

Plenary Speech

Tihe mauri ora!

Te Whare etu nei, tena koe !

Te papa i waho nei, tena koe !

Te mana whenua o tenei rohe, tena koutou

Te hunga mate ki te hunga mate, haere haere haere

Te hunga ora ki a tatou te hunga ora

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa

We greet this house, we greet this land, we greet the people here.

We think of those who have gone before us, we give thanks for those of us here today.

Greetings to each of you, from New Zealand.

Madam President

UNESCO's mandate is as relevant today as it was in 1946 when New Zealand was the second member to sign up to the organisation. Today I want to share with you some of our priorities for engagement with UNESCO through the National Commission, of which I chair, and through our Permanent Delegation based in Paris.

Madam President

New Zealand supports the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and will continue to play our part in meeting the high level of ambition set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

We recognise the importance of UNESCO's leadership of Goal 4 on education. In response to this goal, domestic efforts include the strengthening of support for Global Citizenship Education. Just a few weeks ago, we launched a Global Citizenship Education Award. This is open to both the education sector and community groups, and will enable us to celebrate, share and learn from the outstanding innovations that are taking place in our country.

As a small distant country surrounded by oceans, New Zealand was a strong advocate for the inclusion of a Goal on oceans and marine resources in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In UNESCO we value the work that the IOC is doing to advance SDG 14 and we will continue to engage in this Commission to help it play its part to 'conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development'. We have a proverb in Māori that captures well our deep connection to the Ocean:

Toitū te marae a Tāne-Mahuta, Toitū te marae a Tangaroa, Toitū te tangata.

If the land is well and the sea is well, the people will thrive.

Madam President

New Zealand will continue to advocate for UNESCO to maintain a focus on achieving outcomes for the Pacific including through the Sub-Regional Office for the Pacific States in Apia with whom we work closely.

It is our conviction that the Pacific is a region with a rich, cultural diversity and unique experience that can make a significant contribution to UNESCO's mandate for the benefit of broader membership as well as for the Pacific region itself. It is consequently in the interests of UNESCO that the Pacific voice be represented in UNESCO's governance bodies.

That is why New Zealand is happy to announce it will, this year, support the Cook Islands for election to the Executive Board, and Australia to the World Heritage Committee.

Madam President

The New Zealand National Commission has identified its priorities and focus for the coming years within its programme of work. Some of these include:

-supporting a thriving national Memory of the World Programme.

-establishing a UNESCO Global Geoparks programme that responds to increased awareness of the intersection between natural heritage, culture and sustainability.

-contributing to the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Two of our cities are now designated: Dunedin, a City of Literature, and this week Auckland was designated as a UNESCO Creative City of Music to mark the role of music as the public's voice in times of social activism and celebration.

-we also have an active UNESCO Chairs network in a range of disciplines across New Zealand.

We will also continue to seek collaborative opportunities with the National Commission's in our region and beyond, acknowledging the strength of the network of National Commissions in progressing the goals of UNESCO.

Madam President

New Zealand is a proud multicultural country, our strength based on a bicultural foundation underpinned by the recognition of indigeneity. We recognise and celebrate the value of language, indigenous knowledge and ways of understanding the world. Protecting, promoting and revitalising matauranga Maori or indigenous Maori knowledge is critical to the integrity, mana and vitality of Maori as the indigenous people of New Zealand, strengthening our sense of history and identity.

In February 2018 we will be giving our support to the 'Waka Odyssey' initiative, a mass assembly of waka hourua or ocean canoes in Wellington harbour. These "Waka carry stories, art, science, knowledge, whakapapa (or genealogy) and performance. When the waka arrives it seeks relationships, contact and togetherness" This is a manifestation of all that UNESCO works towards.

New Zealand recognises UNESCO's important contribution to indigenous voices in shaping a better future, and encourages UNESCO to redouble its efforts in this area. In the field of the protection of cultural property, we urge the Organisation to lift its efforts and to take principled stands when necessary.

Madam President

We would like to conclude by acknowledging Director General Irina Bokova for her contribution to UNESCO over her two mandates in often challenging circumstances. It was a particular pleasure for us to have welcomed you in 2015 in Auckland en route to the SIDs conference in Samoa and we have valued your willingness to listen, understand and advocate for the interests of the Pacific during your tenure. This was again manifested in the productive meeting we had with you last night as part of the Pacific group. Thank you again for all you have done.

We very much look forward to working with the new Director General, Audrey Azoulay, as she builds on the efforts of her predecessors to ensure the organisation is as effective as possible.

No rei ra,

Tena Koutou, tena koutou, tena tatou katoa