



26th session, Human Rights Council
Adoption of New Zealand's Universal Periodic Review
Delivered by Ambassador Ellis
19 June 2014

INTRODUCTION

Mr President, distinguished colleagues and representatives.

I am honoured to present the NZ Government's formal response to the recommendations we received during our second UPR.

Allow me to commence by thanking all those States who participated in our review on 27 January 2014. Today, we will also hear statements from civil society and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, and we welcome the different perspectives they will share. Throughout this process, we have heard a clear message: New Zealand has a human rights record to be proud of, but we must continue to do more. We agree with this sentiment, and the UPR process has been a useful tool in allowing us to take stock of where on-going challenges remain.

Before outlining our formal response to recommendations, I would like to briefly outline the process we have undertaken since our review in January. Following the review, the Government met with NGOs, interested individuals and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission to discuss the review and recommendations. We also received several civil society submissions. This engagement was an opportunity for the Government to understand which recommendations civil society regarded as a priority. We also undertook a comprehensive inter-agency consultation process to fully consider each of the recommendations received. The recommendations and our responses to them were then considered at Ministerial-level by our executive branch. As a result, the formal response I present today is the collective response of 24 national government agencies, informed by encouraging participation from civil society groups across New Zealand.

We have found this domestic engagement process to be both important and valuable in preparing us for the implementation phase. It has further raised awareness amongst the

New Zealand public and government, about the UPR process and the recommendations we received.

FORMAL RESPONSE ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Turning to our positions on the recommendations, New Zealand welcomes all the recommendations made during the review process. We have carefully considered each of them and how to respond. In total, New Zealand has accepted 121 recommendations. We were unable to accept 34.

Accepted recommendations are those where we fully support the recommendation and implement it in practice. We reject recommendations for several reasons. With recommendations split across distinct areas we may accept only one part of that recommendation. Others, we accept the spirit behind the recommendation, but cannot commit to a specific proposed method of implementation. We have indicated in our responses where the reasoning lies.

The recommendations we received spanned a wide range of human rights issues, but clear themes emerged. These included family violence, women's and children's rights, addressing inequalities and the on-going relationship between the Government and Maori, New Zealand's Indigenous people. I can report that all of these are areas where the Government is actively taking steps to address on-going challenges and remains committed to do more. Many of these issues are in fact priority areas identified in the opening paragraphs of our national report. The recommendations received provide additional impetus to the Government to address these challenges.

The recommendations will also be a significant basis of our on-going cooperation with the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, particularly as the Commission develops the Second National Action Plan for Human Rights. We understand that the action plan will include specific measurable and concrete actions to ensure our continued respect for our obligations and duties and our UPR recommendations will form an integral part of this.

Mr President, I will stop my intervention here, so as to be able to hear from States and civil society before providing my closing remarks.

CONCLUSION – TO DELIVER AFTER STATES, NZHRC AND NGOS HAVE SPOKEN

[Thank NGOs and NZHRC for their participation, which is an essential element of the UPR process. Possible response to some of their questions]

The success of the UPR depends on all States committing to it as an on-going process. Therefore while this report today wraps up the formal Council proceedings of our second cycle review, for us domestically, the work is just beginning, as we shift to the implementation stage. As civil society have clearly highlighted in their interventions, it is implementation that counts.

We also recognise that some issues raised by the national Human Rights Commission and NGOs in their submissions were not reflected in the formal interactive dialogue or recommendations of our review, by other States here in Geneva, for example issues around legal abortion and sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex people. We intend to follow up on these issues separately as part of our commitment to ongoing engagement with civil society on the UPR, and across the full range of human rights issues in New Zealand.

As part of our commitment to ongoing action and engagement during the implementation period, New Zealand makes a voluntary commitment to publish a mid-term report on the UPR, in 2016.

Finally, I thank you all for your kind attention and participation in a process that we are sure will help us to constantly improve the promotion and protection of human rights in New Zealand.

Thank you Mr President.

