

New Zealand International Human Rights Action Plan 2019 – 2023: Advocacy Priorities

- New Zealand has a strong history of protecting and promoting human rights both at home and internationally. Our foreign policy engagement on human rights includes bilateral, regional and multilateral political advocacy and development assistance, and enhances our reputation as a constructive and committed state in support of the global rules-based system. It provides an opportunity for us to advocate for human rights and support the development of international standards. Supporting strong rules-based international human rights mechanisms is critical to safeguarding existing rights, protecting against serious violations, and realising the rights of minority populations worldwide.
- The international human rights agenda is broad with opportunities to engage on a wide range of issues. This Action Plan identifies priority areas where New Zealand can make a positive impact by leading and supporting initiatives over the coming five years. Our approach aims to protect and advance New Zealand values and key interests and strengthen the international rules-based system.
- This Action Plan sets out our international human rights advocacy priorities for 2019 – 2023. The priorities are intended to guide the level of New Zealand's engagement on particular human rights issues in multilateral fora, as well as indicate issues which should be prioritised for discussion in bilateral and regional engagements.
- New Zealand's international human rights advocacy priorities have been determined taking into account New Zealand's existing role and profile in the multilateral system, issues of importance to New Zealanders, significant human rights issues in the Pacific and South-East Asia region, our consular work, and alignment with our broader foreign policy, trade, and development interests. The priorities also take into account our domestic human rights situation, including areas New Zealand is committed to improving, to ensure that our international engagement is consistent with domestic priorities and action.
- There is a practical need to prioritise New Zealand's engagement on human rights towards areas where we can have a positive impact to achieve global progress. The categories of priorities set out in the Action Plan are intended to guide New Zealand's level of leadership and action, rather than indicate the relative importance of particular rights.

Opportunities to Engage on Human Rights

- New Zealand engages in the annual UN Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee ('**Third Committee**') to address a wide range of human rights issues alongside all UN member states. We also participate actively in the **UN Human Rights Council**'s three sessions each year, although New Zealand is not currently a Council member. In both forums, we chair and engage in negotiations, co-sponsor resolutions, and deliver statements on human rights issues.
- New Zealand makes specific recommendations on human rights issues to other countries, especially those in the Asia-Pacific region, during **Universal Periodic Review** sessions at the UN Human Rights Council to suggest practical steps for improving their domestic human rights situation.

- Alongside our multilateral engagement, we raise human rights issues in **regional and bilateral settings**, calibrating our approach with the broader foreign policy context. New Zealand can conduct or join demarches, release public statements, or raise issues in appropriate bilateral and regional settings.
- New Zealand is an active member of several **cross-regional groups** that coordinate initiatives to progress specific human rights (such as the Equal Rights Coalition focused on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Group of Friends of Persons with Disabilities).
- New Zealand participates in regular **UN treaty body reviews** to assess our domestic implementation of each of the human rights conventions that we have ratified. Treaty bodies are established under each UN human rights convention to monitor progress against the relevant treaty obligations. These reviews provide an opportunity for New Zealand to reflect on our own human rights situation, share our story and experience with the UN and its membership, receive practical recommendations from independent human rights experts, and enhance our reputation as a constructive and committed UN member in support of the global rules-based system.
- Work is underway to identify opportunities for **New Zealand candidacies** and appointments to roles within the multilateral system where New Zealanders can add value. There are opportunities for country candidatures (such as a seat on the Human Rights Council), independent experts on treaty body Committees, or appointments to UN offices. New Zealand's international human rights candidacies should be consistent with the Action Plan's priorities.
- MFAT has a contestable **Multilateral Initiatives Fund** for one-off initiatives to support New Zealand's engagement in international multilateral activities. The Action Plan provides guidance on themes for human rights-related funding to ensure consistency between our multilateral advocacy and support for initiatives that reinforce our interests and values.
- New Zealand's international human rights advocacy priorities are consistent with the focus of our **human rights work in the aid programme and through international cooperation**, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. New Zealand's aid programme seeks to promote and protect human rights through advocacy, support to regional human rights mechanisms, and funding of initiatives that improve social and economic rights (such as access to health, education and clean water) and civil and political rights (such as good governance and rule of law).

New Zealand's International Human Rights Advocacy Priorities

- To guide New Zealand's approach, and ensure that our engagement is effective and impactful, New Zealand will prioritise our international human rights advocacy engagement as follows:

Leadership Role:

- The rights of persons with disabilities
- Gender equality and women's empowerment, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternal mortality and morbidity, leadership and political participation
- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Death penalty

Active Engagement:

- The rights of indigenous peoples
- Children and young people
- Freedom of expression, including civil society participation and human rights defenders
- Torture and arbitrary detention, including prison conditions
- Violence and discrimination against minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities

Maintain and Defend:

- The right to the highest attainable standard of health
- The right to education
- Defensive areas where New Zealand's values and interests are challenged