**New Zealand’s Second Intervention**

(25 minutes - about 3,300 words, after all country statements, around 12:00 am)

Thank you, Mr President, and thank you again to all member states for your questions and recommendations.

In this intervention, I will cover four themes in detail. They are

1. refugees and asylum seekers,
2. employment rights, including migrants,
3. children in state care, and
4. education.

I will also make some closing remarks.

**if applicable:**

First, however, let me respond to some further remarks made by member states.

**Note: Refer to additional speaking notes as discussed at the planning meeting or which officials will pass you during the UPR session.**

1. **Refugees and Asylum seekers**

I will now speak about protections for refugees and asylum seekers.

* New Zealand has a long-standing commitment to supporting refugees. Refugees and migrants are valued members of New Zealand society. We have had an annual quota for the resettlement of refugees since 1987.
* Since New Zealand’s last Universal Periodic Review, the annual quota has been increased, and the visa category *Refugee Family Support* has been doubled.
* New Zealand accepts up to 1,500 refugees mandated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a year. In addition, since the last UPR, New Zealand has received about 3,700 refugee and protection claims. Of these applicants, 468 were recognised as refugees or protected persons.
* Rarely, there are situations in New Zealand that require an asylum seeker to be detained. Any decision to detain an asylum seeker is made in line with the 2012 *United Nations Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum-Seekers*.
* Detained asylum claimants have a right to legal representation and habeas corpus. If a person is recognised as a refugee or protected person, detention ends immediately.
* Recognised refugees and protected persons are granted permanent residence and are eligible to apply for New Zealand citizenship after five years. They have access to the same services and supports as other New Zealanders.
* Asylum seekers have access to publicly funded legal representation, interpreters, and health care. Where they are granted a temporary visa, they can work or study and access New Zealand’s social security system. Those who are not granted a temporary visa are provided with a weekly allowance of $225. Young asylum seekers can access primary and secondary school education on the same basis as citizens.
* However, we acknowledge that asylum seekers continue to face difficulties accessing income support, affordable housing and health care. The Government will continue to review the scope and adequacy of welfare support for asylum seekers in 2024.
* Since 2022, New Zealand’s refugee community has been able to have a greater voice in government decision making on matters that affect their communities through the establishment of the *New Zealand Refugee Advisory Panel*.
* At the 2023 *Global Refugee Forum,* the Government made several pledges to make a direct impact on the lives of refugees. These included commitments to continue to work to increase refugee participation in matters that affect them and to improve access to meaningful employment, education and health.

**Note: You may add further information on asylum seekers here if specific questions were raised. Officials will pass you additional speaking notes.**

1. **Employment and Migrants**

I will now speak about employment rights and migrants.

* To first address the domestic labour market - employment has remained relatively stable and our unemployment rate has remained low - currently 4.0%.
* Nevertheless, the Government is refocusing employment efforts by prioritising support for people who can work, into work. The Government wants to increase productivity and economic growth to create more opportunities and in this way wages can also be lifted.
* New Zealand’s minimum wage is one of the highest in the OECD. The adult minimum wage increased by 2% in April 2024.
* All public service organisations are implementing diversity, equity and inclusion strategies. Data shows that gender and ethnic groups are well represented in the public service, matching their proportions in the wider population or close to them. However, further work is needed to improve leadership diversity and address occupational segregation.
* In the private sector, over 80 Chief Executives and Chairs have formed a group called *Champions for Change* that is leading work to achieve inclusive and diverse workplace leadership. Other organisations like the *Institute of Directors and Women on Boards* also focus on increasing representation of women in leadership and governance.
* The Government will continue supporting women in leadership in both the public and the private sectors.
* In 2023, New Zealand’s gender pay gap was 8.3%. While that is below the OECD average, we will continue to work to close the gap. Voluntary gender pay gap reporting is an effective measure for this.

