



New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations

Te Māngai o Aotearoa

**United Nations high level event on the occasion of the conclusion of
the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages – statement on
behalf of the Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples**

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Check against delivery



E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi, e rau rangatira mā. Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

[All peoples of the world, all speakers, all the chiefly peoples here, all groups. Greetings to all gathered here.]

Tēnā koe Mr / Madam Chair

I address you today in te reo Māori, the indigenous language of New Zealand. To those who have worked hard to make this International Year possible, ngā mihi nunui, I extend a particular thank you to you all.

For New Zealand, the International Year of Indigenous Languages has been a helpful and constructive framework to support the work of Te Taura Whiri (the Māori Language Commission) and their strategy for Māori language revitalisation. The strategy aims that, by 2040, 85% of New Zealanders will value te Reo Māori as a key part of national identity. A particular focus for this year has been on engaging with young New Zealanders – recognising that to revitalise our first language, we need young New Zealanders to help make it happen.

In New Zealand we know that culture, tradition and knowledge are ingrained within languages. This highlights the importance of indigenous languages to indigenous peoples – their identities, their wellbeing, and their futures.

But we also recognise the value of indigenous languages to society more broadly. This is because language is essential to unlocking, understanding and transmitting indigenous perspectives and knowledge. These perspectives that put our children and future descendants at the centre can help us tackle intergenerational challenges such as peace building and sustainable development.

The theme for today's meeting underscores the importance of continued efforts to protect and promote indigenous languages. We welcome the increased attention that an International Decade for indigenous languages will bring to this work. As we look ahead to the Decade New Zealand hopes that indigenous knowledge – indivisible from indigenous languages – will be seen as an essential aspect of this work.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.