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New Zealand country statement

*Conference of States Parties to the UN Convention Against Transnational
Organised Crime*

Vienna, Austria

Introduction

Thank you, Chair and distinguished delegates.

E ngā mana, e ngā Reo, e Rau Rangatira mā kua huihui mai nei, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa

E koa ana te ngākau kua tae mai au i tēnei rā i runga i te reo karanga
No reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

To all authorities, all voices and the many distinguished leaders who have gathered here today, I greet you, I greet you, I greet you all
I am happy to be here today in response to this important topic.
Accordingly, I greet you, I greet you, I greet you all

It is a privilege to be here representing Aotearoa New Zealand.

Aotearoa New Zealand believes in the importance of international cooperation. We value the opportunity to gather at fora such as this, discuss and develop effective approaches to together address transnational organised crime and mitigate its impacts on our local and global communities.

The rule of law, community wellbeing, economic development, and national security are undermined and compromised by transnational organised crime. When presented with unprecedented circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it has shown itself to be unrelenting, opportunistic, and adaptable.

Aotearoa New Zealand considers that civil society participation in UN processes, and in particular the UNTOC Review Mechanism, is vital to the effective implementation of the Convention. Civil society involvement helps to identify emerging issues, solutions to existing challenges and allows for diversity of opinion in discussions of how the Convention is implemented.

Aotearoa New Zealand

We consider transnational organised crime to pose significant risks to Aotearoa New Zealand's public safety, law and order and national security. Transnational organised crime networks exploit our open economy, large maritime border and close links to international partners.

Aotearoa New Zealand acknowledges the clear increase in the scale, scope, sophistication and impact of transnational organised criminal activity including the rising role of online technology to facilitate such activity.

Aotearoa New Zealand's response to this global threat is centred around our Transnational Organised Crime Strategy – a five-year strategy initiated in 2020. This strategy enables greater coordination through an all of government response to tackle organised crime by implementing a framework which responds to a wide range of transnational organised crime including people smuggling, trafficking in persons and migrant exploitation.

Aotearoa New Zealand has strong disruption and enforcement systems. Our strategy seeks to reinforce these capabilities, with an increasing focus on prevention. Under the strategy we are focused on activities to increase awareness and understanding of trafficking in persons and on strengthening our legislative frameworks. We have strengthened our criminal proceeds recovery legislation to prevent organised criminal groups from profiting from their crimes. We are also conducting a policy review of our legislation to strengthen provisions for the criminalization of trafficking of children and to enhance enforcement activity to combat trafficking in persons including successful prosecution of perpetrators. We are increasing our outreach to vulnerable communities and continuing to raise awareness of trafficking in persons through civil society, community and private sector engagements. Our National Counter Fraud Corruption Strategy seeks to provide strategic oversight of our approach to corruption in Aotearoa New Zealand. We are continuing to commit more resources to eliminating people trafficking through prevention, protection and prosecution, as set out in our Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery. The Plan is a high-level framework that will be implemented over the next five years.

UNTOC Review Mechanism

Aotearoa New Zealand looks forward to participating in the Convention's Review Mechanism and the opportunities it brings for further collaboration and cooperation. The Convention's Review Mechanism provides Aotearoa New Zealand with an important opportunity to assess whether our legislation is aligned with international best practice and to consider areas of improvement as part of the Government's role as regulatory stewards. Through the review process, we will

engage with our multi-stakeholder networks to ensure that a range of important perspectives are considered and reflected.

International engagement/relationships across the Pacific

Aotearoa New Zealand remains committed to working with regional and international partners through a rules-based international approach to combat transnational organised crime.

We have valued partnerships in South and Southeast Asia. Aotearoa New Zealand has deployed four Irregular Migration Liaison Officers, based in Kuala Lumpur, Colombo, Bangkok and Jakarta, to work with agencies in the region on issues relating to people smuggling and trafficking in persons and deliver capacity building and prevention-focused programmes. These Officers, as well as our Police and Customs Liaison Officers, are well placed to further develop relationships and strengthen cooperative efforts.

Aotearoa New Zealand plays an active role in the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime and supports country involvement in regional forums to provide opportunity for policy dialogue, information sharing and practical cooperation. As co-chair of the Working Group on the Disruption of Criminal Networks Involved in People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons, Aotearoa New Zealand has recently commenced a 12-month Joint Period of Action, a co-ordinated effort to disrupt and dismantle criminal networks involved in people smuggling and trafficking in persons in the Indo-Pacific region.

We also deeply value our Pacific partnerships as we seek to support a peaceful, stable, prosperous, and resilient Pacific – Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa. This includes enduring cooperation with law enforcement and in combatting illegal unregulated and unreported fishing.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is enshrined in the primary child protection legislation in Aotearoa New Zealand. This legislation also emphasises the principles of ‘best interests of the child’ being the primary consideration, and the ‘voice of the child’ being promoted in decision-making. Where child victims of trafficking are identified and require care or protection, the

wellbeing of the child or young person must be at the centre of decision-making. Government agencies which have a role in protecting our borders have been designated as Child Protection Welfare agencies through legislative amendments. Information sharing across agencies when a case of child trafficking has been detected or identified is therefore facilitated and the necessary action is taken to protect the child.

Conclusion

In closing, Aotearoa New Zealand reiterates its commitment to the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime.

Nō reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa.

Thank you