioritise developments with the greatest potential.

A second has been the propensity of the international development community to mistake activity for achievement.

Of course we need good process to manage the expenditure of development funding, but that is no excuse for valuable development resources being squandered in lengthy bureaucratic process.

That is a particular problem for the Pacific.

The major international financing institutions have developed rule books and processes that might be very appropriate for projects involving billions or hundred of millions of dollars.

But I come from a region where most of our neighbours have populations of tens or a few hundreds of thousands.

Key development projects in the Pacific region often require a few millions or a few tens of millions of dollars.

The application of processes and rules designed for much larger projects in much larger countries have the very simple consequence of adding significant extra cost, and long often interminable delays.

I take this opportunity today to say to the major financing institutions, as I have been saying to them directly for too many years now, that they serve our region poorly when they persist with processes and procedures that add so significantly to the cost and the timetables of important projects.

I have said that achieving sustainable development requires focus and the discipline to prioritise activities that have the capacity to be game-changing.

And today I want to talk briefly about two of the SDGs that are game-changers for our region: energy, specifically renewable energy, and fisheries, one being the biggest cost and the other being the largest economic asset in our region.

In common with most small island developing states, the nations of the Pacific have been heavily dependent on diesel to generate electricity.

This comes at a great cost – the cost of diesel in Pacific islands is more than double the cost in New York.

About one third of their total import bill, and around 10% of their GDP is consumed by the cost of diesel.

In short, shifting Pacific nations from a dependence on expensive diesel and providing access to renewable electricity, especially solar power, is a real game-changer in our region.

For the past two years New Zealand has been leading a programme to shift Pacific neighbours from diesel generated electricity to renewable energy.

In early 2013 we co-hosted a conference in partnership with the EU, involving all Pacific nations and the major partners.

We are now implementing roadmaps in each country, and we are making good progress.

For most of the smallest islands the change is most transformational.

In the Tokelau Islands we have moved from 100% dependence on diesel generated electricity to 100% solar-generated renewable electricity.

Early this year we celebrated conversion of all the islands of the northern Cooks from total dependence on fossil fuels to 100% solar power.

Significant progress has been made on the main island in the southern Cooks, Rarotonga, and all of the smaller southern group islands will be fully resourced with solar power in the coming months.

In Tuvalu the four outer islands will be shifted from diesel powered to solar powered electricity by December of this year.

And we are making major headway with renewables in Samoa, Tonga, Niue, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

Many of the lessons and skills we have learned are transportable, and in more recent times we have been pleased to be involved in assisting SIDS in the Caribbean and others like the Comoros Islands with their efforts to shift to renewable energy.

Another big game-changer for our region is its tuna fishery- its largest economic asset.

So we welcome the adoption of an SDG for Oceans.

The Pacific tuna fishery is the only truly healthy tuna fishery left on the planet.

Keeping it healthy and ensuring that its economic benefits flow more substantially to its owners are critical tasks for the next decade.

In each of the past three years the market values of the tuna taken from the zones of Pacific nations has declined- from \$3.9 billion to \$3.4 billion to \$3.1 billion.

Yet in each of those years greater tonnages have been taken from the zones.

That is simply not a sustainable path.

New Zealand is committed to investing significantly more in building the fisheries management capacity of the region, and encouraging initiatives to move Pacific nations up the value chain through greater processing and employment opportunities in the region.

We need greater cooperation amongst nations to increase surveillance and to stamp out illegal fishing and the under-reporting of catch.

We also need greater cooperation to protect the health of the world's oceans.

It is idle for wealthier countries to participate in debates about sustainable development when they are doing too little to stop the substantial theft of the most valuable asset of some of the poorest countries on the planet.

New Zealand welcomes the adoption of the SDGs.

But we also know that this marks the beginning not the end of the process.

Ahead lies the serious challenge of attempting to meet these Goals.

If we are to succeed in the way in which the MDGs did not, we will need to learn from the significant lessons of the recent past.

These are lessons about hard work and hard decisions, about choosing the right priorities and focusing on practical outcomes.

Above all they are about strong partnerships that deliver positive, timely results.

In that respect, you may be assured that New Zealand will play its full part.