**MFAT CEO Welcoming Comments**

**Annual MFAT/PDG - NGO Hui**

**0900, 22 October 2019**

**Tiakiwai, National Library of Aotearoa New Zealand**

***Tēnā koutou e te mana whenua o te rohe nei***

***Tēnā koutou e ngā rau rangatira mā***

***Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa***

It is my pleasure to welcome you this morning to the Annual MFAT/NGO Hui, here at the Tiakiwai Conference Centre.

The theme for today’s hui is Ngā Rangapū or “Partnerships”.

Our hui today follows on from yesterday’s Annual CID Conference: “Beyond Aid: Partnerships for the Future – congratulations to you Josie, and your team at CID, for what I understand was a very successful conference.

Partnerships are an important way through which we, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, seek to conduct New Zealand’s international development cooperation efforts.

And this is only appropriate. New Zealand’s founding document, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, is based on the principle of partnership. And, bearing this in mind, it is powerful that our hui is being held today in the very place that is currently housing that taonga. I understand there will be opportunities throughout the day to visit the multi-award winning *He Tohu* exhibition.

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We recently published our Strategic Intentions for the period 2019 to 2023. This publicly available document outlines the why, what and how of our work.

This morning I want to highlight our four core values – and the way that we seek to partner with others.

**IMPACT** – we achieve for New Zealand, everyday, everywhere

**COURAGE** – we do the right thing

**MANAAKITANGA** – we honour and respect others

**KOTAHITANGA** – we draw strength from our diversity.

Much like the stars that guided voyagers crossing the Pacific ocean in the past, I believe that these values are navigational tools. They will help us to make a real difference in how MFAT works and the results we deliver, including with partners such as the New Zealand international NGO sector.

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The intention of the New Zealand aid programme is to contribute to a more peaceful world, in which all people live in dignity and safety, all countries can prosper, and our shared environment is protected. Our sharpened focus on the Pacific acknowledges New Zealand as a Pacific country, connected to the Pacific by more than just location. It acknowledges our shared culture, values, history – and our shared vision of the Pacific that we want for future generations.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development continues to underpin New Zealand’s international development co-operation and we remain conscious that, after sub-Saharan Africa, the Pacific is the region most off track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals – with one in four people living below their national poverty line.

The government’s Pacific Reset was an opportunity to sharpen our focus on supporting the wellbeing, prosperity and security of the region and its people. This has been well received by our Pacific Island partners, and we are now embedding the principles and investment as the “new normal” for our engagement. Our key priorities are:

* Reducing vulnerability to climate change, building resilience and helping to meet emissions targets
* Supporting Pacific partners to strengthen and grow their economies
* Addressing core human development issues, such as health and education
* Inclusive development – by helping to realise human rights, including of women, youth and people with disabilities
* Supporting good governance including open and transparent government institutions, processes and decision making.

If I can continue with the Pacific navigators’ analogy – the waka and the paddles are the means to get us from our starting point to our destination. In this respect, the Pacific Reset has provided additional funding and more people in key posts – and that is important.

But that’s not the only change. We are also placing greater emphasis on *the way we work*. Our approach is based on principles of understanding, friendship, mutual benefit, collective ambition and sustainability. These are the ocean currents that carry our waka in the direction of our goals and the principles therefore apply across the breadth of our international cooperation portfolio: from our Pacific engagement, to our secondary geographic focus on Southeast Asia (particularly the Least Developed Countries and the regional role of ASEAN) and our multilateral engagement, humanitarian assistance, regional programmes in Africa and the Caribbean and also to our assistance to fragile and conflict affected areas, particularly in the Middle East and Asia.

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So what are we actually “doing differently” – as we were so challenged by the Minister of Foreign Affairs this time last year? I’d like to consider this by reflecting on a couple of things that I think are relevant for the conversations that you will have today: public perceptions of aid and *Partnering for Impact*.

A few months ago, Deputy Secretary Jonathan Kings shared the results of MFAT commissioned research into public attitudes towards aid and development assistance at a Council for International Development (CID) event. A key finding was the, perhaps not surprising, correlation between exposure to information (which is low and has been declining) and the public support for aid (which has also declined).

But on the positive side, there seems to be appetite amongst the New Zealand public to hear more about what the needs are and what we’re doing about it.

When Minister Peters spoke to the CID annual conference this time last year, he recognized the significant contribution that NGOs have made to development in the Pacific and beyond. He also highlighted the importance of bringing your supporters along in support of aid programme priorities, and helping us to better tell the story of the difference our collective efforts are making in people’s lives, particularly the most vulnerable and marginalized.

There is, I believe, a lot more we can be doing together on this front. Which brings me to *Partnering for Impact* – our new approach to engaging with New Zealand NGOs. Let me start by thanking the sector for working with us over the past year or so to evaluate, research and discuss options for reinvigorating the way we work together.

We heard you. And, as a result, the Minister of Foreign Affairs approved three new mechanisms that form *Partnering for Impact*: Negotiated Partnerships; Manaaki; and Organisational Strengthening. These mechanisms, as well as our partnerships with CID and VSA, will be the powerful waka paddles that MFAT and our partners take up to move us towards our destination, which is:

* Delivering impact in line with NZ Aid Programme priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals
* Empowering and enhancing the capacity of local partners and communities, resulting in greater self-reliance, and
* Engaging the New Zealand public in the aid programme, leveraging further support and resources for development activities.

I am excited about the work going on in this space. Creating opportunities to more effectively leverage the relationships, resources and technical expertise available within MFAT and your organisations has tremendous potential to drive better practice and achieve greater impact in all areas of New Zealand’s international cooperation.

It is, however, a work in practice. While we are rolling out *Partnering for Impact*, we are also taking account of your feedback and the lessons learned to ensure that the approach is as efficient and effective as possible for all partners. Ultimately we want to be able to demonstrate that “doing things differently”, through an increased emphasis on our partnerships, delivers results.

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I would like to return now to MFAT’s values of Impact, Courage, Manaakitanga and Kotahitanga, and I know that many NGOs have articulated similar values. Let us commit to using our organizational values - our taatai arorangi or navigational tools - to guide us through the important hui that will take place here today and our collective efforts in the coming months.

For the Ministry’s part, we are committed to partnering with the New Zealand development sector to do just that: to bring growth from afar to those we partner with in the Pacific and beyond.

*No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.*