

DECLARATION SPEECH

Rahui Katene, MP for Te Tai Tonga

Tuesday 20 April 2010, 2.30pm

This morning in our early dawn, over in New York more than two thousand indigenous peoples rose to their feet to give a rousing ovation to the historic decision of the New Zealand to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Immediately the wires were hot – proclaiming *New Zealand backs indigenous rights*.

It is time now to celebrate, to consolidate and to be proud to stand alongside of some 143 other nations throughout the world who are prepared to back indigenous peoples.

Today is an historic day in which we finally right the wrong that was done on 14 September 2007 - the Labour Government's bizarre decision to oppose a declaration which at its very essence, sets a minimum standard of human rights for indigenous peoples.

Today is a day in which we mihi to those champions, the indigenous advocates, the Maori leaders, activists, academics who have devoted so much of their time and resources to achieve the outlawing of discrimination against indigenous people.

We think of all those who have passed on before experiencing this incredible moment – Irihapeti Murchie; Alec Kaihau, Dame Mira Szaszy.

We think of those of our people who have lived with the Declaration for nigh on 22 years – Nganeko Minhinnick who was there at the very beginning; Aroha Mead; Moana Jackson who was the chair of the indigenous forum for five important years.

And we also recognise our own Hone Harawira who has been such a passionate advocate within the larger movement.

And there are many more in our thoughts today who can claim the success as theirs – who can be proud that they have stood tall to support the rights of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions.

And we join with the people who have been sending emails all day in excitement and in celebration of this very important day.

And we say congratulations to the Government for taking this very important decision.

This is a very important day for our parliament.

We are somewhat surprised that there has been an issue raised around how the Declaration sits within the domestic laws. This was a statement built into the text of the declaration when it was adopted in 2007, by way of Article 46, so it is a non-issue.

I also have to say that the Labour Government when it was in Government, had every change to water down the declaration and the only thing that they regret was that they were unable to water it down any further.

It is a day for celebration; a day when Aotearoa is proud to move forward on the path of justice, dignity and fundamental freedoms for all.

Helen Leahy

Senior Ministerial Advisor

ADDITIONAL REFERENCE

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Article 46

1. Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, people, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations or construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, totally or in part, the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.

2. In the exercise of the rights enunciated in the present Declaration, human rights and fundamental freedoms of all shall be respected. The exercise of the rights set forth in this Declaration shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law, and in accordance with international human rights obligations. Any such limitations shall be non-discriminatory and strictly necessary solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for meeting the just and most compelling requirements of a democratic society.

3. The provisions set forth in this Declaration shall be interpreted in accordance with the principles of justice, democracy, respect for human rights, equality, non-discrimination, good governance and good faith.