Turning to the international employment perspective:

* New Zealand is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. Nearly a quarter of New Zealanders were born in another country.
* Migrant workers, particularly temporary ones, make an important contribution to New Zealand’s economy. This includes addressing short-term labour and skills shortages. The use of migrant labour is particularly prevalent in tourism, primary industries, and construction.
* In September 2023, there were about 162,000 temporary work-visa holders in New Zealand.
* Unfortunately, there is evidence of migrant exploitation and human trafficking in New Zealand, but we have measures to combat this.
* The *New Zealand Migrant Settlement and Integration Strategy* provides a comprehensive approach to effectively settle and integrate migrants in New Zealand. Employment is one of the areas it addresses. The government provides services and resources tailored to migrant and employer needs which include educating migrants and their employers about employment rights and responsibilities.
* In 2022 and 2023, legislative, policy and operational changes were made to reduce migrant exploitation, enable workers to leave exploitative situations through a new visa and to enforce employment and immigration law on employers. These measures have helped reduce the barriers to reporting exploitation.
* In April 2024, the Government announced some changes to the visa category called *Accredited Employer Work Visa*. The introduction of an English language requirement will allow migrants to better understand their rights and raise concerns about an employer.
* New Zealand’s efforts to eliminate people trafficking are set out in the *Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery* which was launched in 2021.
* The Plan is a five year all-of-government response and sets out a high-level framework of actions. It is organised around the three internationally recognised pillars of prevention, protection and enforcement.
* New Zealand has a number of instruments and initiatives in place to protect against the human rights impacts of businesses. However, New Zealand does not have an overarching *action plan on business and human rights*.
* In 2019, New Zealand accepted the UPR recommendation to develop such an action plan and initial work has taken place. The Government will be considering options to develop this action plan.

*The* ***United Kingdom*** *and* ***Gemany*** *asked specifically about modern slavery legislation and global supply chains.*

* New Zealand does not currently have specific laws requiring organisations to consider issues of modern slavery in their supply chains.
* New Zealand has non-legislative tools for addressing modern slavery in supply chains, including business guidance and government procurement policies aimed at addressing risks of modern slavery.
* We also have a range of offences and penalties for individuals and businesses directly involved in slavery and related exploitative practices.
* This includes employment laws relating to workplace exploitation, criminal provisions in the Crimes Act and regulatory powers in the Immigration Act to prevent domestic and transnational people trafficking and slavery.
* Modern slavery supply chain legislation is not currently being developed, and the Government is considering whether it will take further steps.

**Note: You may add further information on employment, migrants and trafficking here if specific questions were raised. Officials will pass you additional speaking notes.**

1. **Children in state care and Inquiry into historic abuse**

The third theme I will speak to is New Zealand’s inquiry into historic abuse of children in state care. I will also touch on the current state care system.

* In response to longstanding claims of abuse in care by survivors and their advocates, in 2018 the New Zealand Government established a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate abuse in state care. It was subsequently expanded to include abuse in the care of religious institutions.

*I note that the* ***United Kingdom*** *expressed an interest in an update on this work.*

* With nearly 187 million dollars of funding over 6 years, the Inquiry has the most extensive scope and funding of any inquiry undertaken in New Zealand.
* Through the Inquiry process, serious issues have been raised around possible breaches of domestic and international human rights in the care system, including the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Convention against Torture.
* The Royal Commission is expected to release its Final Report at the end of June 2024. It is likely to cover the nature, extent and impacts of abuse and neglect and recommendations to strengthen the care system. I acknowledge this report has recently been delayed and this will be distressing for many survivors. The Government appreciates the importance to the survivor community of delivering the Final Report and recommendations.
* Receiving the Final Report will enable the Crown to begin work on its response, and the recommended public apology. The Government intends to respond to the findings and recommendations as soon as practicable, to support the healing process of survivors.
* The Royal Commission’s interim report on redress outlined the significant and life-long harm many people experienced in care, and the failures of previous responses to that harm.
* New Zealand has begun work on several areas highlighted in the interim report on redress, including work on the design of a single independent redress system for survivors of abuse in care and a number of immediate actions on survivors’ redress experiences.
* An example of immediate actions is the creation of the *Survivor Experiences Service* which was established in July 2023 to give survivors a safe, supportive space to share their personal experiences. Several actions are also underway to enhance survivor access to and control of their personal records.
* The Royal Commission’s extension of the deadline for its Final Report will not delay work on these measures.
* The Government is also reassessing the current system of state care. Keeping children safe and ensuring their wellbeing is the core objective of the state care system but we acknowledge that there have been instances where the system didn’t deliver on this objective.
* New Zealand has made several legislative changes to improve advocacy and monitoring in the children’s system.
* In 2022 and 2023, the oversight of the children’s system was strengthened. It now consists of three entities with specific functions relating to advocacy, monitoring, inquiries and complaints. In 2019, New Zealand also adopted *National Care Standards*.
* The Government is committed to further strengthening the system to ensure children are kept safe. We intend to enhance the role of the *Independent Children’s Monito*r by making it more independent from Government.
* The responsible Ministry (Oranga Tamariki) has committed to transforming its strategic approach, policies, processes, practices and staff training to better protect our children. Reports and reviews, such as those from the oversight entities, Waitangi Tribunal Inquiries and the Royal Commission, inform this work.

**Note: You may add further information on state care here if specific questions were raised. Officials will pass you additional speaking notes.**

1. **Education**

The last theme I will speak to is New Zealand’s education system and the Government’s priorities for education.

*Vision*

* Every child deserves a world-leading education, and the Government is committed to ensuring all New Zealand children and young people have access to quality education.

*Government Priorities*

* We have six priority areas to drive system change.

1. We will ensure students are taught the same quality knowledge-rich curriculum, no matter where they live.
2. Literacy and mathematics should be taught in a way that evidence tells us best supports their learning.
3. Parents should be able to know the progress their children are making, and teachers should know how they can best support learning.
4. Teachers should be trained and provided with tools, through greater specificity, for what children need to learn, when, and how.
5. We will ensure the right options and supports are available for learners who fall behind or need extra help.
6. Finally, we will also ensure that data, assessment, and evidence are used to identify and invest in interventions, supports and services that work, and to monitor progress so we can learn and adjust as we go.

*Targets*

* Consistent with our priorities, the Government has two targets for education for the next six years:
  + Firstly, to have 80 per cent of students present for more than 90 per cent of the term by 2030.
  + Secondly, for 80% of secondary school students to be at or above the expected level in reading, writing, and maths by December 2030.

*Attendance*

* Many of our young people are not attending school regularly, yet we know that attendance is protective against longer-term social issues as well is an enabler of educational achievement. We want young people to experience success in the classroom and feel confident in their abilities. The Government is making reporting and enforcement action to reduce non-attendance and truancy a high priority.

*Curriculum (literacy and numeracy)*

* We are refreshing the New Zealand Curriculum so that the critical knowledge, skills, and practices that students need to progress and achieve are described for teachers. This includes making sure all young people can read, write, and use numbers, and that schools are designing teaching and learning programmes that better meet the needs of those students who have historically been underserved by the system. We are also redesigning the curriculum for Māori-medium education to reflect a more indigenous curriculum.
* Work is currently underway to review minimum requirements in the curriculum for what schools must teach every year in reading, writing, maths and science and to embed the teaching of literacy and maths through approaches that evidence tells us best supports students to learn.

*Concluding statement for education*

* New Zealand’s vision is for the schooling system to be inspirational and engaging for learners; to value excellence and achievement; to develop critical-thinkers with the knowledge they need to tackle what comes at them in their futures, and to give all learners the opportunity they need to succeed.

**Note: You may add further information on education here if specific questions were raised. Officials will pass you additional speaking notes.**

**You may also add further information on other topics time permitting. Officials will pass you additional speaking notes.**

**Closing remarks**

* This concludes my substantive statements. To close, I would like to thank the member states who made recommendations for improvements and provided constructive comments this morning. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions from civil society throughout this UPR process which ensure that relevant information is shared with the Working Group and member states.
* We also appreciate the work of the troika, the President of the Human Rights Council, and the Secretariat.
* Collective action and strong multilateral institutions are crucial to address human rights challenges globally. The UPR is a valuable opportunity to review New Zealand’s human rights situation and measures taken for its improvement. We welcome the scrutiny and advice of our peers and consider the UPR process a fundamentally important forum for robust exchanges of positions between member states to promote the universality and indivisibility of human rights across the world.
* New Zealand is committed to cooperating constructively with the Universal Periodic Review process, and to making further efforts for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Thank you.